



# SANGAMON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# HISTORICO

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## LOOKING AHEAD - A HOLIDAY TREAT

Members of the Sangamon County Historical Society are in for a treat at our next meeting which features our own special tour of historic Edwards Place at 700 N. Fourth Street, when we meet there at 7:00 P.M. on Tuesday, December 18. The 1833 mansion, home of the Springfield Art Association, is decked out in Christmas splendor and is the site of a unique holiday display of gingerbread structures depicting seven of Springfield's best-known landmarks. In this "sweet array" we'll find the Old and New State Capitols, Lincoln's Home, Edwards Place itself, the Union Station, the Main Gate at the State Fairgrounds, and the Dana-Thomas House. Our SCHS program chairman, Polly Myers, was one of the builders of the gingerbread version of the Union Station. Teams of volunteers drew the plans and built each house under the guidance of Nancy Long of Nancy's Patisserie. The rooms throughout the mansion are decorated in Victorian style by ten floral designers. Gingerbread cookie ornaments, created by a number of local artists, will be available for sale. Two docents from the Edwards Place volunteer staff will be our special guides. Refreshments will be served by Polly Myers, Georgia Northrup and Joyce Sandage.

(Hours for the general public to view the decorations and gingerbread display at Edwards Place will be from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. on weekdays and 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. on Saturdays and Sundays until December 30, except for Dec. 6, 13, 24 and 25. Admission is free. A "Magic of Sugarplums" brunch for grandparents, parents and children will be held on Saturday, Dec. 15, at a charge of \$10.00 each. For reservations call 523-2631.)

Our first 1991 meeting will be at Lincoln Library on Tuesday, January 15, at 7:00 P.M., when Doris Krake will present a program on quilts.

## A LOOK BACK - SIXTY SWEET YEARS IN SPRINGFIELD

A most enjoyable program was given for the Society on Nov. 20 when Robert Flesher, who has operated the Pease Candy Company for forty-two years, recounted for us the history of his business. Bob's maternal grandfather, a watchmaker by trade in

Canton, Ohio, and later in Elgin, Illinois, made candy as a hobby, but after moving to Bloomington, IL, in the early 1900's he opened his first candy shop. His son, Martin Pease, Jr., who had gone into the family business, moved with his new bride to Springfield in 1930. The young couple opened a candy shop in a house at Third St. and So. Grand Ave., where the little living room became a shop and the basement a candy factory. Candy was made from the first cool days in September until the weather became too warm in May. The Peases also were the town's sole distributors of the popular Rozell's ice cream, and the shop was one of the few places where a customer could get a quart of hand-packed ice cream. Ice cream cones were favorite sales items, too - some had little slips of paper in the bottom which entitled lucky recipients to a free cone! Candy canes in four flavors and homemade potato chips were other popular products.

In 1947 Bob Flesher came over to Springfield on his Christmas vacation from studies at the University of Illinois to help during the holiday rush. Before he left to go to Bloomington to spend Christmas with his parents he was asked by his uncle if he would like to come into the company when he graduated in June. In Bloomington, Bob told his grandfather, Martin, Sr., that he was joining the family business, and the elder Mr. Pease was delighted to know that a third generation member would continue with the company. That night the grandfather had a stroke and died five days later, but at least he had known that a family tradition would live on.

The business grew and in 1953 the candy factory moved to a building at Highland and Pasfield, and the sales shop moved to its present location at State and Laurel. Several years later a second shop was opened on Stevenson Drive. In the early 1970's Martin Pease, Jr., retired and sold the business to his nephew, Bob, and Don Anderson, who had become an assistant candy maker about ten years before. Don continued as manager of the manufacturing process and Bob took over the sales department. They eventually moved the factory into part of the old Sangamo building at Eleventh and Converse. When part of that building was sold and torn down the candy factory moved to the renovated portion at Ninth and North Grand, and a third shop was opened there. Three years ago Don's son, Doug, joined his father in the candy making, and Don's daughter also works in the manufacturing process after being in sales for several years. Bob's son, Rob, joined the sales operation about four years ago, and Bob's four daughters and daughter-in-law, Kim, have grown up in the business as well - so the family tradition continues.

The main season for Peases Candy starts with the making of caramel apples in late August or early September and ends after candy for Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day is made. During the season about thirty people are employed in the factory and as sales clerks in the three main outlets. A fourth outlet, added last year and open for several months a year (through the fall, winter holidays and into the spring) is the kiosk on the second level at White Oaks Mall.

Bob's son and daughter-in-law, Rob and Kim, were present at our meeting, and, to the delight of the audience, passed out samples of the delicious Pease's chocolates. Bob made the happy announcement that Kim and Rob were expecting their first child, and whether a boy or a girl, Bob hopes that his grandchild will continue in the family business.

Bob answered many questions from the large audience which seemed to be made up entirely of enthusiastic Pease Candy fans, many of whom remembered the company's early days in the shop at Third and So. Grand. We learned that Peases Candy has been mailed to all forty-eight contiguous states and taken by fans to several foreign countries, including Poland. Nestle's chocolate is used for dipping, and the nuts used, both in candy and for the popular salted nuts, come from various