



John and Jackie Nelson make mint sandwiches at Buckhart's Candies. Jackie Nelson's parents have owned the candy store since 1972.

LONGTIME CONFECTIONERS ASKING \$100,000 FOR CANDY FACTORY, \$999,000 FOR LANDMARK LOCATION NEAR TWIN LAKES STATE BEACH



JUDITH CALSON — MERCURY NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS

Buckhart's Candies, on East Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz, has been in business since 1902. Some of the store's delectables include English and Scotch toffee, rocky road bonbons, sea foam with a molasses honeycomb center and cherry cordials.

Buckhart's Candies looking for new owner

By Lee Quarnstrom
Mercury News

The first time John Domich tasted Buckhart's candy, he was a young Sacramento boy on vacation in Santa Cruz with his folks.

"In those days," the 86-year-old retired butcher recalled, "it was an all-day trip down from Sacramento.

"The last part of the trip was over the mountains from San Jose on a dirt road through Holy City. My father was driving a Moon, a touring car with a fold-down top."

A lot changed over the years, but Buckhart's venerable East Cliff Drive candy factory was a constant for the Domich family.

"We always stopped in at Buckhart's for taffy and chocolate," Domich said during a recent visit, his 60-year-old son, Mike, nodding in agreement. "Buckhart's is famous for their chocolate, you know."

But Buckhart's Candies soon may go the way of that old touring car with the fold-down top. The candy store inside

the familiar Dutch-style windmill building — as well as the property on which it sits — is for sale.

Jackie Nelson, whose parents have owned Buckhart's for almost three decades and whose husband, John, is the candy-maker, said the asking price for

the almost 100-year-old business and sugar inventory is \$100,000. Her folks are asking another \$999,000 for the site, which is a three-minute walk from Twin Lakes State Beach and a stone's throw from Schwan Lake, a coastal estuary just east of the yacht harbor.

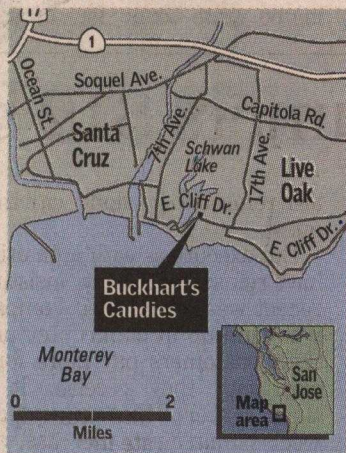
Nelson, 46, presides over the shelves of confections at the front of the building while her 51-year-old husband whips up a

variety of toothsome candies in the back. She's been selling the sweet stuff since her folks, Bob and Carol Clark, bought the business in 1972.

Nelson said that about 75 percent of the candy she sells is made on the



Gold-wrapped chocolate shells are big sellers at Buckhart's Candies.



MERCURY NEWS

BUCKHART'S CANDIES

After owning the business for nearly 30 years, Bob and Carol Clark are selling Buckhart's Candies — a business that has been a staple in Santa Cruz for decades.

Owners: Bob and Carol Clark

Address: 2-1231 E. Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz

In business: Since 1902

Asking price: \$100,000 for business; \$999,000 for property

Most popular homemade candy: The Victoria patty

Source: Buckhart's Candies

In the early days of the Great Depression, owner Harry Buckhart moved his shop from Watsonville to this windmill building, a former flower bulb shop.



JUDITH CALSON — MERCURY NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS

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premises. The rest, much of it hard-to-find sweetmeats older people might recall from childhood, is purchased from other manufacturers.

Buckhart's makes English and Scotch toffee, rocky road bonbons, sea foam with a molasses honeycomb center, cherry cordials, peanut butter cups, chocolate-dipped apricots and a couple dozen more chocolate-based treats. Another specialty made only during the Christmas holiday season is candy-cane ribbon.

Buckhart's also stocks jawbreakers, chocolate-covered cinnamon bears, horehound drops, spearmint leaves, Jordan almonds, old-fashioned chewing mints, jelly beans, gum drops, licorice Scotties and licorice buttons, root beer barrels and malt balls.

The shop's most popular home-made candy, Nelson said, is the Victoria patty, a creamy, chocolate-covered concoction that's been the house specialty since Harry Buckhart started the business in 1902.

Buckhart's first shop was in Watsonville but he soon moved to downtown Santa Cruz, where he also had a restaurant and ice cream store. After some financial



Candy maker John Nelson boxes mint sandwiches — a layer of dark chocolate, a layer of green mint, and another layer of dark chocolate.

problems, Nelson said, Buckhart moved his operation in the early days of the Great Depression to the present location, a former flower bulb business. Thus the Dutch motif.

In those days, much of the Live Oak area between Capitola and the Eastside of Santa Cruz was planted with bulbs by flower growers and dotted with chicken coops where farmers gathered fresh eggs for market.

After Buckhart's death, Nelson said, one of his nephews ran the business until her parents bought it.

Until the Loma Prieta earthquake in October 1989, Nelson's family also had small candy counters in two Monterey Bay-area department stores, Fords in Watsonville and Holman's, later Fords, in Pacific Grove. Both stores were wiped out by the quake.

In recent years, the Clarks have

been semi-retired, leaving the candy-making and the retail and mail-order sales to Jackie and John Nelson. They hope to find another candy fan to take over the business.

It's possible that someone will purchase the candy business, but not the property — given its nearly \$1 million asking price. And it's quite possible that whoever purchases the property will have no interest in selling candy.

Still, Jackie Nelson said she and hundreds of regular customers hope a new owner stays in the East Cliff area.

That sentiment was echoed by neighbor Charlie McFadden. The 53-year-old substitute teacher at Watsonville High School has stopped by "almost every day" for the past 15 years to get his daily fix of licorice sticks and coconut logs.

"These people are killing me," McFadden joked as he nibbled at a coconut candy. "These things are so rich they're eventually going to kill me."

"But," he said with a smile, "I hope that if Jackie's folks sell the business, the new owners stay in the neighborhood."

Contact Lee Quarnstrom at lquarnstrom@sjmercury.com or (831) 423-3234.