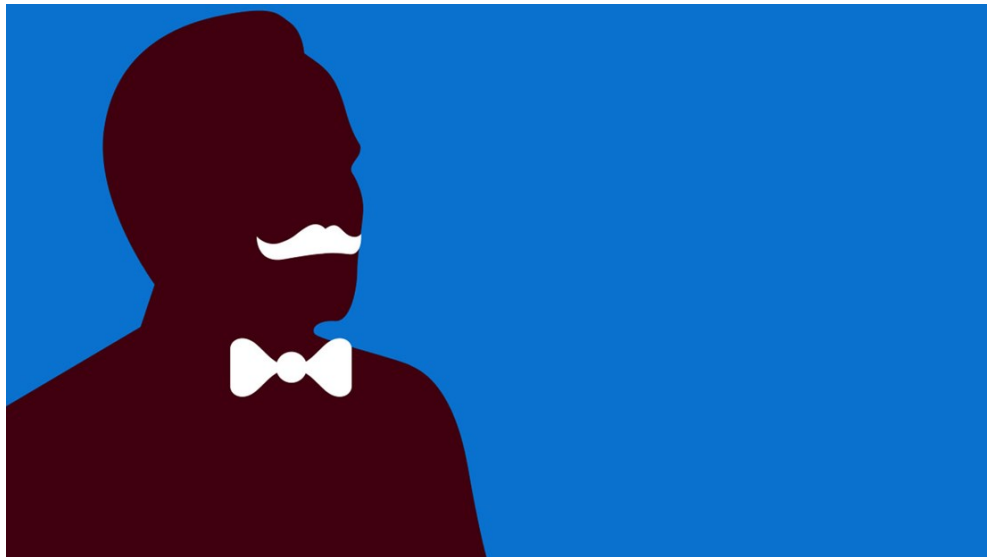


Milton Hershey's Birthday Inspires Today's Leaders

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By [Smith, Rob J](#) Assoc Mgr Editorial Channels 13 Sep 2017 07:54



WHAT'S THE STORY?

Today marks the 160th anniversary of the birth of our founder, Milton Hershey, an occasion that provides us with the opportunity to reflect on his legacy. U.S. President Todd Tillemans, for example, [discusses visiting Mr. Hershey's grave](#) and understanding the full weight of our company's history and heritage. [Social Innovation Manager Whitney Mayer ponders](#) what would inspire Mr. Hershey today—where would he look for innovation and new thinking that reflects his values? Pam Whitenack, Director of The Hershey Archives, reminds us to not only [consider his vision and stick-to-itiveness](#), but also [his humanity](#), with all its complexities.

TELL US MORE ...

Our U.S. President, Todd Tillemans, recalls his third day on the job, in a post on Linked In. Wade Latz, V.P. of Customer Service Initiatives (Supply Chain), took Todd to visit Milton Hershey's grave, and Wade shared with Todd the deep connection that he and generations of his family have with the town of Hershey and The Hershey Company.

"Atop that hill, I had a moment of awe," Todd recalls. "I felt the power of longevity, authenticity, and innovation. The town and company Milton built has stood the test of time — 100-plus years of it. I was

looking out upon a powerhouse company, a thriving community, a school that helps children in need and people who have been stewards of Milton's legacy for their entire lifetime.”

That revelation led Todd to further contemplate Mr. Hershey's legacy, how he founded our company with an unstoppable entrepreneurial spirit and eye toward innovation. He sought to create something that the world had never seen — affordable, high-quality chocolate; that in itself was bold, visionary and risky. Those beginnings have, over the last 123 years, helped Hershey preserve its commitment to quality, its care for the community and the goodness we bring to people's lives.

In [her blog post on Milton Hershey's legacy](#), Whitney Mayer, our Manager of Social Innovation, reflects on what would have inspired Mr. Hershey today — “What innovation and new thinking to shape and disrupt the future would he embrace?” she writes. “How would he do this in a purpose-driven way that reflects his values and commitment to community?”

Whitney draws a line between Mr. Hershey's efforts at working with entrepreneurs, creating affordable products and supporting education, and our company's current extension of his legacy, in our socially minded partnerships in West Africa and collaboration with institutions like the Mack Institute for Innovation Management at Wharton, to explore new business and financial models.

In [a blog post](#) on the history of Mr. Hershey and the town he created, writer Kate Silver recalls a conversation with Pam Whitenack, Director of the Hershey Community Archives, during which Pam noted that Milton Hershey lived the American dream — he didn't just create a product; he created a philosophy and a way of life that really struck a chord with people (Pam reiterated these things [in a blog post of her own](#)).

However, even as he had such great successes and built a community around those successes, Milton Hershey was a man, with all the foibles and complications inherent to our humanity.

“It's so easy to idolize a man or put him up on a pedestal,” Pam told the [Monday Morning Report](#) podcast. “I love every time I hear stories about him that really illustrate his humanity. He [was] a person who [had] strengths and weaknesses. I think we do him a disservice when we try and just say ‘Oh, you know, he's this wonderful man that created this amazing company and product, and put all his money in trust for a school for disadvantaged children.’ It's just such a thin explanation of the man.”

WHAT'S OUR TAKE?

Even now, more than seven decades after his death, Milton Hershey can still inspire and motivate remarkable people to accomplish great things. On a day when we celebrate the birth of our company and community's founder, we should remember his dedication and redouble our own. We should all ask ourselves, what part will we play in Hershey's long story of innovation, prosperity and goodness?