



City of Arts & Innovation

Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD **DATE: DECEMBER 2, 2020**

FROM: MUSEUM COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: ACCESSION OF ONE (1) CITRUS PACKING INDUSTRY TOOL INTO MUSEUM PERMANENT COLLECTION

ISSUE:

Recommend that the City Council approve the accession of one (1) citrus packing industry tool into the Museum of Riverside's permanent collection.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Museum of Riverside Board recommend that the City Council approve the accession of one (1) citrus packing industry tool into the Museum of Riverside's permanent collection.

BACKGROUND:

One citrus packing industry tool was donated at least four years ago to the then Riverside Metropolitan Museum (Museum) by a former Riverside resident and Museum volunteer. It was not processed at that time due to unclear direction regarding how it would be used in exhibition and programs. The donor recalled it being in a Riverside house he sold in 1988 where it had been on view for several years. He estimates that he acquired it in the early to mid-1980s from an antique store on Magnolia owned or run by William McGregor. The specific packing house where this item was used is not known, but it is surmised with reasonable certainty to have been a Riverside packing house.

DISCUSSION:

The tool is of a type commonly used in the packing houses by the women who packed citrus crates for shipping. The spring-loaded steel J-shaped attachment on one side held down a stack of tissue paper for individual wrapping of oranges. The rubber stamps were used to mark the outside of the crate with the number of oranges in it. The same kind of item appears on top of each crate in the Victoria Avenue Citrus Association packers photograph below, an image from the Museum's archives. They're also illustrated in David Boule's *The Orange and the Dream of California*.

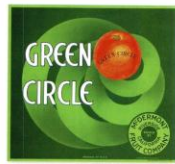
The justification for this recommendation is that the object augments the Museum's citrus history collections, which are and have long been a core collecting area. In spite of how common this tool was in the packing houses, the Museum does not have an example in its permanent collection.



Victoria Avenue Citrus Association packers

Left to right: Delores Martinez, Juana Borrego, Pachita Estrada, Diovijilda Borrego, Maria Luna

Courtesy of the late Delores Martinez



Oranges grown in the same orchard typically varied in quality and size. Most producers divided and packed their oranges into at least three grades, often using colors or related brand names on the box labels to designate the different quality levels. The McDermott Fruit Company in Riverside had the Blue Circle brand with Sunkist identification, as its premium brand, Red Circle as its intermediate grade, and Green Circle for its lowest quality.

This image from a large-format glass slide was part of a series on California used in schools and for public lectures. Even the tedious work of sorting and packing oranges in warehouses was photographed as glamorously as if the worker were a movie star.

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These orange and lemon workers are, in one sense, the direct descendants of the New England mill girls of forty years earlier. One sees in their surroundings the same toil of piecework, but softened somewhat by the absence of heavy machinery and the much lighter nature of their task.

KEVIN STARR

Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era, 1985

This photograph is dated June 16, 1939, and on the back is written, "Mama aquí le mando este retrato de el empaque en donde trabajamos" (Mama, I'm sending you the picture of where we work packing). Gilbert Gonzalez, in California History, quotes Angelina Cruz: "You were so absorbed in packing that you lost track of time... you just kind of sat there."



As illustrated in David Boule, *The Orange and the Dream of California*

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report. Storage space is minimally impacted by this acquisition.

Prepared by:
Certified as to
availability of funds:
Approved by:

Robyn G. Peterson, Ph.D., Museum Director
Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/City Treasurer
Moises Lopez, Deputy City Manager