



ROSS ERIC GIBSON COLLECTION

An Easter basket holds Frazier Lewis' Victoria Creams and their sequel, ZaSu bars.

Santa Cruzans first savored 'World's First Candy Bar'

BY ROSS ERIC GIBSON
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BEFORE WORLD WAR II, one of the childhood delights of Santa Cruz was finding a Victoria Cream candy bar in your Easter basket. The locally made treat not only had fans around the world, but made Santa Cruz the birthplace of the modern candy bar.

Gordon Richards, who frequented Santa Cruz in the early 1900s, says it first began in 1907 when Frazier Lewis of Capitola devised an exceptional chocolate-walnut confection.

Since he wasn't in the candy trade, he tried selling his recipe to an Oakland candy maker who had wide distribution. But that company mainly supplied general stores, where penny candy was sold from glass canisters, requiring long shelf life and resistance to melting in summer heat. Only hard bricks of baking chocolate were

stocked.

Lewis was told his confection would cost more than a penny, and stick together when piled in glass canisters.

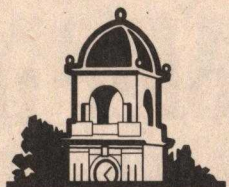
This was discouraging, but he found his neighbors' demands for his homemade treat did not stop when he charged five cents apiece. He decided to run a seasonal candy business out of his home, naming his creation the Victoria Cream individually wrapping it and distributing it throughout the county.

The response was amazing, and in 1910 he opened the ground floor of the new Trust Building at Pacific and Soquel avenues as his candy and ice cream store, with his coffee shop to the side and candy factory in back. The white-trimmed redbrick structure accommodated the Heald Business College on its upper two floors.

The architecture suggested an Ivy League college through its colonial details. But some called it a candy box, and it was more widely known for the candy factory than the college. Its former students still recall with delight how at certain hours the class rooms would suddenly fill with the aroma of baking chocolate.

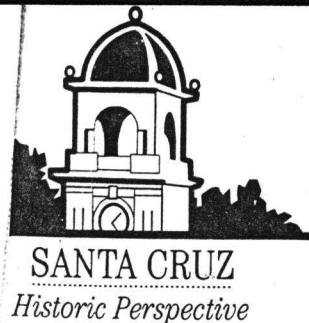
In 1911, nickel "ballpark candy bars" were

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SANTA CRUZ
Historic Perspective

Modern candy bar can trace its roots to old Santa Cruz



■ HISTORY

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introduced in wrappers by another company, as a way to sell chocolate at sporting events. Many of these candy bar names are still familiar today. Frazier Lewis had pioneered the market for the five-cent candy bar.

Lewis' store window was an attraction in itself. In 1913, he displayed an Easter nest with 20 golden eagle eggs, valued at \$90, and a photo of two eaglets. These had been found in 1888 by William Shattuck on his ranch. An eaglet was given to the Lewises that year, remaining a family pet for decades. The eagle eggs weren't fertile, but the eagle was just as happy hatching chicken eggs.

On President Lincoln's birthday in 1911, Lewis displayed a family heirloom. The muster roll from the War of 1812 had belonged to Lewis' grandfather, James Frazier Reed, who helped organize in 1846 the ill-fated Reed-Donner party which brought the family west. When the party became snowbound, Reed went for help, while his wife and daughter stayed, unaware that some in the party had resorted to cannibalism. The daughter was Patty Reed Lewis, the candy-maker's mother.

The Victorias were distributed statewide, even carried by United Cigar stores. Those odd out-of-state locations stocked this "California treat," and a Frazier Lewis Candy Store even appeared in China. Even while shipping hundreds of pounds at a time, Lewis personally mixed his secret formula with two garden spades, before allowing his employees inside to make the candy bars.

He left his Pacific Avenue location in 1928, when he bought a cupola-topped house on the east bank of Schwan Lake. This became his combined home and candy factory. It was a terrible shock in 1943 when he committed suicide, and at first people thought his secret recipe had died with



CYNTHIA MATTHEWS COLLECTION

Movie star ZaSu Pitts displays her candy molds.

him. But he had willed it to the Native Sons of the Golden West, who met in the Trust Building. Many bid for the recipe, but according to Birdy Goslinger, it was purchased by movie star ZaSu Pitts.

Pitts was an avid candy maker, who grew up in Santa Cruz, where her brother once prepared rum-soaked walnuts for Lewis' Victorias. She remembered a local teacher who kept a drawer full of Victorias to reward student achievement. But Pitts didn't use liquor in candy on the general market, and she concocted her own version, marketed as the ZaSu Bar.

She published a book of her candy recipes in 1963 called "Candy Hits by ZaSu Pitts." She died that year, and the candy faded into history. But over the years, Buckhart's windmill-topped candy store (near the Lewis Schwan Lake house) produced its version of Victorias as a tribute to what many called the "World's First Candy Bar."

Local historian, architectural consultant and author Ross Eric Gibson writes a weekly history column for the Santa Cruz/Monterey edition.