



*City of Arts & Innovation*

# City Council Memorandum

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL** **DATE: MARCH 2, 2021**

**FROM: MUSEUM DEPARTMENT** **WARDS: ALL**

**SUBJECT: ACCESSION INTO THE MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE'S PERMANENT  
COLLECTION OF ONE CITRUS PACKING INDUSTRY TOOL**

## **ISSUE:**

Approve accession into the Museum of Riverside's permanent collection of one citrus packing industry tool.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council approve accession into the Museum of Riverside's permanent collection of one citrus packing industry tool.

## **BOARD RECOMMENDATION:**

At a virtual special meeting on December 2, 2020, the Museum of Riverside Board, with six of its nine members present for this vote, unanimously agreed to recommend that City Council approve accession into the permanent collection of one citrus packing industry tool.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The 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 exhibitions 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.

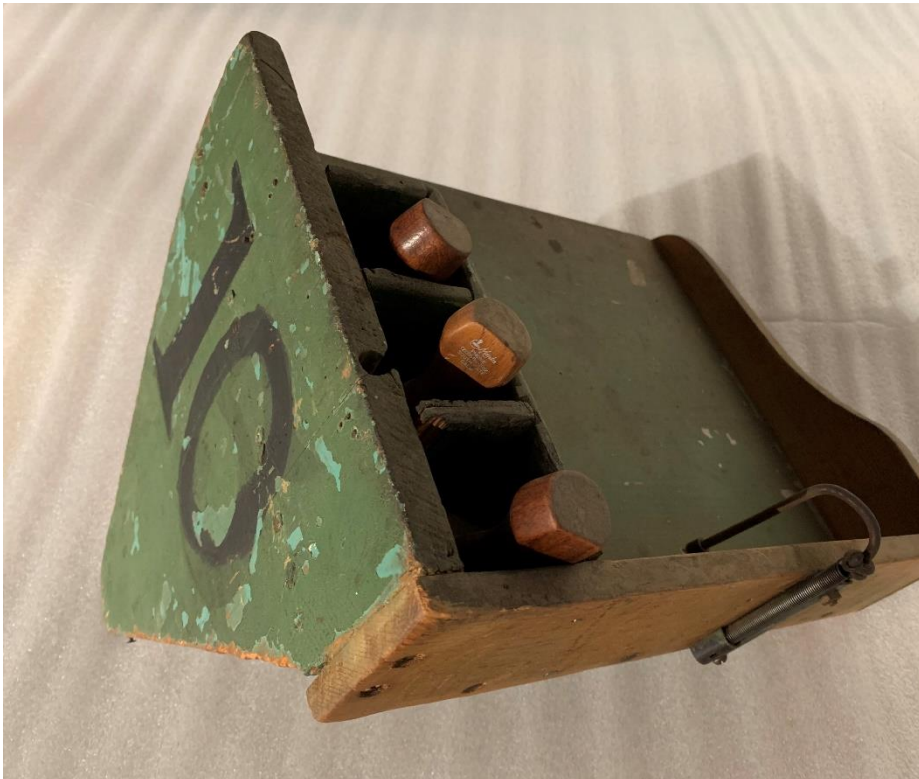
At its meeting on September 23, 2020, with nine committee members supporting and two committee members absent, the Museum's Collections Committee approved a recommendation to accession the citrus packing industry tool.

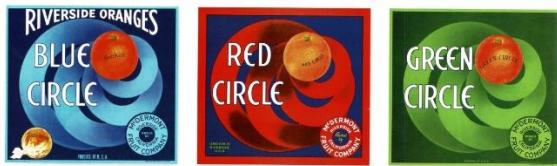
## **DISCUSSION:**

The item 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. Despite how common this kind of tool was in the packing houses, the Museum does not have as complete an example in its permanent collection. The citrus packing industry tool under discussion is complete and is not missing parts.

Storage space demands are minimal. The completeness of this object may permit reconsideration of the Museum's retention of similar, but less complete, objects currently in the collection. The condition of the object is stable. It does not require conservation treatment.





Oranges grown in the same orchard typically varied in quality and size. Most producers divided and packed their oranges into as few as three grades, often using colors or related brand names on the box labels to designate the different quality levels. The McQuinn Fruit Company in Riverside had the Blue Circle brand with Sunkist identification, or 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, 1930, and on the back is written, "Mama aqui le mando una terrazo de el empague en donde trabajamos" (Mama, I'm sending you this 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 lost yourself."*



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



Victoria Avenue Citrus Association packers  
 Left to right: Delores Martinez, Juana Borrego, Pachita Estrada, Diovijilda Borrego,  
 Maria Luna  
 Courtesy of the late Delores Martinez

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by:	Robyn G. Peterson, Ph.D., Museum Director
Certified as to availability of funds:	Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer
Approved by:	Moises Lopez, Deputy City Manager
Approved as to form:	Kristi J. Smith, Interim City Attorney
 Attachment:	 Museum of Riverside Board Minutes December 2, 2020