

# THE HISTORY OF

## How chocolate became America's favorite candy treat



LOOK FOR WORD NERD'S 9 WORDS IN BOLD

**I**t all started with a smell—sweet and delicious.

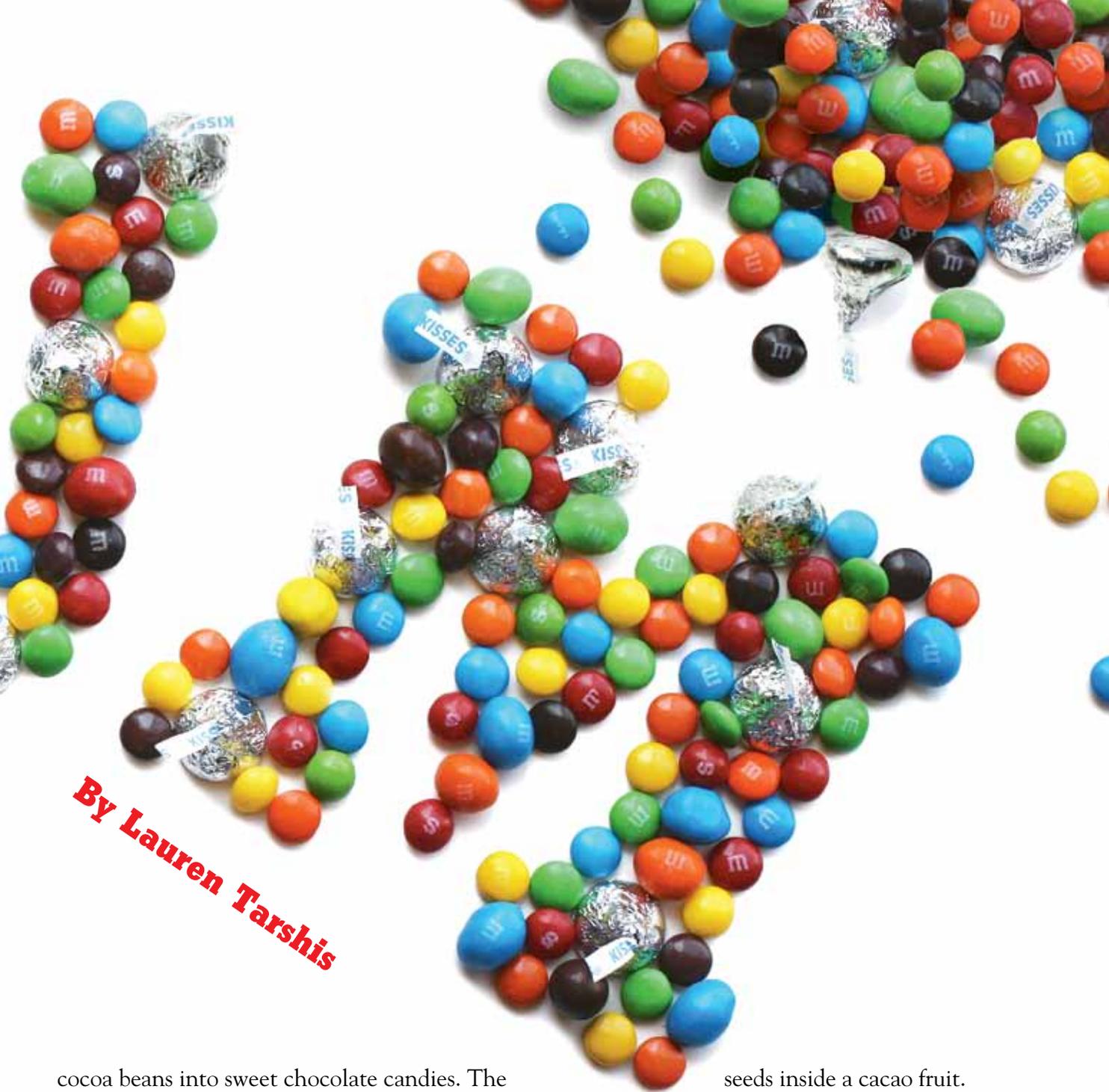
The year was 1893, and Pennsylvania candy maker Milton Hershey was in Chicago, at the Columbian Exposition, an international fair featuring new and amazing inventions from around the world. From the moment Hershey



Candy maker Milton Hershey and one of his famous creations

entered the grand exhibition hall, he was struck by a **delectable** scent that filled the air like a heavenly breeze. At last, he tracked down its source in a back corner of the hall. There, men from a German company were making chocolate.

Hershey watched with fascination as their modern machines **transformed** bitter



**By Lauren Tarshis**

cocoa beans into sweet chocolate candies. The beans were roasted, ground, and melted into a hot chocolate “liquor,” which was then poured into molds and cooled. Hershey was already a leading candy maker, the founder of the largest caramel factory in the country. But he would soon become convinced that the future of his own business—and America’s tastes in candy—would be chocolate.

Historians don’t know who first discovered the almost-magical appeal of the bitter little

seeds inside a cacao fruit.

But sometime around 400 B.C., Indians living in today’s central Mexico found that the seeds could be eaten when roasted and ground. By the year 400 A.D., Mayan Indians were drinking a chocolate beverage—cocoa powder mixed with water and spices—and writing about its supposed incredible health benefits. Over the centuries, the popularity of chocolate drinks spread to Europe and the American colonies.

Candy mosaic by Clint Hansen

## YESTERDAY

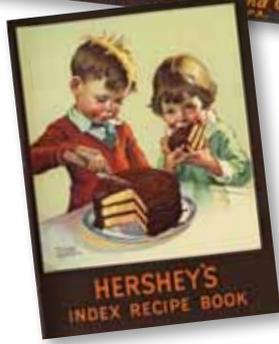
By the time Milton Hershey was building his caramel company in the 1880s, candy was widely available in the U.S., but it was expensive, difficult to produce, and uneven in quality. America's most popular treats were "penny candies," like peppermints, lemon drops, and other small sweets sold from large jars. Recipes for many of these sweets had come from European **immigrants**. Italians

were known for their hard candies, like jawbreakers and fireballs. Germans specialized in candies made from almond paste and spun sugar. America's first candy makers **toiled** in tiny home kitchens. But by 1893, dozens of large companies, like Hershey's, were all working to satisfy America's sweet tooth.

The process of turning cocoa beans into chocolate is complex and challenging.

**H**ershey bought chocolate-making equipment from the floor of the Columbian Exposition and had it shipped back to his caramel factory in Pennsylvania. He hired two chocolate makers, and soon the company was churning out chocolate candies in more than 100 shapes. His new **venture** was a success—yet Hershey wasn't satisfied. Yes, his chocolates were tasty. But he was determined to make a chocolate that was lighter and creamier than Americans had ever tasted. The secret, he knew,

The town of Hershey was—and still is—famous for its candy factory and its amusement park.



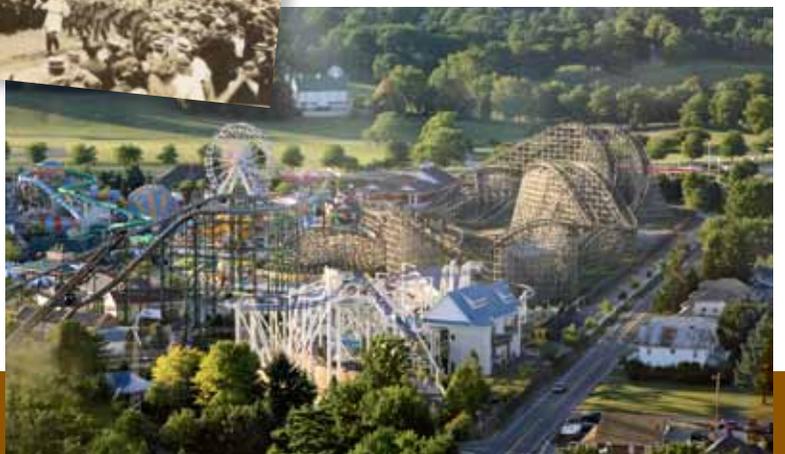
was to add milk. Swiss chocolatiers had been making milk chocolate for years. But their recipes were closely guarded secrets. If Hershey wanted to offer milk chocolate, he would first have to figure out how to make it.

**H**is team worked 16-hour days, month after month. Their challenge was that milk, which is 90 percent water, and cocoa butter, which is mostly oil, don't blend easily together. And when they are finally mixed, they quickly separate. Time after time, Hershey's milk chocolate experiments ended in oily messes.

But finally, in 1900, Hershey succeeded.

He sold his caramel business for \$1 million so that he could focus completely on chocolate. He bought 1,200 acres of Pennsylvania farmland and built the world's biggest chocolate factory—and a town, named Hershey, for his workers and their families. By 1915, Hershey's "nickel bars" were the No. 1 candy in the nation.

Visitors who flocked to Hershey, Pennsylvania, admired the tidy streets and impressive factory. But perhaps the town's most unique and memorable quality was the smell—a chocolaty breeze that filled the air, the same heavenly smell that had **captivated** Milton Hershey decades before. ■



# The Making of a Candy Hit

## How a little alien helped Reese's Pieces soar

**I**t was the late 1970s, and the leaders of the Hershey chocolate company were hungry for a new hit. Hershey's bars were still American favorites. But the company was in fierce competition with Mars, the maker of Milky Way, Snickers, and M&M's. Hershey's leaders wanted to create something new. But it can take years—and tens of millions of dollars—to come up with a recipe that tastes good, can be made in huge quantities, and can sit for months without getting stale.

Hershey decided to build on the success of its Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. Their idea was to create a candy like the M&M, but with peanut butter in the center instead of chocolate. It took time to get the recipe right. At first, the oily peanut butter caused the candy shell to become greasy.

Finally, Hershey's scientists created a mixture of peanuts and sugar that was smooth and tasty and stayed put within a thin candy covering. The new candy, Reese's Pieces, was introduced in 1978. Sales were strong at first but soon sagged.

Was Hershey's newest candy doomed to fail?

Then came an offer from Hollywood. Universal Pictures was creating a new movie about an adorably **homely** alien—E.T.—who is stranded on Earth. He is befriended by an 8-year-old boy named Elliott, who uses handfuls of candy to lure E.T. into the safety of his home.

In the original script, that candy was M&M's.

But Mars refused to cooperate. And so Universal called Hershey and offered them the chance to have Reese's Pieces star in the 1982 movie.

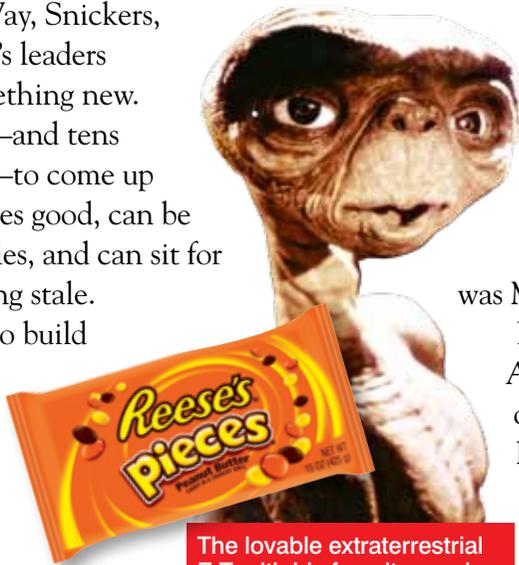
Hershey's leaders **agonized** over the decision. If the movie flopped, the company could be **humiliated**—and Reese's Pieces

might never recover.

But in the end they said yes, and the movie was a smash hit. Almost overnight, Reese's Pieces became America's most famous candy.

Today, Reese's Pieces is one of the top-10 best-selling candies in America.

And for that, Hershey can thank a delicious recipe—and a cute little alien. ■



The lovable extraterrestrial E.T. with his favorite candy

### COMPARE/CONTRAST

Milton Hershey believed that a person had to fail in order to succeed. How do the stories of Hershey's milk chocolate and Reese's Pieces show that this can be true? Use three details from each story and include at least five of the bolded words in your answer.

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