

THE "SWEETEST" STORY OF COWLEY COUNTY — HENRY'S BETTER MADE CANDIES

By Cindy Goertz

What do these have in common? A small town in Cowley County, secret recipes, manufacturing machinery more than 100 years old, thousands of visitors each year, several generations in the same business? Cowley County's own version of *Willy Wonka's Candy Factory*—Henry's Candies in Dexter, Kansas.

Part 1: The beginning—Thomas F. Henry

Thomas F. Henry was born April 15, 1880, in Boston, Massachusetts. By the age of ten, while living in Denver, his interest in candy making as a career began. Tom was helping a Greek candy maker after school. There he learned many of the finer techniques of making candy using Old World methods that were becoming a lost art, including pictures in the middle of rock candy. He continued to apply and refine those candy-making skills as he worked in a variety of places before finally joining Mr. Roehl in Blackwell, Okla., to form the Henry-Roehl Candy Co.

Arkansas City was growing and searching for new industry to bring to town. The Twenty Thousand Club was formed to search for and bring these industries to town. On January 4, 1910, Mr. Creighton, chairman of that club, reported that he had been conferring with the Henry-Roehl Candy Co., of Blackwell. He was requesting they move their factory to Arkansas City, touting the advantages of shipping facilities that would make Arkansas City a good location for their company. He then introduced Mr. Roehl to the club. He shared with the group that their factory in Blackwell had about \$3,000 invested in machinery. They would purchase the machinery in that city and move to Arkansas City for a bonus of \$500. He said he would agree to do business in the town and hire 15 men for a term of five years if they agreed to his proposal. The Henry-Roehl Candy factory had been offered \$1,000 to move to Oklahoma City, but Arkansas City appeared to be the better place to move. The club quickly accepted his proposal and began soliciting the merchants in town to raise the \$500. The needed money was secured very quickly.

When those in Blackwell heard of this possible move, they offered the firm a site to stay, but Henry-Roehl made the decision to move to Arkansas City. By January 17, they had moved all their machinery to the location provided at 226 N. Summit. With Arkansas City providing additional machinery that remained from the former Haymond Candy factory in the Quaker building on North Summit, the factory was ready to begin operating. Apparently, as they were in the process of moving in their machinery, two young men stole several brass candy kettles. The boys were quickly arrested for stealing \$30 worth of brass, then released on \$250 bond, and the