

Frank Mars and the Milky Way

From the sweeties.net wiki

Franklin Clarence Mars, known as Frank, founded what became one of the biggest confectionery companies in the world. He did not live to see most of it.

Chocolate at his mother's side

Frank Mars was born on 24 September 1883 in Walden Township, Pope County, Minnesota. As a boy he had a mild case of polio, and his mother, Alva, kept him entertained by teaching him to hand dip chocolates. By 19 he was selling molasses chips.

A first failure

In 1911 Frank and his second wife, Ethel V. Mars, started the Mars Candy Factory in Tacoma, Washington, making fresh sweets to sell wholesale. It did not last. Tacoma already had a well established sweet maker, Brown and Haley, the makers of Almond Roca, and the Mars business failed.

The Milky Way

By 1920 Frank was back in Minnesota, where he founded the Mar O Bar Company in Minneapolis to make chocolate bars. In 1923 he launched the Milky Way. Its name and taste came from a popular malted milk drink of the day, not the stars. It went national in 1924 and sold \$800,000 worth that year, coated in chocolate supplied by Hershey. It became the best selling chocolate bar in America. His son Forrest later claimed the Milky Way had been his idea.

Snickers and Chicago

In 1929 the company moved to Chicago. In 1930 it launched Snickers, named after the family's favourite horse. In Britain and Ireland the same bar was sold as Marathon until 1990: see [when Marathon became Snickers](#).

Milky Way Farm

With his success, Frank bought farms in Pulaski, Tennessee, in the late 1920s and built a vast estate he called Milky Way Farm. Its building employed more than 935 local men, and it had a clubhouse of 25,000 square feet, more than 30 barns and its own racetrack. Frank kept racehorses there, and the Mars racing stable carried on after he died: in 1940, six years after his death, Gallahadion won the Kentucky Derby.

The feud and the end

Frank divorced Forrest's mother when Forrest was a small child and saw little of him. When Forrest joined the firm and pushed to expand abroad, the two fell out, and Forrest left for England, where he created the Mars bar: see [Forrest Mars and the Mars bar](#).

Frank Mars died of heart and kidney problems at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore on 8 April 1934, aged 50. He was buried at Milky Way Farm, and later moved to a private mausoleum in Minneapolis. His son eventually took control of the company in 1964, and the family still owns every share of it: read [the mystery of the Mars family](#).

Two different Milky Ways

If you have ever been confused on holiday, here is why. The American Milky Way is nougat and caramel in milk chocolate, which is what the British call a Mars bar. The British Milky Way has no caramel at all, and in the United States that bar is sold as 3 Musketeers.

Earn rewards on [sweeties.net](#)

Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

+100 pts

Create your free account

Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



100 pts = 1 tree

Plant a tree in Scotland

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.



[sweeties.net](#) · Tunbridge Wells, Kent · hello@sweeties.net · 3-click cancel at [sweeties.net/cancel/](#)