

A Sweet Legacy



**McKeesport Candy Co.
and CandyFavorites.com
near a centennial of
service, innovation
and a commitment to
excellence.**

BY NICOLE TAFE

Downtown McKeesport is home to a local hidden gem, McKeesport Candy Co., with the distinct honor of being North America's oldest wholesale candy company.

Its roots trace back over a century, originating as Keystone Kandy before Ernest Prince and Max Mullen—brothers-in-law with independent candy businesses—merged their visions to create McKeesport Candy Co. in 1927 officially.

Remarkably, the company continues to operate from its original location, where tradition and innovation have continued through the years. For decades, Prince, Mullen, and their sons Gerald Prince and Sid Mullen steered the company with an unwavering commitment to service.

Today, McKeesport Candy Co. remains privately owned, and Jerry



Prince's son, Jon Prince, is carrying on the torch. Prince also owns and operates CandyFavorites.com, a separate but complementary entity.

From the onset, McKeesport Candy Co. has distinguished itself as a service-focused enterprise.

"'Candy is what we sell, but service is what we deliver' has been one of the company's mottos," says Prince. Over time, it has evolved into a boutique supplier, specializing in hard-to-find retro candies and providing highly personalized support to large and small corporations.

The company's pioneering efforts included being the first to offer private-label bagged candy called Todd's—now sold nationwide under the CandyFavorites label. A dedication to quality over quantity underscores its role as a medium-sized wholesaler

dedicated to unique offerings.

"I had to make a conscious decision as to whether to become a large company or maintain a more manageable size. To maintain the tradition of quality that has guided our company for nine decades, I decided to focus on quality rather than quantity, and thus we created a model that allowed us to maintain our goal of providing the best customer service," explains Prince. "I guess for us, bigger wasn't better—but the model worked!"

The company's ability to adapt has also been central to its longevity.

Embracing the digital age early, Jon Prince launched McKandy.com, whose name paid homage to the original company founded by his grandfather. Then he changed the name to CandyFavorites.com, becoming the first online candy supplier long before Internet access was part of our everyday life. The vision extended globally, as the company became the first American candy exporter to the United Kingdom.

Today, it ships to all 50 states and worldwide, continuously refining the website to not only sell candy but also serve as an educational tribute to the American candy industry.

With a candy warehouse spanning an entire city block, McKeesport Candy Co. boasts the largest selection of confections in the region. Every item in the wholesale division is also available online, allowing customers to explore a diverse inventory that caters to every sweet tooth.

Beyond business success, McKeesport Candy Co. has been deeply rooted in the local Mon Valley community. It has consistently hired locally and maintained a loyal cash-and-carry clientele. Many families have worked for the company across generations—reflecting its strong community ties—and many customers have been visiting the warehouse for decades!

For 15 years, McKeesport Candy Co. operated a retail store, The Candy Tree, at Monroeville Mall. Located near the iconic ice skating rink, the store gained pop-culture fame by appearing in George Romero's "Dawn of the Dead." The store closed by the '90s, a few years after the rink closed.

As McKeesport Candy Co. nears its 100th anniversary, the focus remains on maintaining its rich heritage while continuing to embrace technological advancements. In 2024, the website had a major technical and stylistic overhaul, using archival candy and company photographs, making it one of the most advanced and visually appealing online candy stores. Plans for a centennial celebration are in the works to honor the vision of the founders, the dedication of employees and the loyalty of customers.

"What a long, strange but fun trip it has been. Our longevity is a testament to our ability to change and to many generations of dedicated employees and managers," says Prince. "Reaching a century will be a huge honor for me, our industry and the community that has supported us."

The company's motto says, "The future of candy is rooted in the past." With a firm foundation and an eye toward innovation, McKeesport Candy Co. and CandyFavorites.com continue to sweeten lives, one candy at a time. ■

