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Citrus Talks-The Value of an Orange Brand

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CITRUS TALKS

"THE VALUE OF AN ORANGE BRAND"

✓ State Fruit Growers Convention--

San Bernardino--1915

*State Fruit Grower
Committee
San Bernardino
1915* ✓

THE VALUE OF AN ORANGE
BRAND. ✓

I think I am not bold if I say that the Citrus industry has been developed in California, more rapidly and to a higher degree, than in any other part of the world. From the growing of the nursery stock, preparing of the soil and setting out of the trees, to the marketing of the fruit, it is conducted on sound, modern and scientific business methods. Men of genius and discernment have given careful attention to every phase of the business, and we may take pardonable pride in the progress that has been made. We must not, however be unmindful that there is yet much to learn. The fact that most men engaged in the business are seekers after larger and more perfect knowledge of their calling, is a prophecy of a still greater and brighter future for the industry.

There have been many factors contributing to the development of the Citrus Industry. I am, however, to discuss, and but briefly, *just* but one: The Value of a Brand. The subject is one worthy of our

attention, for brands have made a large contribution to the splendid development of the Citrus Industry.

Many of our brands are not only artistic and beautiful, as portrayed by the box labels, making the package attractive, but are significant and have become household words in many sections of the country. They have contributed to the industry by stimulating the packer to a certain commendable pride in methods of handling and packing his fruit, that he may create and maintain a reputation for his special brand; by attracting the interest of the trade to certain brands, giving occasion and opportunity to advertise them, and through them, the whole California product; and by focussing in a special way, the attention of the consumer on the beauty and superior quality of California oranges.

I do not know when the first brand was used. They began to come into general use as early as 1895, perhaps earlier.

Among the first brands to be brought out were: *Sunbeam, Rose, Sunflower, Poppy, Camellia, Gypsy Queen, Hook Hill, Lion Head & Trophy, Porter Bros., Cook & Langley & Thacker Bros. had brands*

I do not know the names of them

The number of brands grew rapidly during the next few years. The Fruit World, in February of 1898 gave a long list of brands, among them being: -

American Flag - Blossom - Carnation - Chief -
Camellia - Deer - Gold Medal - Golden Rod -
Gold of Ophir - Gypsy Queen - Golden Pheasant
Lion Head - Orange Blossom - Old Mission -
Perfection - Pointer - Purity - Poppy - Rose -
Sky High - Sunflower - Squirrel - Sunbeam -
Smilax - Southern Queen - Trophy - Trumpeter -
Yosemite - Uncle Sam

Twenty-one years ago the idea of having a brand of our own, came to my brother, the late Col F. M. Chapman and myself. We believed that there could be built up from an orange brand, a reputation that would be of real value, - and that a brand could become more than a mere trade mark or box decoration. Some of my friends to whom I suggested our idea thought it merely a dream. They said that it was impossible for anyone to build up a reputation for an orange brand, that would in itself be of real commer-

pay a substantial price for an article, not because they have a personal knowledge of its worth, but because it bears a reputation for excellence. This may be just as applicable to oranges sold under a certain brand, as to the numerous articles we buy daily, on account of the name on the package. The force of this may be illustrated by an incident that occurred about four years ago at an orange sale in New York. My attention was called, by my New York representative, to a car of oranges on display at the great Erie pier. His comment, "there is a fine car of fruit", attracted my interest, and I gave it a somewhat/critical examination, being impressed with the excellence of the fruit and the care and attention given to the packing. It was decorated with a lot of useless tinsel, but in spite of this it showed up well, for it was in fact an unusually fine car. It was packed, as my friend said, "with the idea of making a killing," and I expressed the belief that it would give the Old Mission Brand a close run at the sale; and will frankly admit that I was really expecting my fruit to receive a beating. In due time this car was offered, and to my surprise, this really extra fancy

fruit did not bring as much as my Golden Eagle Brand, at the same sale. This car failed to bring the price it deserved solely, I think, because the brand had no well established reputation in that market, or because in the past its packer had not been consistent. It may have been known elsewhere, but in New York its reputation for excellence had evidently not been established. No one, therefore, was willing to buy it at a fancy price solely on his own judgment. I say this, well knowing that no better judges of fruit are to be found anywhere than those who daily assemble at that great New York auction market.

The impression a brand makes upon any considerable portion of the public, largely gauges its value. I trust I will be pardoned for again referring to the Old Mission Brand to illustrate this. I want to speak of the impression the brand made upon some of its New York consumers. For some time they regarded the name of the brand as indicating a distinct variety of orange. It is not at all surprising that, knowing nothing of the orange industry and the varieties we grow, they were unable to discriminate between the

variety and the brand. This ^{was}~~was~~ especially true if the name on the label did not clearly indicate that it was the name of a brand and not of a variety, - as for instance, Fanuel Hall, or Quail, ~~or~~ Uncle Sam. For some years, a few buyers at least of the Old Mission Brand thought and spoke of it as a distinct variety. This prevailed, to some extent, even among the handlers of fruit. A friend of mine told of calling at a New York fruit house, and pointing to some oranges in an Old Mission box, with the inquiry, "What kind of oranges are those?" The answer came that they were Old Mission oranges. "I know" he replied "that is the brand, but what is the variety?" With a look of compassion for his ignorance, came the decisive reply, "Why, they are the Old Mission variety." An Eastern guest at our home, this past summer, said her family used nothing but Sunkist oranges. I asked, "Don't you think the Valencias are the best oranges?" "No," she replied, "we prefer the Sunkist".

Of the making of brands, there seems to be no end. The list is long, and includes the name of almost every flower, bird, animal and special attraction known

to California. Some have even gone across the mountains for names that would suit their fancy.

Brands are becoming so numerous, that I wonder if there is danger of the system breaking down, or at least becoming seriously impaired, by reason of its own weight. Will a brand on an orange box, however artistic, come to mean nothing in the estimation of the average buyer? The fact is that already, not even a California expert can tell the grades indicated by half the brands in general use. It seems that the system of brands into which we are drifting, is tending to replace the long established grades, by standards set up by the caprice of the individual packer. A prominent packer recently said to me, mentioning his brands, "You know that my _____ Brand runs between a fancy and a choice, and my _____ Brand is somewhat better than a standard."

The old established Fancy, Choice and Standard grades are being lost in the process of establishing an individual reputation for a certain indefinite quality, by means of an artistic and highly colored, but often meaningless label on the box.