

# A bite of America

*A short story of Heath, the candy bar that served—and saved—America*

By Rose Logrosso

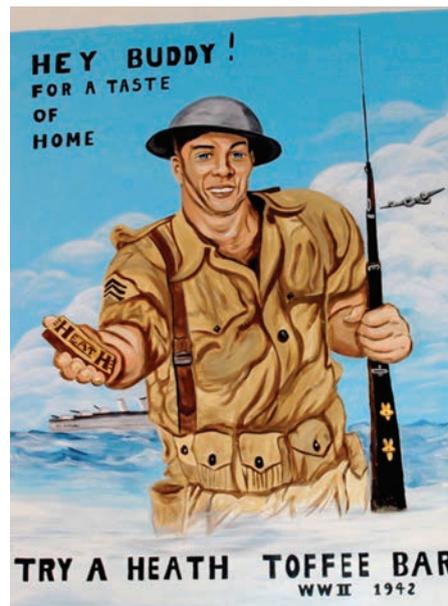
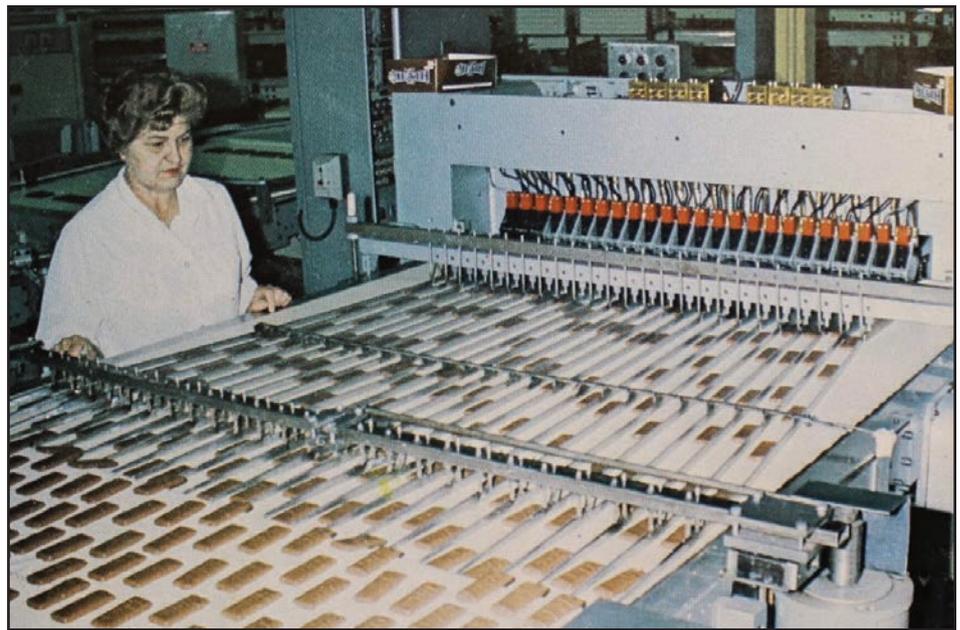
On December 31, 1931, the first Heath bar was created in a confectionary on the square of the small town of Robinson, Illinois. The Heath brothers, Everett and Bayard, had been given the confectionary by their father, L.S. Heath. The confectionary had already acquired an admirable reputation by serving local customers as well as businessmen connected with the oil boom, which had begun in Crawford County in the early 1900s. A Robinson native, James Jones, author of novels such as *From Here To Eternity* and *The Thin Red Line*, would likely have frequented the little store in his younger years. Burl Ives of Jasper County was near enough to visit for sweet treats on occasion.



During WWII, by way of a federal contract, Heath bars were given to the soldiers out in the field and truly appreciated. The complaint from the soldiers had been that regular chocolate bars would be rendered non-edible due to the heat and wear and tear in their packs. Heath bars, in contrast, fared better due to the toffee center. When the troops returned home, they missed their Heath bars.

In response, their demands were met, ensuring further success for the company from post war years to today.

As popularity of the Heath company products grew, it became necessary to move to a larger facility.



Heath was bought out in later years by the Leaf Company and is now owned by the Hershey Company. Mind you, the Robinson factory is the only site where the Heath bar is made. Unfortunately however, the packaging only states: Hershey, PA.

Though Veterans Day is behind us, I wanted to clarify the origins of the Heath bar, because Robinson is my neck of the woods. I am from the neighboring county of Jasper where Newton is the county seat and has the only high school. This area of Illinois is one that has been economically depressed for years. It is made up of rural small towns with businesses greatly dependent upon the farming industry. Many young people who grew up there are not

coming back to raise families. My high school, which was bursting at the seams in my day, is now split between high school and junior high.

I am proud of my hometown area, which provided me with deep roots to get me through the rough winds that are a part of living. It makes me sad to see the changes in the area. People are trying to make the best of their situations. They are not ones to give up easily. Most of them are descended from immigrants who were not ready to give up either and sought hope in coming to America. Perseverance is in our blood. All over America there are similar scenarios.

I happened across this poster, which hangs in the original store on the square in Robinson where the Heath brothers began their endeavor. I feel that it is still worth acknowledging our Veterans, who came from various backgrounds and lifestyles. There are many from our area, who left their farms temporarily or permanently to serve their country. They should be acknowledged beyond one day a year. I think this poster is really cool! I love old advertisements!

Escaping from the politics and turbulence of our time, it is gratifying to bite into a Heath bar knowing that it had a patriotic cause and led to a small town business success. Yum! 

*Rose Logrosso of Springfield is a registered nurse who knows a good candy bar when she eats one.*

