

Peppermint pigs 'smashing' tradition

By Michael Hill Associated Press

SARATOGA SPRINGS, N.Y. - A holiday tradition in this upstate New York resort town has a peppermint twist: pig-shaped hard candies are sold with little metal hammers to smash them at Christmas. The peppermint pigs, which can weigh up to a pound, are considered good luck charms by some. Family members will take turns whacking the piggy tokens of holiday cheer into little candy shards. "We do find that some people are a little taken aback: 'What's the whole idea of the pig and the hammer? What are you doing? And is someone insulting me by giving me a pig?'" said Mike Fitzgerald, owner of Saratoga Sweets, which makes the pigs that can be the size of a big bar of bath soap. Fitzgerald has pigs on his brain this time of year. A small crew at this shop south of Saratoga Springs in Halfmoon makes the hard candy from dawn to dark in a shop distinguished by boiling red pots of candy and an overwhelming scent of peppermint. Fitzgerald is hurrying to fill thousands of pig orders around the country. Why pigs? It could be related to the marzipan pigs northern European confectioners make at holiday time as good luck symbols. Fitzgerald said it's possible chefs at the old hotels in Saratoga Springs in the late 19th century couldn't easily make marzipan, so they improvised with peppermint hard candy. In the old days, the pig was placed on the Christmas dinner table. Father would wrap it in a napkin and crack it with the steel

rod used to sharpen knives so the family could share the sweet-tasting bits, Fitzgerald said. But by the mid-20th century, the area holiday tradition went the way of lit candles on Christmas trees. In 1988, Fitzgerald made a first run of 60 peppermint pigs at the request of the local historical society. He was surprised to see people lining up to buy them, many of them older people who fondly recalled smashing pigs when they were young. He sold out his run and never looked back. "It's been a pig race ever since. This year we'll make about 130,000 pigs," he said. As Fitzgerald spoke, workers stirred bubbling tea pots filled with a Pepto-pink mix of sugar and corn syrup. The candy mix is hand-poured into cast aluminum molds to make one of three pigs: Holly (3 ounces and 3 1/2-inches long), Noel (a half pound and 5 1/2 inches) or the big man, Clarence (1 pound and 6 inches). The hardened pigs have a shiny, glassy quality other hard candies with a higher corn syrup content lack. A quick strike by Fitzgerald's hammer shattered a pig. "It has to break like glass," Fitzgerald said with satisfaction. It's not as tough sales of candy canes - more than 1.8 billion are made a year - are being threatened. But the pigs are a popular item in gift stores in Saratoga Springs and other retailers, dressed in red velvet bags with a shiny, silver hammer. (Once you get the hammer, you can order a refill without one.) "Thanksgiving sort of kicks it off and from here on in, it gets crazy," said Marianne Barker of Impressions of Saratoga.

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Comparison of Levies table with columns for District, Valuation, 2012, 2011, and Levy Diff.

2012 Thomas County Tax Levies Valuation of Thomas County is: 95,910,796 Levies shown are taxes per \$1000 valuation

STATE LEVIES table with columns for State, K.S.A., and Levy.

COUNTY LEVIES table with columns for Service, K.S.A., and Levy.

NWKL REGIONAL LIBRARY table with columns for Service, K.S.A., and Levy.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS table with columns for District, General, Cap. Outlay, Bond & Int., Recreation, Supp Gen, and Total.

TOWNSHIPS table with columns for Service, General, Road & Bridge, Nox. Weed, Emp Ben, Debt Svc, Spec Rd., and Total.

CITIES table with columns for City, General, Sheridan, Library, Rec., Nox. Weed, Special, Employee, Bond & Int., Econ Dev, Street, Sub-Total, Twp. Gen., and Total.

Public Notice

WENDELL TOWNSHIP table with columns for Lot, Valuation, and Description.

ROVOHL TOWNSHIP table with columns for Lot, Valuation, and Description.

BARRETT TOWNSHIP table with columns for Lot, Valuation, and Description.

WEST HALE TOWNSHIP table with columns for Lot, Valuation, and Description.

EAST HALE TOWNSHIP table with columns for Lot, Valuation, and Description.

MORGAN TOWNSHIP table with columns for Lot, Valuation, and Description.

LACEY TOWNSHIP table with columns for Lot, Valuation, and Description.

SMITH TOWNSHIP table with columns for Lot, Valuation, and Description.

MENLO TOWNSHIP table with columns for Lot, Valuation, and Description.

NORTH RANDALL TOWNSHIP table with columns for Lot, Valuation, and Description.

SUMMERS TOWNSHIP table with columns for Lot, Valuation, and Description.

KINGERY TOWNSHIP table with columns for Lot, Valuation, and Description.

SOUTH RANDALL TOWNSHIP table with columns for Lot, Valuation, and Description.

2012 LEVIES BY TOWNSHIPS, SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND CITIES

BREWSTER 200 table with columns for City, Levy, and Total.

COLBY 300 table with columns for City, Levy, and Total.

COLBY 320 table with columns for City, Levy, and Total.

GEM 400 table with columns for City, Levy, and Total.

MENLO 500 table with columns for City, Levy, and Total.

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The 1997 Legislative session approved Senate Bill #41 which provided an exemption of \$20,000 appraised value or \$2,300 of assessed value for the USD General Fund levied against all residential properties.