

# Hollywood on Hamilton Remembering Hess's

## Segment Three Run Time: 17:12

### Overview

In the early 1970s, after Max Hess sold the store, branches of Hess's began springing up in malls all along the east coast -- from Rome, NY to Rome, GA. But Hess's hit financial trouble, and in 1996 after selling many of its stores to a competitor, the doors of the flagship store on 9th and Hamilton Streets were shut for good. The closing of Hess's signified the end of an era, but fond memories of this shopping paradise still thrive in the hearts of thousands of Lehigh Valley folks.



Whether you worked, modeled, or shopped there, Hollywood on Hamilton: Remembering Hess's helps you relive the golden days which may be lost but not forgotten.

### Discussion/Questions

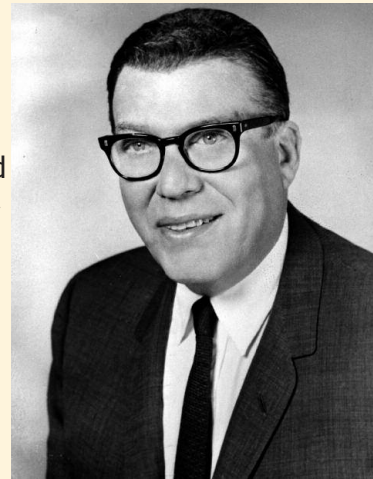
1. What role did management play in the decline of Hess's?  
Do any present companies risk the same fate?
2. How do you think a company could expand successfully? Is there a way to do it without jeopardizing the identity that made it a success?

### Activities

1. Form a debate. One side will be Max Hess Jr. and the other will be new management pitching the idea of expansion. What are the pros and cons? What would the company lose or gain? Keep track of the points and tally the results. See which side made the better argument and decide whether you think Hess's could have expanded successfully.

## Spotlight: Max Hess

Thousands of businesses go bankrupt each year. Very few have left as great an impression on customers as did Hess's. Hess's department store stood for more than clothing, shopping, or dining. The department store stood for a life many wanted and only few obtained. In a valley of steelworkers and housewives, Hess's represented a lifestyle everyone could enjoy.



In nearly a century, one store drew people in from all walks of life and all corners of the world. It represented an era where the American dream was anyone's to take. More is not always better – and Hess's story reflects this idea.

Throughout the 20th century, businesses have judged their success by the opportunity to expand. However, Max Hess Jr. held firm to his belief that you can't imitate a good thing. Hess Jr. refused to expand his tremendously successful department store. He did not want to lose the magic by making carbon copies of the store he loved. The store did not expand until Hess Jr. turned over the key to new management.

Hess stores turned up in malls all across Pennsylvania and a few not too far from the original. However, the magic could never be copied. The business began to decline and eventually the chain ceased to exist and Hess's was closed in the late 1990s. The building was demolished – it marked the end of an era for the Lehigh Valley. Without the need for greed, there might still be a little bit of Hollywood on Hamilton.

## Academic Standards

Hollywood on Hamilton has been designed to address the Academic Standards for History as set forth by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Specifically, this program supports the successful achievement of standards 8.2 Pennsylvania History, as defined under grades 9 and 12 measurement criteria:

Identify and evaluate how continuity and change have influenced Pennsylvania history from the 1890s to the present.

