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CAROL CLARK,  
BUCKHART'S  
CANDIES



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel photos

The owners of Buckhart's Candies are selling their landmark East Cliff Drive shop — and its secret recipes.

# Sweet MEMORIES



Carol Clark, pictured with cook John Nelson, has been running Buckhart's Candies with her husband Robert for 30 years. The business dates back nearly a century, and many local residents have fond memories of its unique confections.

## Landmark Buckhart's Candies for sale

By CAROLYN LEAL  
SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

*Buckhart's Confection* LIVE OAK

**C**hocoloholics take note — Buckhart's Candies, the landmark candy shop on East Cliff Drive, is up for sale. "People stop in and tell us they've been coming here for 50 years," said co-owner Carol Clark. "That's what keeps us going."

However, Carol and husband Robert are ready for retirement after operating Buckhart's for almost 30 years. "He's 70 and I'm close to it. I can't lift the pots anymore. My back is going."

The Clarks are asking \$100,000 for the business. The 12,500-square-foot property at 1-1231 East Cliff Drive is for sale for an additional \$995,000, according to Wagner Real Estate of Hollister.

"We plan to be here through Easter," Carol Clark said.

The Clarks will pass on their prized candy recipes, handwritten by founder Harry Buckhart, to the next owner.

Customers are wondering who will take over.

"I think this shop is great. It has a lot of goodies you can't find anyplace else," said Mary Alys Barnes, who visited the store Wednesday looking for almond bark.

The business actually dates back some 90 years. Harry Buckhart and his brother Dick operated a candy store in Watsonville before moving to Pacific Avenue in Santa Cruz in 1922.

In 1936, they settled on East Cliff Drive in a building with a windmill that once was a nursery selling tulip bulbs.

It's been a landmark for Santa Cruz candy lovers ever since.

"I love the service and the candy itself," said longtime customer Gloria Gales, who often buys English toffee because her grandchildren like it.

One of the store's specialties is the Victoria, a rum- and

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# Buckhart's: Candy store sale could make for a sweet deal

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brandy-flavored buttercream patty with walnuts.

"People come in and ask for it by name, or sometimes they ask for the Frazier Lewis," Carol Clark said.

Frazier Lewis invented the Victoria, the first nickel candy bar, in the 1900s. The discovery resulted from Lewis trying to salvage a batch of candy from ruin, according to historian Ross Eric Gibson. The Victoria candies were produced at a factory known as the cupola on East Cliff Drive until 1941.

When Lewis died two years later, he willed his secret formula to the Native Sons of the Golden West, which sold it to movie star ZaSu Pitts, who grew up in Santa Cruz.

"I remember when Frazier Lewis started the candy bar," Gales said. "It was always wrapped in brown paper. But Buckhart's Victoria tastes exactly the same."

Clark wasn't sure where the Victoria recipe came from. It could have been handed down by the Buckharts or the result of a kitchen experiment, she said.

The current owners still use some of the old candy-making equipment, including large copper pots for melting chocolate and marble-covered tables where chocolate is poured to

harden.

"Everything was done by hand when we bought it," Carol Clark said. "We just modernized it."

In addition to chocolates, the shop carries English toffee, peanut brittle, taffy, Halloween suckers, marshmallow figures and old-fashioned ribbon candy.

"We carry every conceivable candy that grownups like," Clark said, plus Gummi Bears, jawbreakers and Jelly Bellies for kids.

The Clarks purchased the candy shop in 1972 from Tom Regan, a nephew of the Buckharts.

"My husband Robert cooked for 10 years, then my son David cooked for 10 years and now my son-in-law is cooking," Clark said.

Son-in-law John Nelson can be seen in the candy kitchen, lifting a pot of bubbling chocolate onto his shoulder and pouring it onto the marble cooling table. Daughter Jackie Nelson helps tend shop.

The shop makes special orders: Clark's son David once carved a chess set out of chocolate.

The candymakers take pride in their product.

"We're old-fashioned," Clark said.