

Pease's new manufacturing plant spells sweet success

Pease's Candy, which has been pleasing children and other candy lovers in Springfield since 1930, will break ground soon for a new manufacturing plant in Industrial Park South off Toronto Road.

The new plant will give the company more space and cost less than rent in the long run, said Bob Flesher, co-owner in charge of retail operations for Pease's.

"It's a long-term investment in the company," he said, "and there's room to grow. The building is an economy move, too, because it will mean less rent for us."

The new, 8,000-square-foot manufacturing plant and warehouse will be the first property Pease's has owned. It currently rents manufacturing space in the former Sangamo Electric building on North Ninth Street, as well as retail stores at San-

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gamon Center North, on Stevenson Drive, and at State and Laurel streets.

Pease's Candy started in Springfield in 1930, when Flesher's uncle, Martin "Noonie" Pease, left his father's candy plant in Bloomington to start a candy company at Third Street and South Grand Avenue.

The manufacturing operation moved to Highland Avenue and Pasfield Street in 1952 and the retail operation moved to State and Laurel,

between Butler and Blessed Sacrament schools, in 1953.

A second retail store opened on Stevenson Drive in 1957, and manufacturing was moved to the old Sangamo building eight years ago. A retail store also operated there for five years, but moved to Sangamon Center last October in anticipation of the new plant being built.

"That store has exceeded our best expectations," Flesher said.

Pease's also operates a kiosk at White Oaks Mall six months of the year (through Easter).

Flesher, who co-owns the business with Don Anderson, said the 5,000-square-foot facility on Ninth Street has been crowded for some time. Pease's employs between 30 and 35 people at its plant and four stores.

Flesher's son, Rob, and Anderson's son, Doug, both hold positions with Pease's and are being groomed

as the next generation to run the business, Flesher said.

Holding down prices is a problem in the candy industry, Flesher said.

"Nearly every cost involved in manufacturing and selling our products has increased in the past year," he said. "But to show our support for the local economy, we've decided to hold the line on our extensive selection of Easter candy. We won't be raising our Easter prices from 1991.

"It would be nice if other companies in our community and communities across the country could hold back on price increases and get the economy going again," he said.

Flesher said ground should be broken for the manufacturing facility within the next month and the structure completed by mid-July.

Chris Dettro is business editor of the State Journal-Register.