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Promoting Hershey
The Chocolate Bar, The Chocolate Town, The Chocolate King

Before the Hershey’s Milk Chocolate Bar debuted in 1900 at five cents, chocolate bars had been a luxury known only to those Americans who could afford imported “eating chocolate” from Europe. By 1906 Hershey’s chocolate bars were so popular, Milton Hershey proclaimed that Hershey dominated the market and redirected his promotional efforts away from consumer advertising. Raised in the Mennonite faith, Hershey identified with Mennonite principles that, in part, taught their followers to help others and to abhor self-promotion and obvious signs of commercial wealth. Thus, he focused on promotional strategies that conveyed deeper and more complex ideas to employees, consumers, and visitors about the value of quality, community, harmony, purity, and social compassion, which, in turn, reflected back upon the company, the brand, the town, and the man.

In 2011, Advertising Age reported that The Hershey Company, 111 years old, was ranked among the top 100 advertisers in the United States, having increased worldwide ad spending by $62.2 million over the previous year for total expenditures of $440.5 million, the bulk of which was devoted to television advertising. Yet some sixty-four years earlier, the same magazine ran a lengthy piece about how Hershey had no need for advertising. Between products sold directly to consumers and those sold to other businesses, such as creameries and confectioners, Hershey was producing “about one-third of all chocolate and cocoa products consumed in the United States” while the United States as a whole accounted for about 40 percent of the consumption of all such products worldwide. With an estimated combined value of more than $100 million at the time of this December 1947 story, then-chairman Percy Staples said the company was “no closer than ever to becoming an advertiser.”

When the Hershey’s Milk Chocolate Bar was introduced in America in 1900, the chocolate industry was concentrated on baking chocolate, with Boston-based Baker’s Chocolate Company the strong leader in this product line since 1780. Hershey was unique in that it was built on the business of, as W. Greg Rothman put it, “democratizing chocolate.” Until the Hershey’s Milk Chocolate Bar debuted in 1900 at a price of five cents, chocolate bars were a luxury known only to those Americans who could afford imported “eating chocolate” from Europe. By 1906 Milton Hershey proclaimed that Hershey’s chocolate dominated the eating chocolate market. The next year marked the debut of Hershey’s Kisses, followed a year later by Hershey’s Milk Chocolate with Almonds Bar. The company’s next big product launches of Mr. Goodbar and Hershey’s Syrup would not occur until 1925 and 1926, respectively, followed by Krackel (1938), Miniatures Chocolates (1939), and “more than a billion” ration bars for soldiers (1941-1945), according to The Hershey Company timeline. “If you were in a mile race,” Milton Hershey was quoted as saying, “and you were in good health
and feeling fine and going good, if a fellow didn’t start till you were three quarters of a mile round the track, it would not matter how fast he was, he could not beat you."

With no need for brand differentiation, then, Hershey concluded early on that money spent on consumer advertising could be put to better use in developing the product, the company, and the town in Pennsylvania. The product, Milton Hershey and his managers often said, sold itself. This strategic focus on the brand coupled with a rejection of consumer-based paid placement ads continued for more than sixty years.

Although on the face of it, redirecting monies from consumer advertising and into the company’s workplace and lifestyle infrastructure might appear to be simply a sound business move, Hershey had another, more personal reason for rejecting paid placement advertising. A grandson of a Mennonite bishop and son of a practicing Mennonite, Hershey identified with Mennonite principles that, in part, teach their followers to work for the good of others and to abhor self-promotion and obvious signs of commercial wealth. Blatant advertising of a commercial product to increase profits did not mesh with such beliefs. Of more benefit to Hershey, the man, and Hershey, the company, it may be these very principles that protected Hershey from the investigative journalism of the muckrakers that befell some of Hershey’s contemporaries in the first decade of the century.

Hershey operated when national businesses, particularly food processing companies such as Campbell’s, Nabisco, Gold Medal, and Baker’s, increasingly relied on placing national consumer advertising in newspapers and magazines. What makes Hershey, the Chocolate King, more significant is that he did just the opposite, eschewing paid-placement consumer advertising in favor of creatively promoting his utopian town of Hershey, Pennsylvania, which, indirectly, promoted his chocolate products. Although these initiatives also cost money, Hershey did not consider them to be “advertising” because they were not paid placements in media outlets. Influenced, in part, by his own Mennonite sensibility, these outreach initiatives generated outcomes Hershey valued: more consumers, employees, and visitors seeking combinations of pure, high-quality chocolate and a wholesome quality of work, life, and leisure.

The Hershey Company has been featured in books and articles about the chocolate industry and about Hershey programs and products. Topics have included its corporate history exhibits; its Teachers for West Africa Program, launched in 1962; its business history, such as Milton Hershey’s early obstacles to establishing his caramel company; its Cuban sugar plantations and the company’s fight against the U.S. sugar tariff; the Milton Hershey School Trust’s intention to sell its interest in the Hershey Company; and its modern financial management practices. The company
also has been featured in studies of product placement, often because of the famous use of Reese's Pieces in the 1982 film, *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial.* The Hershey Bar has even been employed as a teaching tool to explain phylogenetic relationships within evolutionary biology. What has not been examined is the history of the company's promotional efforts to understand how Hershey drew people to embrace the product, the company, and the town with little paid media placement even as advertising and America's consumer culture were on the rise.

The scholarly literature is largely bereft of historical works on Milton Hershey and his company perhaps because of the dearth of primary sources left by the man himself. With little formal education, Hershey wrote and signed few documents in his lifetime and left even fewer, and thus no archival collections of his papers are known to exist. Reporters writing about Hershey during his lifetime even commented on Hershey's noted abstinence from letter writing and signatures. Additionally, the promotional materials the Hershey Company produced and distributed over time were not fully documented along the way. While the archive contains a substantial number of early magazine ads, brochures, postcards, and other promotional material, it is currently impossible to directly correlate individual promotional items with sales figures. What does remain, however, is the opportunity to piece together the existing promotional pieces with information on intent gleaned from interviews of people associated with the company. These interviews comprise a voluminous collection and were conducted in the 1950s by Paul A.W. Wallace, who had been commissioned by the Milton Hershey School to write Hershey's biography. While the biography was never published, Wallace’s meticulous notes and transcripts provide a wealth of information about the company, its employees, the town, and Hershey himself.

The purpose of this study, then, is to examine the ways in which the Hershey Company's decidedly indirect approach to promoting the company, the town and, by association, the products themselves, closely aligned to traditions of Mennonite principles. The focus is on the years between 1900, when Hershey sold his caramel business to focus exclusively on chocolate, and 1945, the year of his death. Primary sources for this study include artifacts from the Hershey Community Archives, including the Wallace interviews that focus on the company's promotional efforts and promotional collateral, and news and trade publication articles written about Hershey and his company during this time period.

This study employed a multi-faceted approach using cultural-historical and narrative analysis as well as a layered reading and interpretation of the promotional materials produced by Hershey. Similar to the study conducted on Gold Medal and Pillsbury flours by the same authors, this method makes it possible to first identify emerging patterns in text, message structure, and image, and then to interpret the meaning of those themes "with an understanding of professional promotional tactics and methods of the time as well as relevant social and cultural historical context." This layered approach revealed the ways in which Hershey used elements of its company story in its promotional efforts over time to convey the larger meaning of the Hershey Company and its values.

Milton Snavely Hershey was born in 1857 in central Pennsylvania to a mother who was a practicing Reformed Mennonite and daughter of a Lancaster County Mennonite bishop, and to a Mennonite father who in the best of times was a dreamer of big ideas and, in the worst of times, a ne'er-do-well who could not support his family. When Hershey was twelve years old, his devoted and pragmatic mother urged him into apprenticeships first in the ice cream and then, soon after, the candy businesses. By 1872, he had learned the secret to making milk caramels that would have a long shelf life, and, during the 1876 Philadelphia Exposition, Hershey operated his own candy shop, supported and staffed in no small part by his mother and his aunt. Subsequent work led him to, among other places, the Smith Bros. in Poughkeepsie, New York, where he learned how to structure operations for low costs, including low wages, and New York City, where retail was moving toward a consumer orientation with production efficiency yielding higher quality and lower prices.

Other attempts at starting up businesses in Chicago and New York led to failure and indebtedness and, eventually, a move back to Lancaster, where Hershey's luck changed. Transportation, fuel, and a sound labor pool were just some of the factors he leveraged there, and by the 1890s, his Crystal A caramel company, later renamed the Lancaster Caramel Company, was producing premium brands in 450,000 square feet of factory space. In 1893, however, at the Chicago Exposition, Hershey watched a demonstration for the production of eating chocolate, from the roasting of the cocoa beans to the finished chocolate bar. Hershey purchased the equipment, determined to refocus his business on chocolate as a nutritious treat that, unlike the richness of caramels, could be eaten every day. "Eating chocolate" was not only hailed as a healthful product, but also as a virtuous one, having been endorsed by the temperance advocates in England as an alternative to alcohol. As a new industry, the production and sales of eating chocolate also presented opportunities to businessmen who might otherwise have been shunned by the Protestant mainstream. Indeed, what might be considered Hershey's English counterpart, albeit one that had a longer history, was the Quaker company Cadbury. Amid a going concern of coffee and tea, John Cadbury shifted into the cocoa business in 1831 but was unsuccessful in capturing the elite cocoa consumer market. In 1865, his sons saved the company by building on the cocoa product line until their launch of the Dairy Milk bar in 1905. The bar was the first eating chocolate to come out of the Cadburys' own utopian company town in Bournville, England, which they began building in 1879.
The Dairy Milk bar’s debut also coincided with Hershey’s own success. Six years after selling his caramel company for $1 million, Hershey had $1.2 million in sales, with the Hershey’s Milk Chocolate Bar dominating the U.S. market at a nickel each. A February 1906 ad in the trade publication *Confectioners’ Journal* proclaimed, “There is more of Hershey’s Milk Chocolate sold than all other domestic brands combined.” By that time, too, Hershey had moved his operations to a location fifteen miles east of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in Derry Church, Lancaster County. Soon the town itself, a chocolate utopia with Hershey’s Kisses topping the streetlamps, chocolate wafting through the air, and happy cows dotting the countryside to provide pure, fresh milk for the company’s distinctive creamy chocolate products, was well under way.

Milton Hershey, as man and industrial leader, came of age in the midst of great societal shifts in the United States, as reformers began to challenge the laissez-faire model of self-determination and called for policy regulation informed by the domestic sphere. The so-called robber barons of the Gilded Age, such as the Vanderbilts, John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and J.P. Morgan, immersed in the spoils of capitalism, would soon be prosecuted in the court of public opinion by turn-of-the-century muckrakers. Unlikely many of those captains of industry, however, Hershey was spared and even celebrated. He conformed to a profile of many Mennonite businessmen who were financially successful often by engaging in agricultural enterprises, businesses that directly or indirectly relied upon agricultural resources for their product or service, such as poultry processing and trucking. Or, in Hershey’s case, dairy. No less of an industrial magnate than his counterparts, Hershey focused on quality, efficiency, and economies of scale, lessons he had learned in the years leading up to the chocolate business. Yet, in contrast to those who exploited the lands and their workers to build their oil, steel, and railway empires, for example, Hershey purchased the land in Lancaster County to fulfill his vision of a small town in the countryside: efficient and harmonious, with fresh air and good, clean living for the workers and their families. “There was nothing malicious about him,” according to one interview subject not fully identified in the Wallace collection. “He liked people, people here—not general humanity. He was not like the Rockefellers or the Texas oilmen, who have endowed universities for research, so that all humanity will benefit. Hershey benefitted only this place here.”

Hershey was guided by the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments. He was a “humanist with a little religious bias,” according to a minister of the time. His approach to faith “was a cold, ethical thing without divine reference.” As a boy, he attended church with his mother, and those values became ingrained in him; however, he did not consider himself a practicing believer. Later, as the namesake and symbol for the brand, the company, and the town, Hershey did not single out one church to attend because the roles of faith in Mennonite business is still not clear, but, according to sociologist Calvin Redekop, a Mennonite and a scholar in Mennonite history and practice, four generalizations can be made about the factors contributing to Mennonites’ success in business: stewardship, the idea that Mennonites are “trustees and caretakers of their God-given blessings”; hard work; community-focused emphasis; and individual economic security. In building Hershey, Pennsylvania, Milton Hershey realized ideals of pastoral living, harkening to an agrarian lifestyle that prized family and community. In time, those sensibilities extended to the product, the brand, and the company, even to Hershey himself.

In the beginning, while building the Lancaster Caramel Company and again in the early years of the Hershey Chocolate Company, Hershey did, despite later claims to the contrary, engage in advertising. The archival sources tended to use “advertising” to refer to any promotional effort; however, in examining the evidence, it was clear that Hershey’s foray into paid media placement largely concerned the trade press whereas outreach to consumers consisted of promotional efforts more closely associated with the public relations function, such as news releases, postcards, posters, premiums, and recipe books. It was also clear that although Hershey did not like spending for paid placement, he nevertheless understood its importance as he launched his chocolate enterprise. One contemporary recalled, for example, that in 1901, “the business was on the increase because of the growth of population and because of advertising propaganda,
in which field Hershey was a leader.\footnote{Another confirmed that Hershey was well aware of the value of these advertising efforts.\footnote{For paid media advertising placements, then, Hershey relied heavily on business-to-business trade journals. Ads used by the Lancaster Caramel Company in the decade before Hershey sold it provided templates for Hershey’s later use in advertising his chocolate company. \textit{Confectioners’ Journal} ads for Lancaster Caramel, for example, were text-heavy and mostly announced the goods and prices for sale.}}\footnote{Very few used illustrations, but simply made concise claims about the caramels in various sizes of typeface. In an 1893 advertisement, the company asserted, “We are the largest producers of caramels in this country.” The ad continued that the company operated its own creameries, made all of its own boxes on the premises, had the latest machinery, including specially adapted and patented improvements of its own design, and provided “the best quality for the least money” since the factory was in “one of the finest dairy districts.” Another ad featured large line drawings of four factories and office buildings of Lancaster Caramel, a technique common at the time to show the prosperity and magnitude of a company. Additionally, many of Hershey’s ads in \textit{Confectioners’ Journal} proclaimed, “Our Products are all Warranted Absolutely Pure.”\footnote{These messages and images that conveyed self-sufficiency, purity tied to proximity of dairies and ingredients, technology, and industrial power were later echoed in similar advertisements for the Hershey Chocolate Company. For example, purity, according to Milton Hershey in a 1906 ad for the Hershey Chocolate Company, was not simply a matter of not adding foreign substances to a product, but also of starting with the purest ingredients available. Hershey told readers that they “should not only consider the purity of the goods, but also the quality of the raw materials from which they are made and the reputation of the manufacturer who guarantees them.” That is, it was not only Hershey’s chocolate that was unmatched in quality, but also its production process and, by extension, the Hershey Chocolate Company itself. The most common early Hershey Chocolate Company ads in the \textit{Confectioners’ Journal} were simple statements of goods and, occasionally, prices. These ads touted some combination of Hershey’s chocolate and vanilla sweet coatings, chocolate soda syrup, powdered chocolate (cocoa), and individual chocolate candies. The ads, in fact, read more like a menu of items available and used little persuasive language. Most concluded with a simple request for merchants to inquire for more information if interested. After 1906, even these declined dramatically. Ads in \textit{Confectioners’ Journal} dropped in size from full page to half or quarter pages. Each of these ads, instead of promoting a number of Hershey products, focused on one product. However, once Hershey launched his Hershey, Pennsylvania, operations, the advertising clearly changed its focus from simple product announcements to tying the quality of the chocolate product to its new manufacturing facility. A 1904 ad in \textit{Confectioners’ Journal} began with a large question mark, followed by a question to the reader asking, “Did you ever stop to think that the manufacturer operating the largest and best equipped plant in the world, erected for the specific purpose for which it is employed, is in a position to offer you BETTER GOODS for the SAME MONEY, or THE SAME GOODS for LESS MONEY than any other house having a limited capacity and meager equipment?” In fact, claimed a 1906 ad, while its competitors made “strenuous efforts” to attract business through special deals and advertising, Hershey instead had trouble keeping up with demand for its high-quality product manufactured in “the largest and most complete}}\footnote{This image of happy cows contentedly grazing in lush Pennsylvania fields was one of the many “bar cards” the Hershey Company wrapped inside its chocolate bars between 1909 and 1918 to convey messages about the purity and quality of the product, the company, and the town. Doubling as postcards, the bar cards functioned on a word-of-mouth principle: Hershey consumers could access the promotional card only after opening the bar wrapper. By sharing the card, consumers spread the company’s messages. Image courtesy of Hershey Community Archives, Hershey, Pennsylvania.}
plant of its kind in the World."52 Not only was the factory large but also, readers were assured, it was so clean, "You could eat off the floor without fear," which, of course, resulted in a more pure finished product.53 As the rapidly increasing concern over food purity punctuated by the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 caused a shift in advertising messages across the nation,54 Hershey explained to readers that the tranquil Pennsylvania rolling hills provided the perfect environment for producing wholesome and nutritious chocolate. Quite simply, pure, clean healthy cows produced pure, clean healthy milk, which, in turn, produced pure, clean healthy chocolate. In a small brochure distributed in the first decade of 1900, Hershey explained this in detail.

Surrounded by seven hundred acres of finest grazing land, famed throughout the world for its agricultural richness, and owned exclusively by the Hershey Chocolate Company, is located their extensive works . . . especially erected for the manufacture of milk chocolate. Maintained by the company are herds of Alderney cattle, who thrive abundantly on this choice pasture where they may also drink the pure, unpolluted water from the natural springs which plentifully abound. Thus the rich, fresh milk entering into Hershey Milk Chocolate is absolutely free from dust, soot and other impurities practically impossible to provide against in factories located in the heart of thickly populated cities.55

These early years of trade advertisements also corresponded with some attempts at outdoor consumer advertising.56 One employee remembered that Milton Hershey had "a big sign here in New York on the way to Harlem, at the turn, 110th Street: 'HERSHEY'S MILK CHOCOLATE.' He spent a lot of money on advertising in his younger years. Afterwards he didn't need to."57 Another recalled, "He had an office on West Broadway and used billboards all over New York. This was while he was in Lancaster."58 And still another described "billboards all over town (New York): white on blue background, with white letters: 'Hershey Chocolate: a Food to Eat; Hershey Cocoa: a Food to Drink.'"59

As Hershey turned away from paid-placement advertising, he created his own recipe for promotion that included controlled publications, such as brochures, pamphlets, news releases, promotional premiums, and a strong sales force. In 1906, for example, Hershey offered merchants a novelty of "mail pouches" filled with Hershey milk chocolate wafers. These "mail pouches" were nestled in "mail cars" a shop owner could sit on the counter.60 It was not uncommon for businesses during this time to rely on their own sales forces and their distributors to promote a product, especially when consumers were already familiar with it.61 In Hershey's case, however, lessons learned from his successful caramel business about the power of personal contact drove his decisions about promotions in his new chocolate enterprise. In 1955, John C. McClain recalled Hershey telling him that the "only way to establish a successful business is personal contact." He had forty to a hundred men on the road. When he started the chocolate business, he wanted men to call on the grocery trade, contact them every ten days if possible. The caramel business contacted their clients once a month or two months. That was because he was pushing the chocolate business. He had proved the principle in the caramel business. Instead of putting a million in advertising, as Baker did, he put so many more men on the road."62 A Hershey employee also noted that some of those monies not spent on consumer advertising were channeled into providing deeper dealer discounts.63

Although it was not until 1934 that Hershey hired Alexander Stoddart to be the company's first full-time publicity representative for Hershey Park, the Hershey Company began promoting the town from the start. As the town of Hershey grew, the company shifted to the more complex layers of promotional messages and imagery that were designed to attract to the Chocolate Town potential employees and their families looking for a workplace and quality of life, and then, later, visitors seeking a wholesome vacation destination. Such promotional efforts included booklets, recipes, and news releases, which often read like brochure copy. The theme of purity continued, however, in the context of product ingredients, manufacturing, or the larger environment of Hershey in which the plant and its workers resided, as did references to the Mennonite traditions of harmony, community, hard work, and self-sufficiency.

Employees recalled that these connections among Mennonite values, purity, the town of Hershey, and Hershey chocolate were intentional. One remembered that, in 1905, Hershey established Hershey Park because 'he wanted to have the public come to Hershey. He wanted to make the people want to come and work in this town.' He did not want to charge a lot; he wanted 'to build up a good town.'"

A cornerstone of that foundation was the promotional
material that Hershey produced in his own printing plant, such as a series of booklets and bar cards that told the story of the town and the company.68 The booklets, which ranged from postcard- to letter-size, featured images with some text that explained how chocolate was discovered, how it was processed in Hershey, and how the rich agricultural land and pure air and water contributed to the purity of the product. They also highlighted the buildings, the entertainment, and factories of Hershey. Readers were given to understand that the quality of the Hershey chocolate product was directly tied to the quality of the town of Hershey. A small, pocket-size booklet distributed to merchants to give to customers at the end of the first decade of 1900, for example, not only reinforced Milton Hershey's focus on personal sales contact, but also touted Hershey's manufacturing process, which because it was “performed entirely by the use of modern hydraulic presses of enormous power, the purity, palatability and highest nutritive qualities of the beans are thus retained. Alkalines or chemicals—which by some manufacturers are used as an economical method of eliminating the indigestible substances—have a tendency to destroy much of the flavor inherent to good cocoa.”69 And, in another brochure, shaped like a cocoa pod, Hershey attempted to explain why Hershey chocolate and cocoa were superior to other manufacturers' products. According to the booklet, “the principle reason” Hershey's chocolate was superior was that it used “only the very best and purest materials in the manufacture of all products.”70 A booklet that reached out to mothers, in particular, assured them, “[T]here is nothing more healthful or nourishing than good Cocoa. Its food value cannot be excelled for either young or old. Why injure the child's health with tea or coffee when Cocoa more than satisfies, builds up the tissues, or is in other words 'A FOOD TO DRINK.’”71 That same booklet captured the health, purity, and wholesomeness of the product and incorporated messages Hershey promoted about both the town and, by association, the chocolate, in an adaptation of a popular song of the time:

A beautiful town in a valley lay,  
Where a lot of people night and day  
Make Hershey's Chocolate and Cocoa  
As clean and pure as the falling snow.  
And the green grass grew all around, all around,  
And the green grass grew all around. 

The beautiful cows in the pasture fed,  
Clean as could be from their tails to their head.  
Making pure milk early and late  
For making Hershey's Cocoa and Chocolate.  
And the green grass grew all around, all around.  
And the green grass grew all around. 

A little child said to her mother dear,  
'Cocoa and Chocolate are healthful, I hear.'  
'Yes,' said her mother, 'if they're pure and fresh.'  
Said the child, 'Well, that means Hershey's I guess.'

For the green grass grew all around, all around.  
For the green grass grew all around.72

This series of booklets, repeating themes of sanitary and efficient chocolate production, nutritional qualities, and the wholesome, pastoral setting of the town of Hershey, continued until well after World War II.

It was through what Hershey called the “bar cards” that the most creative tie between the chocolate product and the Chocolate Town was created. Hershey placed small postcards inside the wrappers of each bar of chocolate between 1909 and 1922. Of the sixty-two bar cards remaining in the archives, all but three of them portrayed scenes from the town of Hershey. Many of these were scenes of the Hershey farms, complete with happy, grazing cows under the sun. Others were of town buildings such as the Open Air Theatre in Hershey Park, the Golf Club House, the Hershey Industrial School, and the Hershey Power Plant. And, of course, there were scenes of the factory itself nestled in the rolling Pennsylvania hills. Leisure scenes were also common, depicting men and women picnicking in the park, families playing in the pool, women floating down a river in row boats, and girls with light-colored dresses and big hair bows swinging on rope ladders. The beauty of these bar cards, from a promotional standpoint, was that consumers could use them only after opening a Hershey Bar, essentially providing a personal endorsement, then, of both the product and the town when they mailed the cards to friends and family. That is, the consumer could not see or access the promotional item until after the purchase had been made, reinforcing Hershey's rejection of paid, placed advertising in lieu of, in this case, word of mouth, to generate interest in the town itself.

A constant backdrop to the company's promotional strategies was the image of Milton Hershey as the Chocolate King, a kindly candy maker. He did not actively cultivate this perception. In fact, his affinity for travel, his devotion to his wife, Catherine Sweeney Hershey, who suffered ill health until her death in 1915, and his development and oversight of the company's sugar plantation operations in Cuba actually meant that he was not often available to reporters.73 Nevertheless, one topic dear to Hershey's heart was the Hershey Industrial School, or Orphan's Home, that he and Catherine Hershey founded in 1909. To the Mennonites, Calvin Redekop explained, “social compassion” is “an expected role behavior.”74 Although not without its outside critics, the Orphan's Home encapsulated that sentiment. It was established for orphan boys, whom Hershey considered to be boys who might be parentless or have one parent (usually a mother) who was unable to care for them. Girls, explained Hershey, were more easily adoptable, so he and his wife wanted to reach out to boys.75 Milton Hershey was adamant that the boys not be used for paid placement advertising, however.76 Hershey told Fortune in 1934 that "to have advertised that to the world would have seemed like . . . telling the people to eat more chocolate to aid the orphans and my competitors . . . would have said I was taking advantage of them."77
In 1918, Hershey endowed the school with a trust worth $60 million, the bulk of his personal fortune, a move that effectively transferred ownership of the company as well. The story did not break, however, until 1923, when New York Times reporter James C. Young interviewed Hershey about his decision. In addition to explaining the school and its mission, Young also devoted much of the story to Hershey himself, “short, stout, ruddy-faced, gray-haired, with an easy smile,” “old-fashioned,” his “vigor and alertness” defying his sixty-six years. Young concluded that much good could be said of the town and school and the benefit to the boys, “but, best of all, think of an orphan boy having for his guardian a man who will give him as much chocolate as he can eat.” Subsequent coverage of the trust endowment appeared during this time in the Wall Street Journal, the Herald of Gospel Liberty, Current Opinion, McClure’s, and the Chicago Defender, an African-American newspaper that criticized Hershey for limiting his selection criteria to poor white boys. A few years later, when the company went public, the story re-surfaced in Success Magazine, in another New York Times story in which Milton Hershey’s School endowment was favorably compared to the philanthropic works of the Rockefellers, Mrs. Russell Sage, James B. Duke, Julius Rosenwald, and Carnegie, and in Fortune, which also included criticism of the selection criteria and concerns regarding the program’s perpetuity and lack of experts in foundations and education. Although the stories focused on Hershey, the man and the town, the connections to the Hershey chocolate products were clear.

Another prominent story about the company and its business decisions included the Hershey Chocolate Company’s decision to forgo $1 million in profits in the depth of the Depression. Hershey opted, instead, to benefit the consumer by providing a larger candy bar at the same price of five cents, but made with the same, now less expensive, ingredients. Concern over its dealers also led the company to this decision. Reporter Chapin Hoskins noted that the Hershey company explained it this way: “The company has built up a fortunate position in the trade, and it would certainly be foolish to destroy it during the present period, through avarice.” Hoskins also reminded readers about Milton Hershey—the man and his investment in the town: “They are the direct expression of the faith and generosity of an unusual business personality.” To forgo $1 million, Hoskins concluded, “seems to me a much more striking expression of the spirit which appears to move all the Hershey undertakings. Regardless of what happens later, it stands out as one of the unique business achievements of the present time.”

Hershey made the national news again, however, when John Lewis’s then-named Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) came to Hershey in early 1937 and founded a chapter of the United Chocolate Workers of America. The workers organized a sit-down strike April 2, shutting down operations, which hurt local dairy farmers whose coffers and herds had benefited from the company. Twelve-hundred Hershey workers participated that day and returned again April 6. Each day the plant was closed meant that 800,000 pounds of milk went unused and that farmers lost $10,000. Farmers, independent workers, and their supporters, numbering 5,000, marched into town that night and gave the strikers until 1 p.m. to disband. The strikers decided to comply at the last minute, but by that time it was too late. The farmers stormed the plant and attacked the strikers, forcing them “to run a gauntlet of two rows of farmers and independents who struck and slashed at them and kicked them on their way past.” The crisis lasted a week but did not involve police, and there was some feeling that Hershey’s management had not only lent some support to the farmers but had also not stepped in to stop the violence.

A vote called by the National Labor Relations Board rejected the CIO two to one, and the company considered itself “vindicated.” Despite that victory, however, the strike permanently ended Hershey’s “utopian innocence.”

While the 1937 sit-down strike appears to contradict Hershey’s image as the kindly Chocolate Man, in truth, most people in the area were still strongly loyal to him during the strike and opposed it at the time. The violence tied to the strike was related to the townspeople and farmers who tried to break it up. Although, by the time of the strike, Hershey had long since passed on the company’s privately held status, which did not change until 1927. Another reason concerned his Mennonite background, the company’s publicly taken activities, the media. Nevertheless, his image and persona as the Chocolate King, the stories that did appear in the national news reflected an inextricable and largely positively portrayed tie connecting Hershey the man, the product, the company, and the town, regardless of Hershey’s official position in the company at the time.
Mennonites have been characterized as being frugal, shrewd, clanish, deferential, authoritarian, covertly humorous and covertly emotionally expressive, and practical. Milton Hershey was alternately characterized as disdainful of others, intimidating, dismissive, egotistical, energetic, tenacious, simple (i.e., leading a life of simplicity), lonely, shrewd, impatient, hot-tempered, patient, thoughtful, tidy, and humorous (although he did not tell jokes or appreciate word play or others’ attempts at humor). He would always accept blame if faced with his own failure; he did not worry about things; and he loved children.

Still, Hershey was also an industrialist of his time, a captain of industry, albeit one cut from a slightly different cloth. One person interviewed by Wallace commented, for example, that Hershey “once said he knew how to make money; hence, he insisted on making it for the good of the people, who seemingly did not know how to make money.” And, in the aftermath of the strike, another recalled that Hershey “thought the strike gave him good advertising. ‘Do you realize [sic] how much it would have cost me? I got between $500,000 and a million dollars free advertising on that strike.’ That was afterwards.” Still, recalled another, beyond his philanthropy, Hershey was always “thinking of the people who help to build this town. Take all the things he did, outside of the school itself, practically all the other things were done for the people who worked with him. He had two motives: provide education, and provide for the people who worked for him. He was loyal to his people. He was hurt very deeply when they had the sit-down strike.”

Milton Hershey founded his company in the midst of rising consumerism and consumer activism. Given his immediate, runaway success in the eating chocolate market, however, he did not focus on national consumer advertising as did most national food manufacturers of the time. Nor did he conform to a model of contemporary industrial company towns. Instead, his approach was to eschew paid placement in consumer media for promotional strategies that conveyed deeper and more complex ideas to employees, consumers, and visitors about the value of quality, community, harmony, purity, and social compassion, which, in turn, reflected well upon the company, the brand, the town, and the man. The quality of the product, he said, spoke for itself; so he focused on the values behind it, combining Mennonite principles shared by his family, his employees, and the surrounding communities with state-of-the-art tools of the time to create efficiency and economy and to uniquely position the production and promotion of chocolate and the Chocolate Town. That is, by examining archival evidence overlaid with trade and mainstream press coverage, this article presents evidence of Hershey’s intention to employ public relations over advertising and to do so in a framework informed by the values of a faith he honored but did not embrace.

NOTES

1 Bradley Johnson, “100 Leading National Advertisers,” Advertising Age, June 20, 2011, 8. The list focuses on “measured media” per Kantar Media, WPP, as opposed to “unmeasured” (e.g., social media) as estimated by Ad Age.


3 Hughes, “Never Felt Need to Advertise.” 31. Staples was Milton Hershey’s hand-picked successor, groomed during his twenty-five years at the company’s sugar plant operations in Cuba to continue Milton Hershey’s work upon the founder’s death in 1945 at age eighty-eight. The Havana operations demanded much of the same invention that Hershey, Pennsylvania, did, including building a railway, a town for employees and their families, and state-of-the-art plant facilities, such as the “largest sugar refinery in Cuba.” See also Thomas R. Winpenny, “Milton S. Hershey Ventures into Cuban Sugar,” Pennsylvania History 62, no. 4 (1995): 491-502.

4 Up to this point, consumer chocolate manufacturing in the United States focused on cocoa for drinking and cocoa and bar chocolate for baking.


6 Hershey did not consider all chocolate companies to be his competition, only those that made chocolate bars. So it was, for example, that Hershey began supplying chocolate coatings to many other candy concerns, including Reese and York, which the company later acquired.


8 Milton S. Hershey on advertising. Box 11, F26: On advertising from Wm. Kishpaugh, March 8, 1955 [photocopy of typewritten notes], Wallace Research Collection, Hershey Community Archives, Accession #97004, Box 11, Unit 199, Shelf 6.9A. Sources cited in this study from the Wallace collection and from other sources within the Hershey Community Archives, in Hershey, Pennsylvania, adhere to the style requested by the archives.

9 Card #25: from Mike Harber [spelling unclear] Oct. 9, 1954; Card #26: from A.T. Heilman, Oct. 16, 1953, Wallace Research Collection, Hershey Community Archives, Accession #97004, Box B13, Unit 199, Shelf 7.3A.


15 The Hershey Company retained few financial records of promotional efforts.
while Milton Hershey was alive. In fact, not until the company went public in 1927 do even intermittent financial records appear for the company as a whole.

Wallace had a doctoral degree in English from the University of Toronto and, for many years, chaired the English department at Lebanon Valley College and served as the editor of "Pennsylvania History" for the Pennsylvania Historical Association. He never published the Hershey biography, although some of his findings appeared in a children's book, Katherine Shippen and Paul Wallace, Milton S. Hershey (New York: Random House, 1959). See "Biographical Note" in the Paul Wallace Research Collection, 1700-1974, Hershey Community Archives. Wallace's notes consist of typed and handwritten index cards and typed transcripts of interviews. His note cards are intact and remain sorted in the same categories he established. Together, the notes and transcripts comprise ten cubic feet in the archive. As noted above, citations in this study from the Wallace collection employ the reference format he used, which was not consistent throughout his notes.

17. To parallel the external communication efforts that paid placement advertising would have otherwise addressed, this study focuses on external pieces. Internal messages, while probably best studied via the lens of the tightly controlled company organ, Hershey News, are beyond the scope of this study.


20. D'Antonio, Hershey, 25-45. The secret, according to D'Antonio, was to cook the milk long enough and slowly enough to eliminate the water and bacteria. Later, Hershey would perfect this system to include higher milk content. The result was a creamier caramel that wouldn't stick to the teeth and that appealed to people concerned about wholesome foods. (p. 55).

21. Ibid., 45-52.

22. Ibid., 58-59.

23. Ibid., 66-67. The exhibit was by J. M. Lehmann of Dresden.

24. Ibid., 89-91.

25. Ibid., 68. Seventh-day Adventists, Mennonites, and Quakers were included here. See also Cadbury, Chocolate Wars. In describing the brothers' approach to business, Cadbury explained, "Quaker idealism lay at the very heart of their business goals" (p. 42).

26. Bradley, Cadbury's Purple Reign, 4-52.

27. See, for example, Bradley, Cadbury's Purple Reign; and Cadbury, Chocolate Wars.


29. "There is more of Hershey's Milk Chocolate sold than all other domestic brands combined," Confectioners' Journal, February 1906. Note: Hershey Community archivists pulled and photocopied these artifacts from the Library of Congress to include them as part of their collection for visiting scholars. Not all images, however, are documented with complete source citations, so the references here include as much information as could be determined for each image.

30. Hershey began building in 1903. One year later, the first homes were built—complete with central heating, indoor plumbing, and electricity, which were "luxuries" to many of the families who bought them. By 1905, the factory was fully operational. See D'Antonio, Hershey, 116-19.


33. Card #222: from Black [no first name, possibly Bert], n.d. Wallace Research Collection, Hershey Community Archives, Accession #97004, Box B13, Unit 199, Shelf 7.3A.

34. Box 11, F15: Milton Hershey – Religion. From Rev. Herbert Miller, Nov. 24, 1954 [typewritten notes]. Wallace Research Collection, Hershey Community Archives, Accession #97004, Box B13, Unit 199, Shelf 6.9A.

35. Box 11, F15: Milton Hershey – Religion. From Dr. H. H. Hofstetter, Oct. 1, 1954 [typewritten notes]; From Sam Clark, Jan. 27, 1955 [photocopy of teletype-looking notes]. Wallace Research Collection, Hershey Community Archives, Accession #97004, Box B13, Unit 199, Shelf 7.3A.


43. See, for example, "Hershey's Cocoa," Confectioners' Journal, January 1911; "Hershey's Almond Milk Chocolate, Confectioners' Journal, April 1911; "More Sold Than All Other Makers Combined," Confectioners' Journal, September 1911; "Hershey's Cocoa," Confectioners' Journal, January 1914; and "Hershey's Milk Chocolate Pyramids," Confectioners' Journal, February 1914.

44. "Confectioners' Journal, 1904. The same ad ran repeatedly for the next few years.


47. The Food and Drug Administration was created in 1930.

48. "Hershey Chocolate Bar" booklet, n.d. Hershey Community Archives, box B11, Folder 2. Note: The booklets and brochures are designated by the Hershey Community archivists as having been produced in the early years of the Hershey Chocolate Company. It was possible to independently validate that time period using references within the copy to products, town features, or broader cultural contexts.

49. Notes from the archives are limited to some comments about Hershey's advertising presence in New York City; however, the company is not certain of the duration or of the penetration of this outdoor advertising initiative.


51. Card #33: from Clayton Snavely, June 28, 1954. Wallace Research Collection, Hershey Community Archives, Accession #97004, Box B13, Unit 199, Shelf 7.3A.
corporate cause marketing and social responsibility initiatives. Yet, in another indication of Hershey's own distinction between advertising and promotion, photos of himself with the boys and photos of the boys at school did appear on bar cards and in the press.

Young, “Hershey, Unique Philanthropist.” No evidence has been found to indicate the reason for the delay. Hershey Chocolate did not go public until 1927, though, so it is possible that the endowment had been considered a private, internal financial decision at that point.


88 Hoskins, “Why We Passed Up a Million in Profits,” 8.


90 Bongartz, “The Chocolate Camelot.”


92 D’Antonio, Hershey, 220. As the company grew, it also grew in diversity, no longer simply reflecting the Amish and Mennonite cultures of the surrounding communities, but the broader spectrum of American industry at that time. The strike, then, according to D’Antonio, was also a symptom of anti-immigration sentiment.

93 Redekop, Mennonite Society, 100-1. He explained that Mennonites and non-Mennonites alike would agree with those “sterotypes” and explained that Mennonites’ humor and expressions of emotions and ideologies are often manifest within the community, leading outsiders to incorrectly conclude that Mennonites are “sombre” and “unemotional.” According to Redekop, deference to others comes from Gelassenheit, which also entails deference to God’s will.

94 See file cards under “Anecdotes” and “Character.” Wallace Research Collection, Hershey Community Archives, Accession #97004, Box B13, Unit 199, Shelf 7.3A.

95 Card #406: From Wallace notes on Breidenstine, Questionnaire. Wallace Research Collection, Hershey Community Archives, Accession #97004, Box B13, Unit 199, Shelf 7.3A.

96 Card #395: From Mike Huber [unclear handwriting], Oct. 9, 1954. Wallace Research Collection, Hershey Community Archives, Accession #97004, Box B13, Unit 199, Shelf 7.3A.

97 See, for example, “M.S. Hershey, Almost 81, Tells Intimate Details of Life’s Aims and Achievements,” Special to the Harrisburg Evening News, Sept. 7, 1938. Hershey was quoted in this article as saying, “I could have very easily disturbed real estate holdings and values in the towns close by, by building—as have others who started an industrial town—a house for every employe [sic] and requesting the employe [sic] to live therein.”