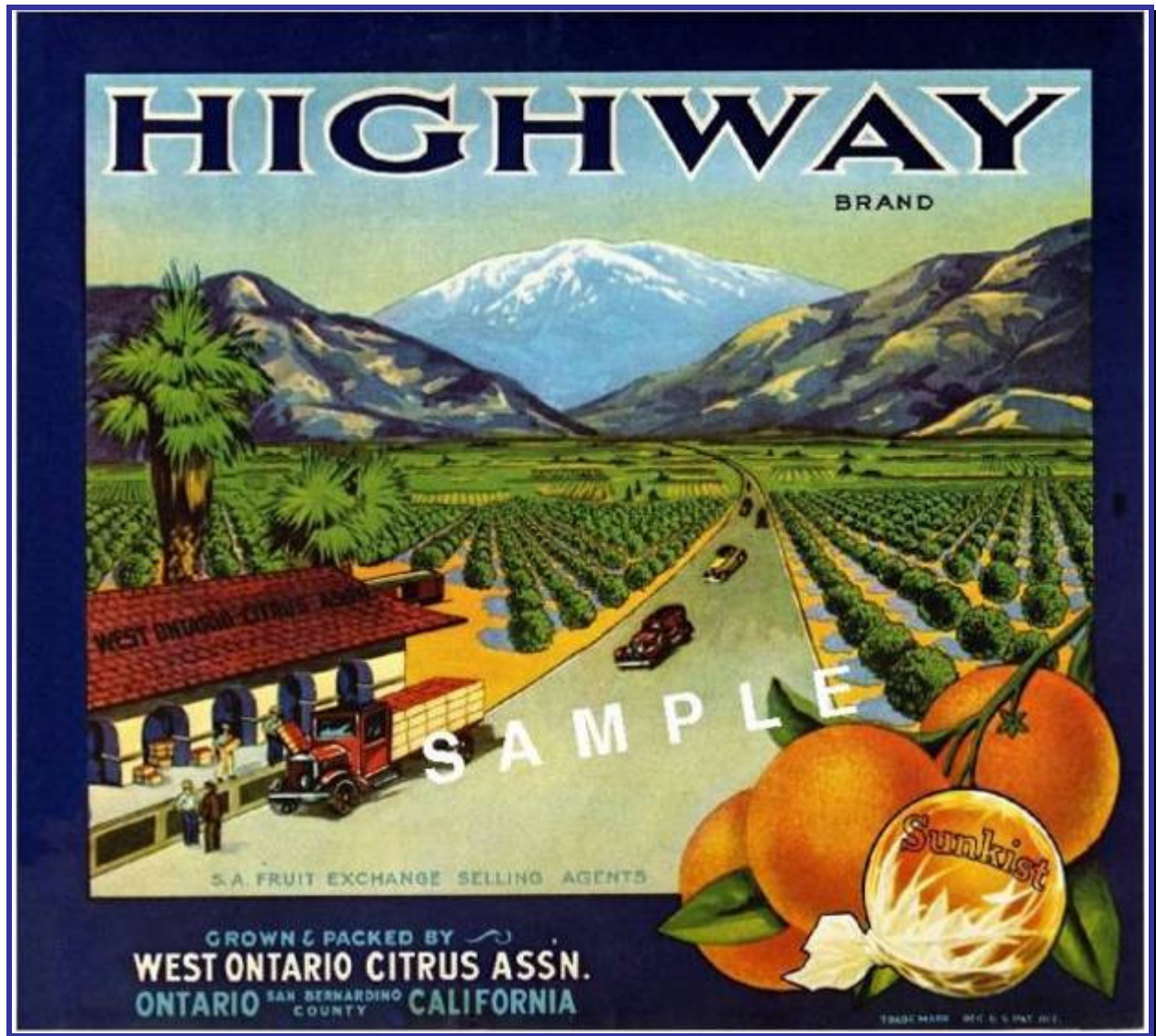


Historic Context for The City of Ontario's Citrus Industry



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Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ii
CITRUS INDUSTRY HISTORIC CONTEXT (INTRODUCTION).....	1
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	1
EARLY HISTORY OF SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY AND NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES	1
CITY OF ONTARIO ESTABLISHED	3
THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CITRUS INDUSTRY IN CALIFORNIA	7
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITRUS INDUSTRY IN SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY	9
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITRUS INDUSTRY IN ONTARIO	12
THE CITRUS GROVE AND ASSOCIATED BUILDINGS	14
ONTARIO CITRUS	16
THE CITRUS PACKING HOUSE	18
THE FORMATION OF CITRUS ASSOCIATIONS	21
ONTARIO’S RELATIONSHIP WITH NEIGHBORING UPLAND	36
CITRUS INDUSTRY LABOR FORCE	38
ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES TO CITRUS CROPS	41
THE ONTARIO CITRUS INDUSTRY IN THE MID- TO LATE-TWENTIETH CENTURY	42
TIMELINE OF ONTARIO’S CITRUS INDUSTRY	45
BIBLIOGRAPHY	48

Citrus Industry Historic Context (Introduction)

This Citrus Industry Historic Context provides a historical background for citrus growing and packing properties once located within the City of Ontario, and provides a framework for understanding and preserving the history of the area as well as a foundation for integrating historic preservation into future land use planning. Historic contexts identify the broad patterns of historical development and link the history of an area with the built environment.

This Historic Context was initially conceived by the City of Ontario to formally research and document the city's once prolific citrus industry to aid in the future identification of potential historic resources within the city's boundaries and to identify those areas, property types and individual resources which should possibly be included in subsequent research, and intensive level survey and evaluation efforts. It is expected that the context will continue to be developed as additional information becomes available through additional research, survey work, and public input.

Historical Overview

Early History of San Bernardino County and Neighboring Communities

San Bernardino County comprises three major areas; a valley basin in which the city of Ontario is located, a series of high mountains, and a vast expanse of desert. In its natural state, the valley was a grassy land with native trees growing in the foothills and along the banks of streams. As early as 1500, Indians (most likely the nomadic Tongva or Gabrieleño Indians) first inhabited the San Bernardino Valley and lived in small settlements called Rancherías. The Rancherías were located near streams or natural springs and contained 10 to 30 dwellings.

Water and climate have been the two key factors in the development of the area. The climate is Mediterranean-like with dry, hot summers and cool moist winters. The water comes down from the San Gabriel Mountains to the north and percolates into the alluvial material of the valley floor and is stored below the surface. Because of its climate and topography, the San Bernardino Valley developed into the principal agricultural area of the county. However, during its early years, the area was used as range land for cattle and grain fields, and then for crops such as vineyards and citrus groves.

The first Europeans who came into the area were Spanish soldiers and padres traveling to and from the San Gabriel and San Luis Rey missions, located to the west and south of Ontario. In 1772, Pedro Fages, a military commander tracked deserters through the county. In 1774, Juan Bautista de Anza led an expedition from Mexico and camped along San Antonio Creek near present day Ontario, naming the place Arroyo de los Osos, or "Bear Gulch." Mission San Gabriel Archangel, founded in 1771, proved to be the most economically successful of all the missions. Its outlying ranch lands, grain fields, orchards and vineyards constituted a vast pastoral empire, eventually extending

many miles inland into the San Bernardino Valley. From the time of the Anza expedition until the Mexican Rancho Period, the land around Ontario was used as grazing land by the Mission. Under Mission rule, cattle ranching became a major industry. The rangy, tough cattle thrived and bred rapidly in the benign Mediterranean climate. Soon hundreds of thousands of head of cattle were wandering across the lush pasture.

Starting in the 1830s, a trade route, known as the Spanish Trail, was established between Southern California and New Mexico. Traders from New Mexico traveled for two months to traverse the rough terrain carrying woolen goods on mules and pack horses to exchange for horses, mules, silks and Chinese goods from California. The San Bernardino Valley served as an excellent pasturage for the livestock of the trading expeditions.

Following the secularization of the missions, large land grants were given to influential citizens leading to European settlement of ranchos for raising cattle in the San Bernardino Valley. The Rancho period lasted from 1834 until the Mexican War of 1846. Raids on livestock were rampant during the Rancho Period. Colonists were encouraged to settle in the San Bernardino Valley to help protect the region from such raids. Recipients of the land grants included Spanish gentlemen (dons) from many of the first families of California, such as the Lugos, Sepulvedas, Yorbas, Bandinis, Tapias, Palomares, and Picos.

One of the largest land grants in the area was Rancho Santa Ana del Chino. In 1841, the Spanish governor Alvarado granted the 22,000-acre Rancho Santa Ana del Chino to his uncle, Antonio Maria Lugo. Lugo had been born at the San Antonio Mission in 1775 and was the son of a soldier. In time, he would become one of the wealthiest and most influential men in Mexican California.

Lugo deeded half the ownership of the ranch to his son-in-law, Isaac William, following his marriage to Lugo's daughter, Maria de Jesus. Williams had come to California in 1832 and become a merchant in Los Angeles. He built the Chino Ranch and turned it into an empire. He planted many field crops, a vineyard, fruit trees, and grew wheat. He constructed a mill to produce flour and established a soap factory. His home was built in a large quadrangle enclosing an interior courtyard, 250 feet on each side. Visitors described it as the largest and best arranged private home in California. Williams' ranch house was a quintessential example of the Rancho-period homes that would serve as the architectural inspiration a century later for a new wave of inhabitants to the area.

The Lugo's San Bernardino Rancho was primarily a livestock range. 4,000 cattle were brought from the elder Lugo's ranch at the present Lynwood-Compton area of Los Angeles. A local historian, Walter C. Schuiling, described rancho living in the 1840s as "a pastoral, almost feudal way of life. Indians provided labor for the Rancherias. Raising cattle and horses were the primary activity- corn, wheat, barley, potatoes, peas, beans, onions and peppers were also cultivated to provide food. Rodeos or roundups were regularly scheduled after the calving season to brand, mark, and gild the livestock. Cattle within a designated area would be driven to one ranch location and livestock that did not belong to that ranch would be driven to their owners."

In 1847, a group of Mormons had separated from the Mormon Battalion on their way to Salt Lake City and ended up living at the Chino Ranch. They aided in the harvest and in building a gristmill. Gold seekers stopped at the Chino Ranch for rest and supplies. In 1848 the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo ended the Mexican War, which signaled the demise of the Rancho Period. Although many land titles were confirmed by the new American government, large grants of land for new ranches came to an end. A new population bringing different cultures began moving into the area, displacing the Hispanic and Mexican inhabitants and their cultures. Free-ranging herds of livestock gave way to a new use of the land - agriculture. In 1853 the County of San Bernardino was created and divided into three townships: San Bernardino, San Salvador and Chino. San Bernardino was designated as the county seat, with the Mormon Council House serving as the first courthouse.

Beginning in 1873, San Bernardino County saw many new railroad lines and train depots being constructed. By 1886, the San Bernardino Valley had two transcontinental railroad systems. In the 1870s and 1880s, cowboys continued to lead herds of cattle over trails through the valley to the railroads.

Another stimulus to growth in the San Bernardino Valley was the growing importance of citrus agriculture. The valley possessed factors especially favorable for citrus growing such as the decomposed granite soil, good drainage, available water, abundant sunshine, and cool winter nights. The completion of the railroads and the booming citrus industry created a land boom, especially in the valley area. During the boom period of the last two decades of the nineteenth century, about 30 new communities, including Ontario, were started in the county.

City of Ontario Established

Located at the west end of San Bernardino County on a sloping plateau at the base of the 10,000-foot Mt. San Antonio (or "Old Baldy"), was established the City of Ontario, California. This area consisted of barren wasteland extending from the San Antonio Canon on the north to the Rancho Santa Ana del Chino on the south and from Cucamonga on the east to Rancho San Jose on the west. Ontario is located fifty miles east of Los Angeles and has an average altitude of 1,000 feet. The natural supply of water comes from the mountain snows and also from the large wells situated in the outlying districts of the city. The mountain also creates a natural barrier for the area from the rest of the world.¹



¹ Alford, Grace H. and Lillian Halfpenny. Survey of Ontario. Sociology 121: Community Organization Term Paper and Project. Second Semester 1928: pg. 6.

The city was named for Ontario, Canada by George Chaffey, a Canadian-born engineer who came to Riverside in 1880, for the purpose of buying, selling and improving real estate, water rights and water privileges in the San Bernardino area. He and his brother William acquired 1,000 acres of the Garcia Rancho in 1881 which they intended to subdivide into small fruit farms after seeing the success of the citrus industry in the Riverside, California area. For the sum of \$60,000, the Chaffeys purchased an additional 6,000 acres that would become the cities of Ontario and Upland. They aspired to create a “Model Colony” which would serve as inspiration to other new community developments.

The Chaffeys understood that to successfully develop an agricultural community in a desert area they would have to create an innovative irrigation system to bring in an adequate supply of water. After surveying the area they realized that this could only be accomplished by routing the waters from the mountain streams (named San Antonio Creek). This system was described in detail in the Volume I addition of the History of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, the author states:

For the purpose of supplying the tract...the water rights including the overflow and underflow of which had been purchased, being in the San Antonio Canyon, about two miles to the northwest of the colony tract. For the first one-half mile, the water is conveyed in a cemented ditch to the main pipe line at the base of the mountain, where the water enters the largest main. The system of distribution over the entire tract consists of pipe lines, about sixty miles or more in extent, varying in size from six to twenty-two inches in diameter. Considerable water has been developed by a tunnel extending up the canon more than a half mile and tapping the underflow. When the colony was started, it was thought the San Antonio Creek in connection with its underflow would furnish abundant water for irrigation...It was demonstrated for years that an average rainfall insured Ontario a series of years remarkable in the history of California for light rainfall, and it was deemed advisable that precautionary measures be taken by the water company which accordingly purchased additional water rights and land and proceeded to make developments. By these purchases and developments the San Antonio Water Company became the possessor of four sources of water supply: first, from the San Antonio Creek; second, from the tunnels; third, artesian water, and fourth, that pumped from numerous wells.²



Photo: Men digging an irrigation ditch for citrus groves. – no date or location. (courtesy of the Ontario City Library, Model Colony Room , Ontario, CA)

² Brown, John Jr. and James Boyd. History of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties – Volume I. The Western Historical Association. 1922: pg. 232.

The Chaffey family laid out the irrigation plan for the area and made water available to every parcel of land through cement pipes. The first pipe was laid on December 11, 1882, and by the end of construction some sixty miles (or 5,000 acres) of piping had been laid. Chaffey also designed a tunnel to tap the underground water supply. The construction of the mile-long tunnel took five years at an estimated cost of close to \$75,000. Much of the difficult and hazardous construction of this pipe has been credited to Chinese workers who had also worked on the construction of the transcontinental railroad.³

In a 1910 *Los Angeles Times* article entitled, "Ontario, A Rich and Attractive City," the water system was featured and described as disposing, "of nearly 10,000,000 gallons of water monthly for domestic use. The rate to customers is \$1 for the first 1000 cubic feet and 50 cents per thousand for additional quantities."⁴ This system not only appealed to many potential agricultural settlers, but also set a new standard for community development and remains the classic pattern for irrigation projects. Ontario became a "model" that was imitated by many other rural "colony" endeavors.⁵ And to impress visitors with the "abundance" of water in Ontario, Chaffey placed a fountain at the Southern Pacific railway station, where it was set to turn on once an hour just as the train arrived.

To ensure the success of this irrigation plan and to appeal to potential land buyers, the Chaffey family created a "mutual water company" in which each landowner became a stockholder. On October 25, 1882, the San Antonio Water Company was incorporated as a California corporation with an authorized capitalization of \$1,500,000 for the purpose of developing and acquiring water, water rights, land, and to furnish water for irrigation and other purposes to serve its shareholders.⁶ Also, an agreement was made, whereby the water was ultimately to become the property of the land owners. The Chaffey family sold all their water rights to the company to reassure their land buyers that they were not selling more land than they had water for. According to the book, Ontario: the Model Colony:

Buyers received one share of water stock with each purchased acre, not to exceed 10 shares. To acquire the shares, the newly formed San Antonio Water Company traded stock to the Chaffey family in return for water rights. The San Antonio Water Company board of directors were Judge Robert M. Widney of Los Angeles, president; George D. Cunningham of Riverside, vice-president; Luther M. Holt also of Riverside, secretary. Charles Chaffey and John C. Dunlap were also on the board...Payment to the Chaffey family for their water rights consisted of 10 shares of stock in the company for each inch of water measured each July 15. They were paid 2,000 shares in advance.⁷

³ Austen, Ruth. Ontario: The Model Colony: An Illustrated History. Windsor Publication, Inc. 1990: pg. 34-35.

⁴ *Los Angeles Times*. "Ontario, A Rich and Attractive City." December 18, 1910: pg. V12.

⁵ Ellingwood, Bob. Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow: Preserving the Past, Presenting the Future – A Chronicle of Moments in Time, "The Model Colony." Inland Empire Business Journal. October 1992: pg. 20.

⁶ Barker, Richard H. Citrus Roots...Our Legacy: Citriculture to Citrus Culture Volume II. Upland Community Foundation. Upland, California: 2004, pg. 124.

⁷ Austen. pg. 35.

The water used from this irrigation system was also used for electrical purposes. George Chaffey was very interested in electricity and he was the first to wire his home for that purpose in the Southern California area. The Ontario Electric Company was set-up through the San Antonio Water Company, and was also owned by the land owners of the city. An electric plant was built which used the water to generate electricity.

The success of the Chaffey's irrigation and electrical plan spread quickly and mention of the San Antonio Water Company appeared regularly in the *Los Angeles Times* throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s. In 1903, the company received national recognition when it was picked to place a miniature replica of its irrigation system on display at the St. Louis Exposition organized by the Hydrographic Bureau of the Geological Survey of the federal government. The following appeared in a 1903 article:

Southern California will offer a novel attraction to the exposition at St. Louis next year. It will be a miniature irrigation system now in existence in Southern California...When the government officials began to look over the various irrigation plants with a view to selecting one which would represent the highest advancement, they turned to California, and their final decision rested on the plant of the San Antonio Water Company, which furnishes most of the water in use in the Ontario colony lands...Not only does the company take all the water from the San Antonio River for irrigation purposes, but it utilizes the water under heavy pressure for generating electricity.⁸

Prior to the *Los Angeles Times* reporting on the success of the Ontario colony, the Chaffey brothers had seen the value of the media to attracting potential home buyers to their newly development area. The first edition of *The Ontario Fruit Grower* was issued on Monday, December 4, 1882. The editor was a man named Edward A. Weed who worked out of an office in Riverside since no buildings were yet constructed in Ontario. The paper touted the innovations of the new development, as well as notices of real estate sales.⁹ Also, its name reflected the intent of the Chaffeys to found Ontario as an agricultural area.

This intent was also evidenced by George Chaffey's decision to set aside one square mile for the Ontario town site with half of the area deeded to trustees for the endowment of an agricultural college. In 1883, the agricultural Chaffey College was constructed on twenty acres in the Ontario Colony. Chaffey College was the first college in San Bernardino County. The agricultural endeavors of Ontario focused primarily on fruit growing. Both the citrus and the olive industries were popular in the area.

On the rest of the land, the Chaffey brothers designed the present downtown Ontario and a land subdivision pattern. They created the main boulevard of Euclid Avenue (California Highway 83) to run from the city's southernmost boundaries to the mountains. Once completed, it was over seven miles in length and 200 feet wide. It had wide lanes and a landscaped grassy median. Euclid's center parkway was to be

⁸ *Los Angeles Times*. "Model Irrigation in Ontario Colony: Miniature Will Go to the St. Louis Exposition." January 9, 1903: pg. 17.

⁹ Lee, Beatrice Parson. The History and Development of the Ontario Colony: A Thesis Presented to the Department of History, University of California. May 2, 1929: pg. 24.

flanked by a 65-foot-wide drive on each side. Every half-mile, paralleling Euclid to the east and west, were 65-foot-wide avenues. North and south, at quarter-mile intervals, were cross streets.¹⁰

The first individual lot sales of Ontario's lands took place in November of 1882. Due to the Canadian roots of the Chaffeys, Canadian settlers were among the first to the area. The area was also appealing to New Englanders for its dry climate and clean air. Soon there was rapid building and citrus groves were appearing on lots throughout the city. The first school house was erected on the same corner where Central school stands today- at "G" Street and Sultana Avenue. The South Side School was located on the northeast corner of State Street and San Antonio Avenue, which was built shortly after Central School. And in 1887, Edward Frasier placed a town site on Market Street (now called Mountain) – it consisted of one and a half miles of land located 2 miles west of Euclid Avenue. His special excursion train brought hundreds of buyers to Ontario's Southern Pacific Depot from Los Angeles.

Ontario was incorporated on December 10, 1891, and a bandstand was built on Euclid Avenue to mark the occasion. However, due to a dispute over the North Ontario area, a petition for enlarged incorporation was brought before the city's people in May of 1901. The vote was carried and Ontario's newly enlarged incorporated area extended north of the Santa Fe tracks into North Ontario to Tenth Street on the west side of Euclid Avenue, and beyond the Santa Fe on the east side of the Avenue to a point which would include the North Ontario Santa Fe Depot. The residents of North Ontario found themselves suddenly included within the boundaries of Ontario and a meeting was called in an attempt to maintain the area's independence. The attendees voted to change North Ontario's name to Upland. As a result, the areas remained as two separate towns.¹¹

Ontario continued to prosper in the citrus industry throughout the early twentieth century, and in a 1921 *Los Angeles Times* article, San Bernardino County is touted as producing a fourth of America's citrus crops.¹² In the 1920s, the largest business was the Exchange Orange Products Company (now Sunkist Growers, Inc.), which was a subsidiary of the California Fruit Growers Exchange. It was moved to Ontario in 1926, where it processed the culls of Valencia oranges into juice and cattle feed.

The Beginnings of the Citrus Industry in California

The first appearance of the orange tree on California soil has been credited to the Spanish padres who brought citrus seeds from Mexico, where they had been cultivated by the Spanish people since the year 1701.¹³ The Franciscans planted gardens and cultivated orchards on the grounds of their California Missions. Their orchards included

¹⁰ Lee. pg. 22.

¹¹ Ibid. pg. 38.

¹² *Los Angeles Times*. "San Bernardino Gains in Wealth and People. Nation's Largest County Produces Fourth of America's Citrus Crop." January 1, 1921: pg. V19.

¹³ Coit, J.E. Citrus Fruits. Macmillan Company, New York: 1917. pg. 2.

figs, grapes, and olives as well as oranges. The largest orange orchard was located at the San Gabriel Mission around 1804 near the city of Los Angeles where six acres were planted with about 400 trees, some of which were still bearing in 1885.¹⁴ It has been speculated that these trees were brought from the lower California missions.

From the San Gabriel orchard, a few trees were acquired by Louis Vignes in 1834 to set out at his home on land now apart of Los Angeles. Then in 1841, the first commercial orchard was established on two acres by William Wolfskill (a Kentucky trapper), also in the Los Angeles area. This proved to be a successful business for Wolfskill, and in 1858 he set out his famous "Wolfskill" orchard which for many years was the largest orange grove in the state of California, eventually growing in size to 72 acres.¹⁵ The first carload of oranges was shipped out-of-state to St. Louis, Missouri from this orchard in 1877, and in 1878 Wolfskill established the first citrus packing house. Wolfskill's orchard was purchased in 1878 by Eugene Germain who paid some \$25,000 for the crop and then had it shipped to San Francisco. The remains of Wolfskill's orchard was eventually enveloped by the fast-paced growth of Los Angeles.¹⁶

By the early 1870s, several orchards had been established by citrus pioneers throughout Southern California. These early orange trees were all seedlings which were small, uneven and full of seeds. According to the author of the Volume I addition of the History of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties several different varieties of oranges were introduced during these early years of citrus cultivation:

About that time, certain nurserymen began to introduce budded varieties from England, South America, Australia, China and Japan, but of the more than 100 varieties thus introduced only a few were retained as having any special value as compared with the seedlings. The first variety of importance to prove of value was the Mediterranean Sweet, imported from Europe, which was extremely cultivated, and, being a late orange, took the market during the early summer months. Other varieties known to the nurserymen of that date were the Paper-rind St. Michael and large St. Michael and the Malta Blood.¹⁷

Although there was much experimentation with various types of oranges, the navel orange caught the attention of many of the citrus growers as being well suited to the California climate and soil. Originally, there were two varieties of the navel which were being grown in this country – one from the trees imported from Australia (Australian navels) and the other from trees sent from the Agricultural Department at Washington D.C. (Washington navels). The resemblance between the two varieties was strikingly similar and only an expert could tell the difference. However, over time the Australian Navel proved to be inferior to the Washington Navel, which eventually became the dominate variety.

The Washington Navel is considered a winter orange and is marketed from November to May. It was mainly grown in the inland areas of Southern California between the San Gabriel and San Bernardino mountains. Its parent orange is the Selecta orange

¹⁴ Stone, George G. "Financing the Orange Industry in California." Pomona Valley Historian. October 2, 1966: pg. 159 – 174.

¹⁵ Lee. pg. 70.

¹⁶ Brown and Boyd. pg. 71.

¹⁷ Ibid. pg. 71-72.

originally grown in the Portuguese colony in Goa on the west coast of India. Eventually, it was taken to Brazil where a Selecta orange tree sprouted a limb bearing the first navel orange. At once this new orange variety was recognized for its superior characteristics and the cultivation of it began immediately. In 1868, the United States Department of Agriculture learned of this variety and had a few trees brought to this country.¹⁸

A second variety of orange which caught the attention of California citrus growers was the Valencia orange which was considered “breathtaking in sheer size.”¹⁹ It was considered a summer orange and is marketed from April to November. Valencias possessed seeds and were used primarily for juice, so farmers cared more about their quantity than quality. Consequently, ranchers grew Valencias near coastal ranges and further down the inland valleys. It is thought to have originated in the Azores and was brought to this country by an Englishman named Thomas Rivers around 1865. “One importation was called the ‘Rivers Late’ and other importations were known by other names until all were found to be of the same variety and identified with the variety called ‘La Naranga Tarde de Valencia’ in Spain.”²⁰ Eventually, the Spanish name was shortened to simply Valencia.

By the early 1880s, the Washington Navel and the Valencia dominated the California orange crop and created a year-round citrus industry. Overall, the Washington Navel was the more popular of the two and was recognized as the country’s first seedless orange. According to Rob Leicester Wagner, author of *Sleeping Giant*, the Washington Navel became the “crown jewel of the Southern California citrus industry.”²¹ This variety was grown successfully in Riverside, San Bernardino and Orange Counties. The most well-known area for the variety’s growth was “in the Foothill orange district that ranged from Pasadena to San Bernardino and included Riverside, Ontario, Upland, Pomona, Glendora, Azusa, Covina, and Monrovia.”²²

The Development of the Citrus Industry in San Bernardino County

The first citrus fruit bearing trees in San Bernardino have been traced back to three specimens obtained from the San Gabriel orchard. They were planted by Anson Van Leuven in 1857 on his farm in San Bernardino, an area formally known as Cottonwood River. Then in 1862, L.R. Van Leuven set out four acres of three year old seedlings he acquired in Los Angeles. And in 1874, Lewis Cram was recognized in the *San Bernardino Guardian* for setting out 1,500 orange trees.²³ These early attempts at citrus growing were mainly experimental. It was uncertain for these early citrus pioneers whether an orange crop could grow successfully in the San Bernardino area and also be profitable.

¹⁸ Stone. pg. 160.

¹⁹ Wagner, Rob Leicester. *Sleeping Giant: An Illustrated History of Southern California’s Inland Empire*. Stephens Press LLC. Las Vegas, Nevada: 1954. pg. 45.

²⁰ Stone. pg. 160.

²¹ Wagner. pg. 45.

²² Ibid.

²³ Brown and Boyd. pg. 73.

The most famous citrus pioneers to the entire Foothill orange district were Luther and Eliza Tibbets. They are given credit with revolutionizing the early citrus industry by introducing the Washington navel to California. In 1873, the Tibbets had visited Washington D.C. in route to their new California home. Upon visiting the Department of Agriculture, Eliza was presented with two navel orange trees by William Saunders, who had been experimenting with this new seedless variety. She accepted the gift and took the trees to her home in Riverside where it is believed that she planted them in 1874. It wasn't until 1879 that Eliza introduced her crop to the world when she hosted a housewarming party and provided her guests with samples of the fruit. Her contribution to the citrus industry has been described as follows:

*Her oranges proved that the Washington navel could adapt to the environment, producing large, plumb seedless oranges with exceptional color and remarkable flavor. From that point, citrus growers realized they had a sure thing on their hands. The demand for the fruit became so great that buds from the Tibbets' trees were used exclusively for propagation with budded wood, selling for the astronomical price of \$5 per piece. The Tibbets were also forced to build a fence around their trees to prevent theft of the buds.*²⁴

The wide recognition of the outstanding quality of the Tibet Washington navels was the impetus that caused the California citrus industry to grow at an incredible speed. Soon hundreds of acres of citrus had been planted throughout the Foothill orange district. Being a neighbor to Riverside, San Bernardino quickly realized that its soil was also well suited for fruit growing, and it adopted the Washington navel (as well as the Valencia orange), and groves were rapidly being planted throughout the county's developing communities.

The early citrus growers were not agriculturalists who had been educated in the specialties of fruit growing. Instead, they were ambitious individuals who saw the financial potential of the citrus industry. These early pioneers of the citrus industry have been described as, "aggressive experimenters in irrigating, planting, pruning, harvesting, and managing their crops. They eagerly exchanged information at the numerous fruit and citrus fairs throughout the region and flooded the College of Agriculture at the University of California, Berkeley, with letters requesting information."²⁵ They educated themselves, and in doing so created the most successful industry for the state at that time.

Many of these citrus pioneers moved into San Bernardino County in hopes of developing a successful citrus crop. Not only were oranges being planted, but lemons and grapefruit were also being experimented with. Soon areas such as Ontario and Upland were quickly becoming established as citrus communities. And most of the San Bernardino Valley communities that were established in the 1880s and 90s owed their growth during the subsequent decades to the citrus agriculture.

²⁴ Wagner. pg. 47.

²⁵ Austen. pg. 59.



Photo: No description or date. (photo courtesy of the Cooper Museum, Upland, CA)

The San Bernardino citrus crops flourished, and the first car load of oranges and lemons was sent from the area by G. W. Garcelon and A. J. Twogood on April 24, 1882, to Denver. The county then gained recognition at various fairs and expositions for the quality of their fruit. In 1884, San Bernardino participated in the New Orleans Exposition and won the following awards: “Gold medal for the best

twenty varieties of oranges grown in California: gold medal for the same grown in the United States: gold medal for the same grown in the world: silver medal (highest prize) for the best display of lemons, from any part of the world.”²⁶ San Bernardino County citrus had competed with citrus from various California districts, Louisiana, Florida, the West Indies, and from various Mexican states and Mediterranean cities. San Bernardino also participated in the Chicago Citrus Fair of 1886 where the county’s handsomely decorated exhibition train car was greeted with much fanfare by the some 75,000 attendees from all over the Northwestern United States.²⁷ San Bernardino County citrus also was a consistent entry in local citrus fairs. These fairs and exhibitions were held annually in conjunction with the State Convention of Fruit Growers and also at state fairs in various communities. San Bernardino hosted their first citrus fair in 1891 in a pavilion built specifically for the occasion. And in 1911, San Bernardino County hosted the first annual National Orange Show.

In 1888, the San Bernardino Horticultural Commission was founded to protect the county’s citrus crops from parasites and insects. At first, the commission was not well received, but over time its important contribution to the industry was recognized. Under the innovative leadership of S.A. Pease of Ontario, the system operated with local inspectors making monthly inspections and reports. Pease also began the collection and classification of entomological specimens. His collection not only comprised the destructive and beneficial insects and parasites native to San Bernardino County, but also included specimens from various areas in the United States and Mexico.²⁸

Transportation of the citrus crops was also an important factor in the success and marketing of the industry. The product had an immediate national market, but developing the proper methods of transporting the fruit was a slow and deliberate process. Early on the crops were only for local consumption. In San Bernardino, Anson Van Leuven’s groves were a popular attraction and visitors willingly paid 75 cents to

²⁶ Brown and Boyd. pg. 77.

²⁷ *The San Bernardino Times*. “Citrus Growers Arrive at Chicago Citrus Fair.” March 3, 1886. pg.1.

²⁸ Brown and Boyd. pg. 78.

pick a dozen.²⁹ Local newspapers also touted the popularity and success of other San Bernardino groves, enticing visitors to make the journey and hand pick their own citrus.

The first attempts at transporting the fruit involved moving it by wagon to Los Angeles and from there by ship and rail to San Francisco. At that time, the fruit was being sold for between \$2 and \$4 per box, which was a modest price compared to the \$7 and \$8 per box in cities such as Denver, Colorado. The completion of the Southern Pacific line to Los Angeles in 1876 benefited the transportation and financial success of California citrus, as well as the New Orleans extension in 1881. But it wasn't until the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe line opened in 1885 that the industry boomed. An average profit per acre was between \$800 and \$1,000, with some growers making upwards to \$3,000 per acre.³⁰

By 1915, the California citrus industry was a \$200 million industry. And by 1920, San Bernardino County was contributing more than 125,000 carloads of citrus on an annual basis, valued at more than \$30,000,000. San Bernardino's success was due to its successful fruit growing communities, such as Ontario, which because of its excellent irrigation system was able to produce oranges, lemons as well as other kinds of fruits in large quantities.

The Development of the Citrus Industry in Ontario

When the Chaffey brothers founded the Ontario colony, they had spent the last few years in Riverside witnessing their father's, W.B. Chaffey, experimentation with oranges. They soon realized that the soil of their new development was also well-suited to fruit growing. However in 1882, orange trees were too scarce and expensive at \$100 an acre to turn to citrus, so at first other types of fruit were planted.³¹ By 1884, Ontario Nursery owner D.A. Shaw reported that there were "40,000 peach trees, 29,000 pear trees, 15,000 seedling apple trees, 16,000 grafted apple trees, 1,000 cherry trees, and 16,000 grape cuttings set out in orchards and vineyards."³² These fast-growing deciduous fruits became a stable crop for Ontario throughout the late nineteenth century.

The first documented orange grove planted in Ontario was that of L.S. Dyer on San Antonio Avenue between Fifth and Sixth Streets. The success of his crop influenced others to try their luck at citrus growing. Fred L. Alles was given credit in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1885 for producing the first orange in Ontario on a "newly set tree." It was reported that a plaster cast was made of it.³³

²⁹ Ibid. pg. 74.

³⁰ Austen. pg. 59.

³¹ Lee. pg. 72.

³² Austen. pg. 60.

³³ Lee. pg. 72.



Photo: Abraham Oakley 10-acre citrus grove site located at the northwest corner of J Street and Euclid Avenue. He purchased the property in the mid-1880s. Chaffey College can be seen in the background. (courtesy of the OntarioCity Library, Model Colony Room, Ontario, CA)

During the late nineteenth century, there was a huge explosion in the planting of orange crops in Ontario. By 1878, it was reported that some 700 acres of crops had been planted, and by 1889 the acreage had increased to over 2,000. At this time, Ontario was rated as having the second largest citrus acreage in the state.³⁴

Many early citrus pioneers were establishing their groves by this time, and were also contributing to the development of the city by increasing landownership and bringing their own cultures, knowledge and talents to the area. According to Ontario city directories, newspaper clippings and the leadership rosters of the Ontario citrus associations, some of the most well-known Ontario citrus pioneers included Glenn D. Smith, H. E. Swan, A. T. Hamilton, K. D. Blaikie, W. L. Cook, N. H. Garrison, C. C. Graber, Hugh Latimer, James P. Lindley, William Lindley, William Laidlaw, G. W. Russell, W. P. Arden, L. W. Cushman, J. F. Wyon, B. E. Williams, L. A. Stone, Knud Benson, David Crawford, James Cooney, S. C. Pitzer, F. D. Green, B. F. Singer, C. B. Ford, D. K. Brant, Daniel Gibier, James Monroe, E. M. Dillman, Charles D. Adams, F. D. Green, George W. Turner, George W. Naftel, Frank W. Ford, Dorr B. Lee, P. H. Brown, and the Stewart brothers – Lyman, Wilton and William.

The Stewart brothers were especially well-known within the Ontario citrus industry. Lyman Stewart was the second largest stockholder of the Ontario Land and Improvement Company, and along with his brothers Milton and William, had acquired some 800 acres of land in Ontario by the 1890s. The family ran their own packing house, the Stewart Citrus Association Packing House, which was a member of the Ontario-Cucamonga Fruit Exchange and packaged such brands as “Blue Jay,” “Lotus,” “Bear” and “Coyote.”³⁵

³⁴ Syke, Dr. R.C. “The Citrus Industry.” *Ontario Record*. February 5, 1890.

³⁵ The Ontario Planning/Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report. “Landmark Designation of the W.B. Stewart House. June 28, 2005. pg.2.

John Perry Ensley was also a very well-known Ontario citrus grower. Ensley settled in Ontario in 1885 and cleared several acres for citrus development which “started the development of other citrus tracts” in the area, as well as Upland.³⁶ He was one of the original settlers of Ontario and was elected to the board of trustees for nine years and served as mayor for several terms. He was also one of the organizers of the San Antonio Water Company and served as its director for three terms. He was a member of the Ontario Citrus Fruit Association and represented them to the Ontario Cucamonga Fruit Exchange.

The Citrus Grove and Associated Buildings



Photo: Citrus grove in North Ontario area photographed in circa 1905. (courtesy of the Cooper Museum, Upland, CA)

The majority of the pioneer citrus growers planted their groves on the same property as their residences, as well as owning property for additional crops. The lots were square or rectangular in shape and the citrus trees were planted in straight rows with walkways in between for

pickers to have room to place the ladders and equipment needed to pick the fruit. Irrigation pipes were also placed in the paths between the grove rows, as well as smudge pots to warm the crops when the temperature dropped below freezing. The citrus groves could be placed on lots as small as one acre to lots as large as several hundred acres.



Photo: Citrus groves around Euclid Avenue, circa 1915. (courtesy of the Cooper Museum, Upland, CA)

³⁶ *Los Angeles Times*. “Pioneer of Ontario in Final Rest.” November 16, 1930. pg. A6.

Typically, the citrus grower planted groves surrounding his residence on three sides, leaving only the façade to be visible from the street. The architectural style of these early pioneer residences from the late nineteenth century were mostly of the Victorian-era, popular during the 1880s and 1890s. Many were constructed in the Queen Anne or Victorian-eclectic style. The residences varied in size depending on the wealth and prominence of the grower. They were usually one- to two-story buildings. Some of the distinct features of these styles included; gabled or hipped roofs, second-story projections and corner turrets, gable ends ornamented with half-timbering or stylized relief decoration, casement windows with upper panes outlined with stained-glass squares, clapboard or decorative shingles, verandas and balconies.



Photo: Representative example of a high-style Queen Anne residence as seen in Ontario. (courtesy of <http://architecture.about.com/library/ucmys14.htm>)



Photo: The Dorr B. Lee Citrus Ranch Farmhouse located at 607 W. "D" Street in Ontario. This is a more modest example of the Queen Anne style. (courtesy of the City of Ontario.)



Photo: Large citrus property in the Ontario or North Ontario area – no name or date. Photo shows a large scale Victorian-era home (of the Queen Anne style) surrounded by groves with only the building's façade visible from the driveway. A number of grove associated buildings can be seen to the rear of the residence. (courtesy of the Ontario Public Library, Model Colony Room, Ontario, CA)

Going into the early twentieth century, many citrus growers were constructing their homes in the Craftsman style, which was popular from 1905 - 1930. This style became prolific during this time due to the abundance of appropriate materials and pattern books

which made a Craftsman homes affordable and desirable. The typical features of a Craftsman home included natural materials, a gabled or hipped roof, one- to two-stories, an exterior chimney, wide window and door surrounds, partial- or full-width front porch, battered and angled foundation, and low piers with columns above at the porch. This style became popular for Ontario citrus growers as Craftsman neighborhoods appeared within the city.



Photos: Typical Craftsman Bungalows from the early twentieth-century. (photos taken by Rebecca Silva)

Also present on the grower's property were barns, garages and sometimes other fruit processing buildings, including packing facilities if the grower was large enough to support their own packing house. The majority of these buildings were constructed to be large warehouse-type buildings, open on the interior with upper-clerestory windows to maximize light. These buildings were constructed large enough to house equipment such as tractors, smudge pots, wagons and horse equipment. They were usually of wood frame construction with metal roofs.

As technology progressed into the twentieth century, the citrus farmer went from a horse and buggy operation to an automated one with tractors doing most of the plow and general farm work, and the automobile transporting the citrus products. This somewhat changed the layout of the groves as roads and driveways were added to accommodate these machines. Access needed to be provided directly to the groves and the buildings associated with them. Sometimes tree rows were lost as these access routes were laid out within the grove itself. However, the convenience provided by these machines far outweighed the loss of a few citrus trees. Also, larger driveways were added to front of the property to give better access to automobiles and tractors arriving and departing from the property. In general, production levels went up and the citrus farmer experienced fewer problems since they were not as dependent on animal power. But overall, the appearance and operations of the citrus grove did not change much over time. Due to the delicate nature of the fruit, it continued to be hand picked and the citrus trees continued to be planted in symmetrical rows.

Ontario Citrus

The early groves in Ontario began around San Antonio Street and eventually surrounded the central downtown area of Euclid Avenue. By locating themselves close to downtown Ontario, the growers were able to tend their crops but also do business in

Ontario. However, over the years the demand for housing caused growers to sell off portions of their land for residential developments, pushing the groves to the west of the central core of the city.

Due to the fast paced development of the Ontario citrus groves in the 1880s, the first car load of oranges was shipped from Ontario to Denver in December of 1889. In the spring of 1890, Ontario held its first citrus fair for all surrounding communities. This event was publicized in a *Los Angeles Times* article in February 7, 1890. The following is an excerpt from that article:

*The Ontario Citrus Fair, which was held in the A.O.U.W. Hall, Ontario all day Wednesday and during the evening, was a success in every sense. The attendance was good, and the display of citrus fruit was all that could be desired. In many respects the Ontario oranges and lemons on exhibition rival the celebrated fruit of Riverside, being bright, free from scale, and possessing all the essential features of the best Southern California fruit. When one considers that only six years ago where are now located orange groves was mere pasture land, the showing made at the Ontario fair was indeed a brilliant one, and clearly demonstrates what can be done in a very short period in the way of citrus culture in our superior climate and soils. Up to date, the growers of this favorite section have shipped upward of sixty carloads of oranges, the prices received being the same as for the Riverside fruit. This gratifying showing will no doubt stimulate the industry about Ontario, and the acreage to oranges and lemons will be materially increased year by year.*³⁷

Because of this regional recognition, the Pomona cannery offered to buy Ontario's citrus fruits for \$2.75 per box, agreeing to ship them under an Ontario brand.³⁸ Ontario also began entering their citrus crops in the California state fair. In 1891, Ontario lemons took all top prizes at the state fair. In 1893, Ontario's fruit exhibit took first place at the Colton Fair and was purchased by the San Bernardino County World's Fair Association and sent to Chicago for the Chicago Citrus Fair.

To adequately transport the citrus to these various fairs, exhibitions and also to market, the growers realized that a packing system had to be developed. The first efforts at packing were relatively primitive compared to later innovations. During these early years, the fruit was packed loosely in barrels or boxes, and the wooden crate ends and barrel tops were crudely stenciled, stamped or burned with a brand name and packing location. By 1880, some of the more progressive growers began sorting and packing the fruit and placing them in a uniform box. And by 1882, packing houses were established and began bidding on business. Some of the earliest packing houses included the Riverside Fruit Company and the E. C. Packard Company. And "the first organization of packers was held at Riverside, December 28, 1887, and adopted rules as to the conduct of their business."³⁹

³⁷ *Los Angeles Times*. "Ontario Fair: A Successful Citrus Exhibit – The Premiums." February 7, 1890. pg. 3.

³⁸ Lee. pg. 73.

³⁹ Brown and Boyd. pg. 75.

The Citrus Packing House



Photo: Upland packing house in circa 1950s. (courtesy of the Cooper Museum, Upland, CA)

The success of the packing houses depended upon the quality of machinery, the efficiency of the employees and the abilities of management. The packing house was overseen by a board of directors who were elected by the local growers association which founded it. This board would hire the house manager whose responsibilities included nurturing the relationship between the local growers and the organization, and successfully managing operations and employees. Many of the house managers started out as pickers and worked their way up. Underneath the house manager, was the house foreman. His main responsibility was the general operation of the plant. Other employees included the foremen of various departments,

packers, sorters, pressmen, car loaders, labelers, box-makers, mechanics and general helpers.⁴⁰

Once the fruit arrived at the packing house, it was sent to the storeroom for softening (sometimes ethelyn gas was used to bring out the fruit color). Next, the fruit was washed as it was gently dumped from boxes into washing tanks filled with warm water and solvents or soaps to loosen smudging soot, sprays, and dust. The oranges were then passed over various conveyor belts under rinsing sprays, through disinfecting solutions, and then dried by revolving brushes and air blasts. During the drying process the fruit was given a paraffin coating for protection and shine.⁴¹ After washing and drying, the oranges were placed on a table to be graded and counted. Some packing houses did not have counters so the growers' fruit was tallied as it was run, which included the number of packed boxes in the different packed grades, the number of loose fruit boxes, number of culls, by-products, ponies and rots. The grower was paid according to the grade of his fruit; he received along with the other growers, an equal amount for his produce in a given pool for each grade.⁴²

The next step in the packing process was trademarking to indicate whether the fruit conformed to certain prescribed standards such as good eating quality, texture and external appearance. Oranges were passed through a stamping machine where they received inked stamps indicating such standard terms as Fancy, Choice, Standard,

⁴⁰ Division of Curriculum, Los Angeles County Schools. "The Citrus Industry in California." Industrial Units Series No. P-1090B. Los Angeles, California. 1936: pg.45.

⁴¹ Ibid. pg. 45.

⁴² Ibid. pg. 47.

Extra Fancy, etc. Lemons were not stamped directly with a trademark, but rather were placed in trademark wrappers.⁴³



Photo: 1890s automatic orange weighing machine designed and constructed for Redlands Citrus Association. (courtesy of the Ontario Public Library, Model Colony Room, Ontario, CA)

The last three steps in this process were sizing, packing and lidding. To separate the various sizes, the fruit was placed in a sizing machine where it was carried along between a set of rolls and a rope or belt which allowed the proper sizes to drop into bins (small sizes first) until all sizes had been separated. Then the packers (almost always women) took the fruit from the bins, wrapped it in tissue paper and placed it in shipping boxes. The boxes were uniform in size, however, the number of oranges per box varied because of the various sizes of the fruit. On average, anywhere from fifty to 75 boxes were packed a day. Each packer wore gloves to not injure the fruit and was also required to stamp their number on the label end of each box so any faulty work could be traced. Also, the fruit had to be firmly and neatly packed or it would spoil during shipping. Once packed, the boxes were carried by belts to the lidding machine, where the covers were automatically nailed on and the proper identification marks were placed

⁴³ Ibid. pg. 48.

on each box. The wood used for the packing boxes came from citrus association-owned timber lands and mills, usually located in northern California.⁴⁴

The first packing house in Ontario was established in June, 1892 to provide local growers with the proper packing of their crops for market. The Ontario Packing Company was organized by local growers who came together for mutual assistance in meeting the high standards of the market. The plant was established with a capital stock of \$15,000 and was located just opposite of the Southern Pacific depot. The first year the plant opened, it had originally been contracted for three-hundred tons of fruit (two-hundred of which been grown in the citrus district below the railroad tracks), but by the close of the season, the plant had handled seven-hundred tons of fruit for which it had paid \$20,000. By the end of the year, the plant had sold sixteen cars fruit.⁴⁵



Photo: One of the early Ontario packing houses operated by Mitchell and Butterfield out of an old livery stable in 1897. The building later became the home of the Hotpoint factory. (courtesy of the Ontario Public Library, Model Colony Room, Ontario, CA)

Due to the packing improvements provided by the packing house, Ontario was able to ship its first train load of fruit on November 4, 1893, by way of the Santa Fe rail line. According to Beatrice Lee in her thesis, "It was shipped by Sutliff and Groom, who had leased the cannery, and consisted of seventeen cars of canned and dried fruit, and raisins. A large crowd came to give it a 'send off' and the Ontario band accompanied the train to San Bernardino. The cars were decorated with palm branches and flowers and a large lithograph of Ontario."⁴⁶

During the 1892-93 season, over forty-six cars of oranges and lemons had been shipped from Ontario. And by 1893, Ontario had developed some 5,000 acres for citrus growing. Although the crops were flourishing, the problem of marketing the citrus fruits became increasingly more difficult. The growers were not organized and were at the mercy of the numerous commission men and local buyers who forced the prices to

⁴⁴ Ibid. pg. 49-51.

⁴⁵ Lee. pg. 73-74.

⁴⁶ Ibid. pg. 74.

plummet. Distribution methods were weak and difficulties were encountered in the long transcontinental shipments in slow trains with improper care and quantities of fruit spoiled prior to reaching its destination. Many times the fruit was being shipped without the growers' knowing whether the markets were flooded or whether the product was in demand.⁴⁷ The growers were rapidly increasing the production of the oranges, but were unable to sell at a profit.

The Formation of Citrus Associations

Growers all over Southern California were experiencing the same frustrations. To find a solution to these problems, growers began to associate themselves together for mutual protection and for the purpose of better packing marketing facilities.⁴⁸ On November 24, 1885, several growers came together in Los Angeles and formally declared that unless some action was taken immediately they were going to lose their homes. After several days of sessions, they established the first organization to unite citrus growers, The Orange Growers Protective Union of Southern California. They elected five men to travel east to sell, regulate and distribute the citrus shipments. Then in 1893, the Southern California Fruit Exchange was established to create a cooperative among growers. The following excerpt describes how the Exchange was formed:

At the close of the season in 1893 some sixty growers from all districts met in Los Angeles to discuss the orange marketing problems faced by them. As a result of this meeting a committee was appointed which recommended the direct system of marketing first adopted by the Claremont California Fruit Growers Association and a plan of cooperative action in the industry. The committee proposed the formation of eight districts and an organization of local packing associations in each district. A central office was recommended for each district and each district would be represented by one person on a central executive committee for Southern California with headquarters in Los Angeles. Local associations were to do their own packing under their own brand. The districts were to sell the fruit and the central executive committee was to act as a clearing house of sales information.⁴⁹

The region's citrus-growing areas were divided into districts, each with a local association that would do its own picking, grading, and packing under a purely local brand. The exchange itself would handle the marketing and distribution of the fruit, break the grip of the middlemen, and distribute all profits to the individual associations, which would then pass them down the line to the growers on a pro-ratio basis. Local growers began grouping themselves together on a local level as part of packing house associations. And the packing house associations grouped themselves together on a regional level as part of district exchanges. And all of these cooperatives were a part of the parent organization, the California Fruit Growers' Exchange. This system helped the local grower to extend their product from the orchard to the market. It also protected

⁴⁷ Wagner. pg. 48.

⁴⁸ Lee. pg. 75.

⁴⁹ Stone. pg. 167.

the growers by regulating the prices and established more uniform methods of marketing and shipping.

The orange growers controlled the packing house associations' activities by electing three to eleven of their own to serve as directors. The number of votes each member could cast was determined by various factors depending on the individual association, and usually included any one of the following: the number of shares he owned, the patronage of the association, the size of his grove, the number of boxes his grove produced the previous season, or the number of trees per acre on his land. The directors completely controlled the management of the association, the election of officers and the packing house manager. The officers were usually a president, vice-president, secretary (sometimes a bank) and treasurer. The packing house manager was responsible for overseeing the plant's operation and carrying out the policies set by the board of directors.⁵⁰

To join a packing house association, the local grower must sign the by-laws and a crop contract in which he agrees to deliver all the fruit from his grove to the association and in turn receives the right to participate in the association. The contract contains sections stating the fruit pooling methods, and various deductions for packing and fruit reserves from the returns of fruit sales. These contracts were usually for a period of a few years, but could be terminated by either party at any time. The contract was also immediately terminated by the sale of the grove.⁵¹

The district exchange was an incorporated cooperative association offering membership to a local group of packing house associations in a given geographical area. It operated between the local associations and the California Fruit Growers Exchange. There were usually between one and twenty local packing house associations in each district. The exchanges were also operated by a board of directors who were elected among its member associations. The board would select its officers, manager, and sometimes an assistant manager. Also, they would elect one of their members to represent the exchange on the board of the California Fruit Growers Exchange. A marketing agreement binds the packing house associations to the district exchange and the district exchange to the central exchange.

The California Fruit Growers Exchange (or central exchange) was a cooperative non-stock, non-profit, marketing association. Its membership was composed of 25 district exchanges and twenty-five board members serving as representatives of the individual exchanges. The directors elect a president, three vice-presidents, a secretary, three assistant secretaries, a treasurer and a cashier. There were also ten department heads. The three-party marketing agreement between the local associations, the district exchanges and the central exchange binds all members to market their product through each other and also withholds a percentage of revenue to pay for various organizational expenses, including marketing and office costs.⁵²

⁵⁰ Stone. pg.170.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid. pg.171-173.

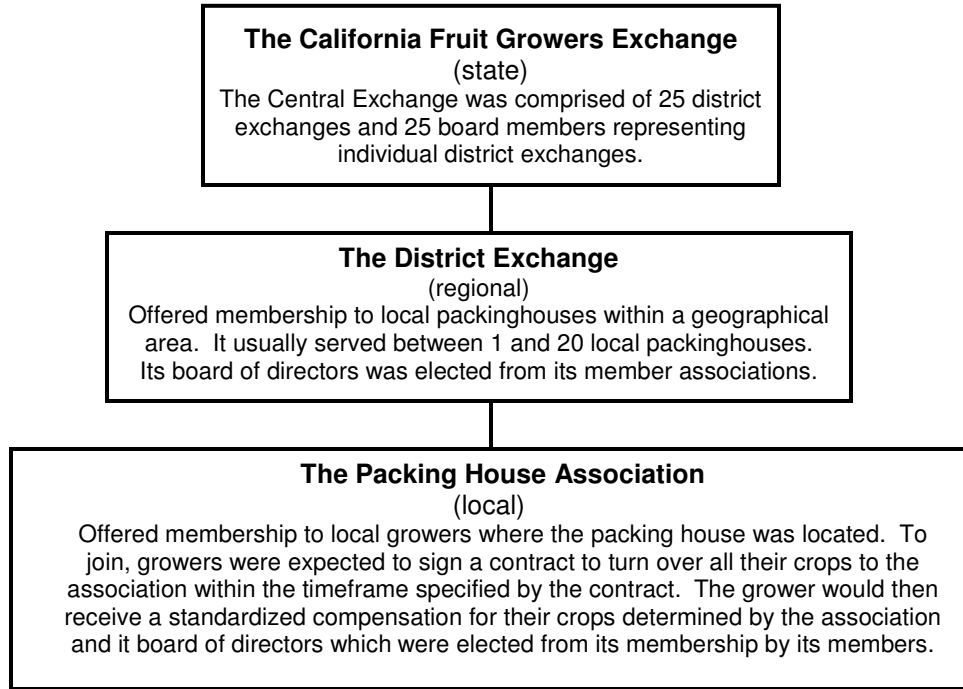


CHART: *The grower's associations organization chart showing the three tiers of citrus pricing oversight on a local, regional and state level.*

Ontario growers saw the benefit of organizing themselves into a cooperative group and formed the Ontario Fruit Exchange on June 3, 1893. The original board of directors was comprised of L.S. Dyer, G.S. Barrett, C.E. Harwood, Dr. Hyar and W.E. Collins⁵³ and its organization was described by Alford and Halfpenny as follows:

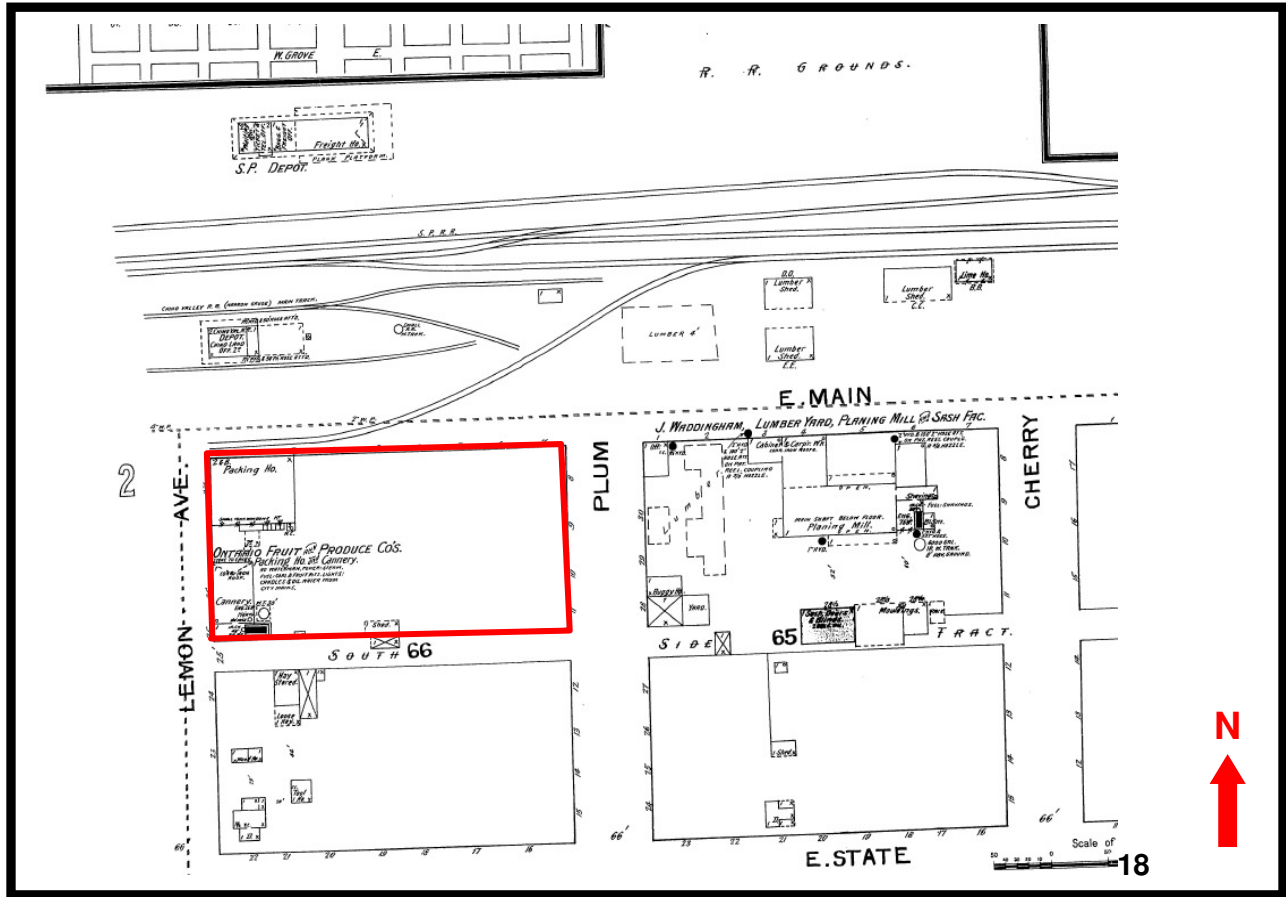
The Fruit Exchange was opened as early as 1889. Now there are two associations and packing houses. This is a cooperative scheme. There is a pooling system with a pro rata of expenses and receipts. There is a field man who estimates the amount of fruit of each rancher and then he is notified how many boxes of fruit to deliver at the packing house for each pool. The packing house has equipment for sorting and people for packing the fruit. The culls or defective fruit is sold directly to men who come to the packing house with their trucks and take the fruit to Los Angeles for street selling. As the years have passed improvements have been made.⁵⁴

In the fall of that same year, the Lemon Growers Exchange of Ontario was also established and it has been recognized as the oldest organization for the marketing of lemons in California.⁵⁵ It was located during its first two years of operation in a small frame packing house just south of the Santa Fe rail line in Ontario.

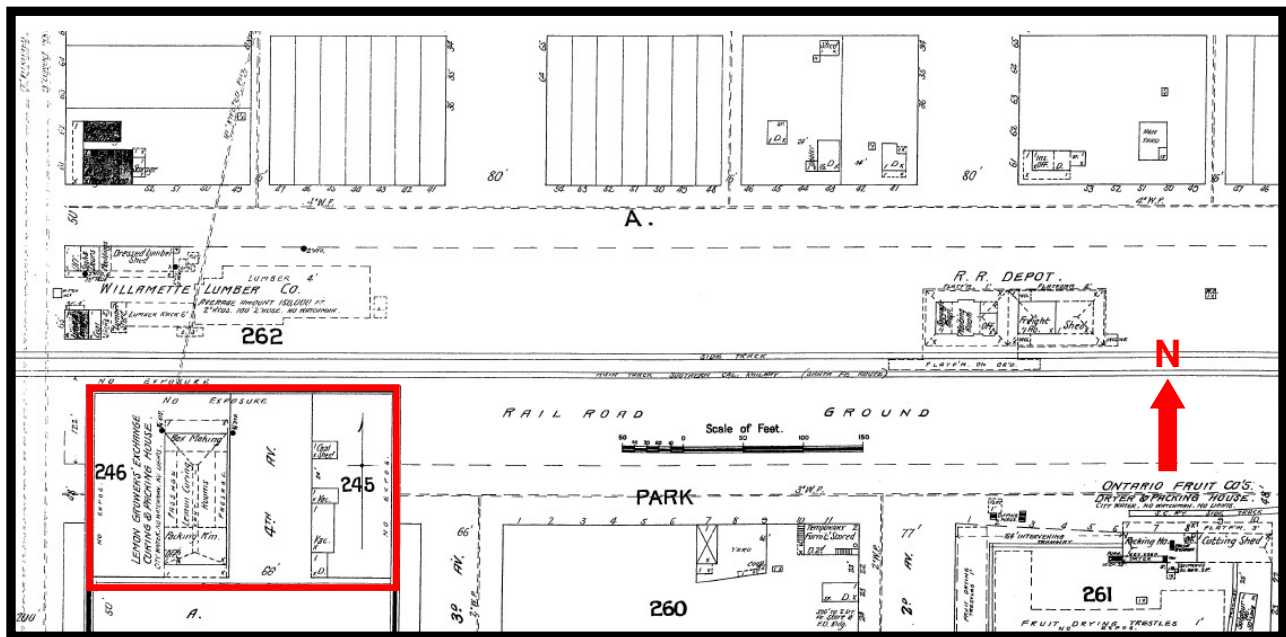
⁵³ Lee. pg. 75.

⁵⁴ Alford and Halfpenny. pg. 13.

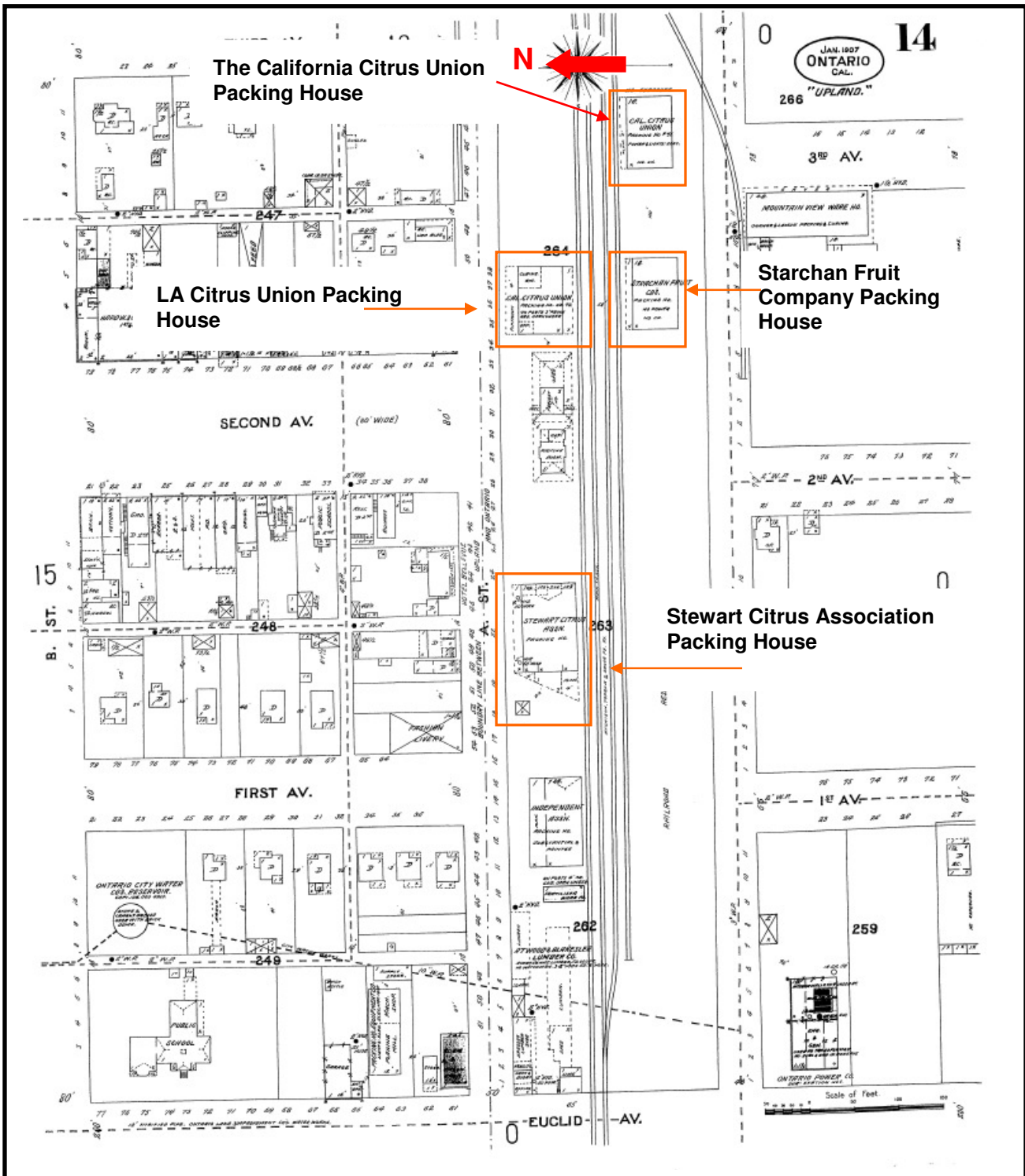
⁵⁵ Boyd and Brown. pg. 233.



1893 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: The Orange Fruit Exchange's original packing house location. It was situated within the block of East Main Street, Lemon Avenue, East State Street and Plum Street, and was located south of the rail road tracks. (Sanborn Map courtesy of proquest.com)



1895 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: Original location of the Lemon Grower's Exchange packing house in what was Ontario but is now the City of Upland. It was situated directly south of the railroad tracks and the depot, between Fourth Avenue and Euclid Avenue. (Sanborn Map courtesy of proquest.com)



1907 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: Several additional packing houses appear by 1907 around the railroad tracks in Ontario (now the City of Upland), clearly illustrating the relationship between rail transportation and the citrus packing industry. (Sanborn Map courtesy of proquest.com)

In September of 1893, the Ontario Fruit Exchange became an association of the San Antonio Fruit Exchange, but withdrew after only two years. In 1895, it joined the Southern California Fruit Exchange, as a separate district exchange, until 1897 when it became one of the associations comprised by the Ontario-Cucamonga Fruit Exchange. Around 1900, the Ontario Fruit Exchange changed its name to the West Ontario Citrus Association and in 1920 it rejoined the San Antonio Fruit Exchange since it was geographically much more connected. This organization was also a member of the California Fruit Growers Exchange. The principal packing house for this exchange was located in Narod and it also had a packing house in Upland.⁵⁶

Another well-known Ontario district (regional) exchange was the Ontario-Cucamonga Fruit Exchange (or O.K. Exchange), which handled oranges, lemons and grapefruit, and its brands included "Nucleus Bear," "Nucleus Owl" and "Nucleus Quail." By 1911, the Ontario-Cucamonga Fruit Exchange included in its membership the following ten associations: The Ontario Citrus Association, Mountain View Orange and Lemon Growers' Association, Cucamonga Citrus Association, Upland Citrus Association, Upland Heights Orange Association, Lemon Growers' Exchange, Ettwanda Citrus Growers' Association, Stewart Citrus Association and the Cucamonga Lemon Association. And by 1924, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the exchange was shipping 85 percent of the citrus from its district. The article also reported that year was a record breaking one for the exchange as 4,535 cars of citrus was getting ready to be shipped, causing its packing house to hire additional workers to prepare for the rush.⁵⁷ And in 1925, the exchange had one of its biggest years, reporting \$6,003,655.00 in sales.⁵⁸ This exchange was a member of the California Fruit Growers' Exchange.

The *Los Angeles Times* consistently mentioned the activities of the various Ontario exchanges and associations. Their meetings, elections of board of directors, shipments, packing house improvements, expenses, pricing and annual income were featured regularly throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The two Ontario based packing house associations which received the most recognition were the Ontario Citrus Association and the Western Ontario Citrus Association.

The Ontario Citrus Association was founded in 1898 and grew rapidly in size. At one time, it was recognized as one of the largest associations in numbers in the Southern California area. The Association had two packing house, the first on the eastern side of Ontario on East A Street and the second on South Pleasant Avenue, and its brands included "Special Bear" and "Special Quail." This organization was first recognized in the *Los Angeles Times* in a August 13, 1898, article, which stated, "The Ontario Citrus Association is a thriving young organization and many orange and lemon growers are joining it. The association will be a member of the Ontario-Cucamonga Exchange."⁵⁹ In a September 17, 1919, *Los Angeles Times* article the association had its biggest year to date and was mentioned in the following way:

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *Los Angeles Times*. "Expect Record Crop of Fruit." February 2, 1924. pg. D12.

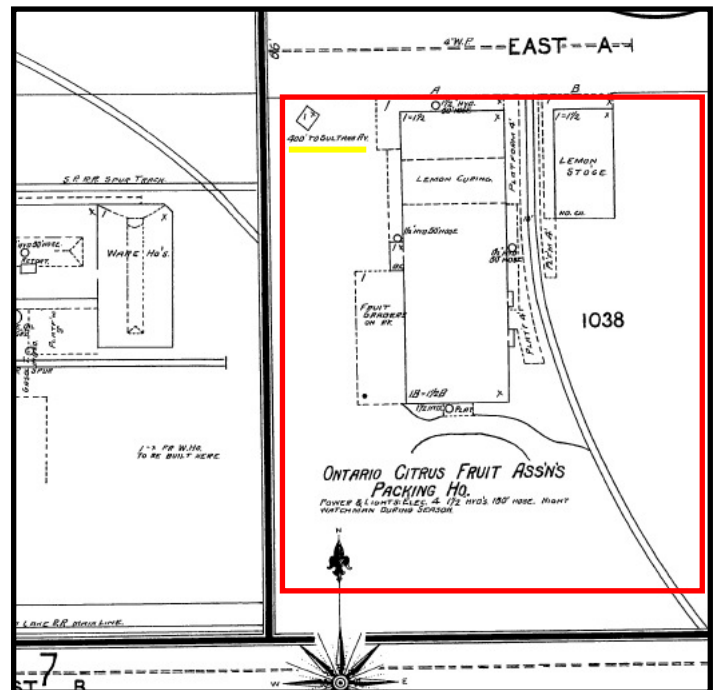
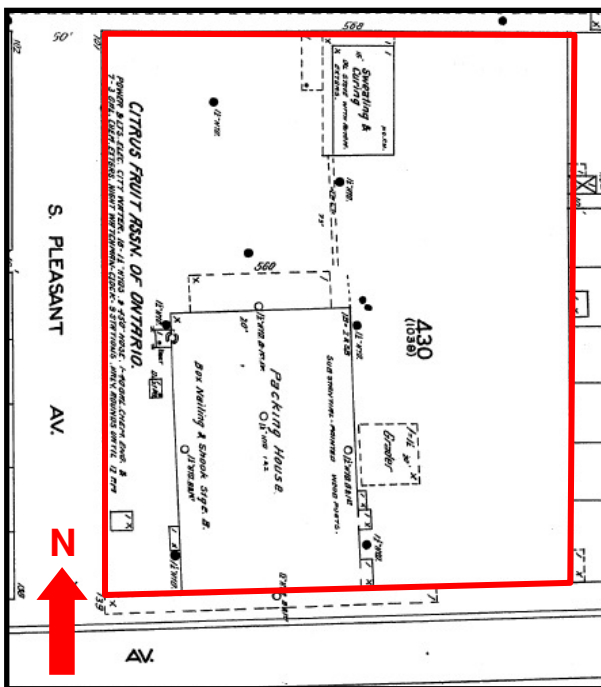
⁵⁸ *Los Angeles Times*. "Millions For Golden Fruit." November 23, 1925. pg. 12.

⁵⁹ *Los Angeles Times*. "Ontario." August 13, 1898. pg. 13.

Members of the Ontario Citrus Fruit Association, one of the largest members of the Ontario-Cucamonga Fruit Exchange, received \$307,977.79 for their fruit or an average net payment to the grower per packed box of \$3.16 or \$4.44 per hundred pounds, during the year just closed. This is the largest net payment per box in the twenty-one year history of the association and the total amount paid to growers is the largest... There were 242 cars shipped during the last season, 152 navels, sixty-eight Valencias and twenty-two of other varieties, according to the association manager, at the annual meeting yesterday.⁶⁰

Then in a September 14, 1920, *Los Angeles Times* article entitled, "Ontario Fruit Turns to Gold," the association was reported to have surpassed all other citrus associations in sales in Southern California. It was reported as follows:

Ontario's claim to supremacy as producer of fine oranges was strengthened today when figures made public in the twenty-second annual report of the Ontario Citrus Fruit Association showed the average price received for Washington Navel oranges shipped during the year just closed to have been \$5.21 per hundred pounds. This is not only the biggest return in the history of the Ontario fruit concern but eclipses records established by all other citrus fruit-growing districts in California, it is said. During the year, a total of 100,833 boxes of all varieties of citrus fruit were packed and shipped and the total amount received for the fruit was \$407,990.21. Valencias shipped in 1920 by the Ontario association brought an average \$5.33 per hundred and the average on all grades and varieties of citrus fruit packed was \$4.67.⁶¹



1912 (left) and 1907 (right) Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: Showing the location of the Ontario Citrus Fruit Association packing houses in what is now the City of Upland. The map to the left shows the packing house at the intersection of South Pleasant and East Emporia Avenues and the map to the right shows the packing house on East A Street (Sultana Avenue is located 400 feet west of the packing house, yellow line reflects note on map). (Sanborn Map courtesy of proquest.com)

⁶⁰ *Los Angeles Times*. "Growers Receive Fortune for Fruit." September 17, 1919. pg.118.

⁶¹ *Los Angeles Times*. "Ontario Fruit Turns to Gold." September 14, 1920. pg.116.

The Western Ontario Citrus Association was first mentioned in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1903, when their tenth annual meeting was announced as being held at their Narod packing house. It was stated that, "This is the corporation which was the original Ontario Fruit Exchange, formed ten years ago to affiliate with the Southern California Fruit Exchange."⁶² This was the oldest citrus association in Ontario and its members included some of the earliest pioneers of the Ontario citrus industry. In 1904, the association paid its members \$11,000, and by 1907 it paid \$77,778. Because of this large and quick growth in shipments, the association agreed in 1907 to enlarge their packing house in Narod to accommodate the growing business. And then in 1910, the association voted to change the nature of the organization from a membership association to a stock-holders' association. This was "heartily endorsed" by the Ontario-Cucamonga Exchange, of which the association was a member.⁶³ By 1925, the Western Ontario Citrus Association was shipping around 900 car loads and the receipts for the year totaled more than \$600,000. This was the largest return for the association until 1928 when the association reported its best year to date:

*Returns from the orange crop of Monte Vista district through West Ontario Citrus association yielded the growers \$1,206,038.65, which set a new high record, 350 grower members and officials were told today during the annual meeting at the packing house. A remarkable season in citrus growing was predicted for the coming year by officials of the West Ontario Citrus Association, who were enthusiastic over having just closed the most successful year in the organization's history. Their optimism was based upon the shipment of 637 cars of navel and Valencia oranges, which stream of golden fruit flowed east and then flowed back to Monte Vista in checks passing the \$1,000,000 mark. There was a 20.8 per cent fruit increase this past year, it was reported at the meeting, which yielded a 92.5 per cent increase in cash returns.*⁶⁴

Each year these associations reported publicly on their successes and failures, and their combined efforts put Ontario on the map as a major citrus producing community in Southern California, which by 1915 had become a \$200 million industry for the state of California.⁶⁵ By the 1920s, Ontario was contributing millions to the multi-million dollar industry. According to Lee in her thesis, "During the season of 1927-28 the O-K Exchange marketed three thousand seven hundred and seventy cars of fruit and with the fruit handled by the West Ontario Citrus Association the total for the district amounted to four thousand and four hundred thirty-five car loads. This amounted on one million seven hundred seventy-four thousand packed boxes and brought to the growers \$9,842,319.63, averaging \$4.98 per packed box."⁶⁶

As part of the marketing tactics to promote the sale of their citrus, each local association or exchange began creating their own trademark or label by 1889 to identify brand name, type and grade of produce, place of origin, grower, packer and shipper. The fruit was being shipped in wooden crates and many times the fruit was sold directly out of the crate. Crate labels were created to induce the shopper to buy the product. These labels were colorful, attention grabbing and artistically pleasing images and also served

⁶² Los Angeles Times. "Ontario Fruit Men Declare for Agency." September 19, 1903.

⁶³ Los Angeles Times. "Fire at East Highland." September 23, 1910. pg. 1111.

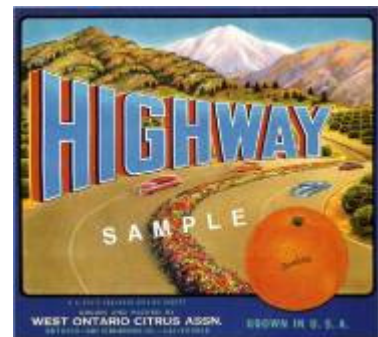
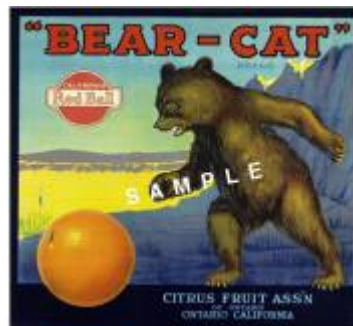
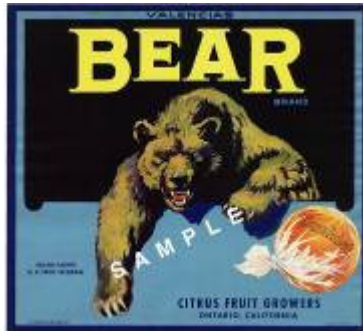
⁶⁴ *Los Angeles Times*. "Citrus Growers Happy." September 21, 1928. pg. 13.

⁶⁵ Wagner. p.48.

⁶⁶ Lee. p.78.

as advertisements for the produce. Over the years, thousands of different labels were designed and printed by commercial artists and lithographers competing with each other to create the most attractive labels. This practice continued until the 1950s and then crate labels became considered works of art collected all over the world.

The following are a few examples of various crate labels from Ontario based exchanges and associations -- the Ontario Fruit Exchange (later the West Ontario Citrus Association), the Citrus Fruit Association of Ontario, the Citrus Fruit Growers Association and the San Antonio Fruit Exchange:



As seen above, crate labels featured romanticized images of endless rows of orange trees, snow capped mountains and trees, wildlife, and the American Indian to market goods. These images depicted California as a paradise and its citrus as an exotic fruit. These colorful advertisements appealed to Easterners who were far removed from California and its natural resources. Crate labels were used on wooden citrus boxes until the mid-1950s, when the wooden boxes were replaced by cardboard boxes with preprinted labels on the box ends.

These crate labels were also a way for the various Ontario packing house associations and district exchanges to advertise their names and the brands of citrus that they sold. Each packing house association packed their own brands and created their own artwork to market the product. There were several packing houses located in the Ontario area beginning with Ontario's first packing house, the Ontario Packing Company, in 1892 to the large and successful Exchange Orange Products Company (now Sunkist Growers, Inc.) in the 1926.

Over the years, the cooperatives made improvements to their packing houses as their businesses expanded. This was especially seen during the 1920s, when many citrus associations entered into a period of program expansion and improvement. New buildings with modern equipment were constructed and many of the cooperatives installed pre-cooling plants as well. These pre-cooling areas made it possible to store large quantities of fruit for a longer period of time, and also allowed the houses to provide ice for their own shipping cars.⁶⁷ Also, the invention of the Brogdex Process of treating the citrus with a chemical spray which sealed and sterilized any cut or bruise and essentially preserved the fruit over a longer period of time, made the citrus industry more profitable by allowing a larger amount of the fruit shipments to arrive in good condition.

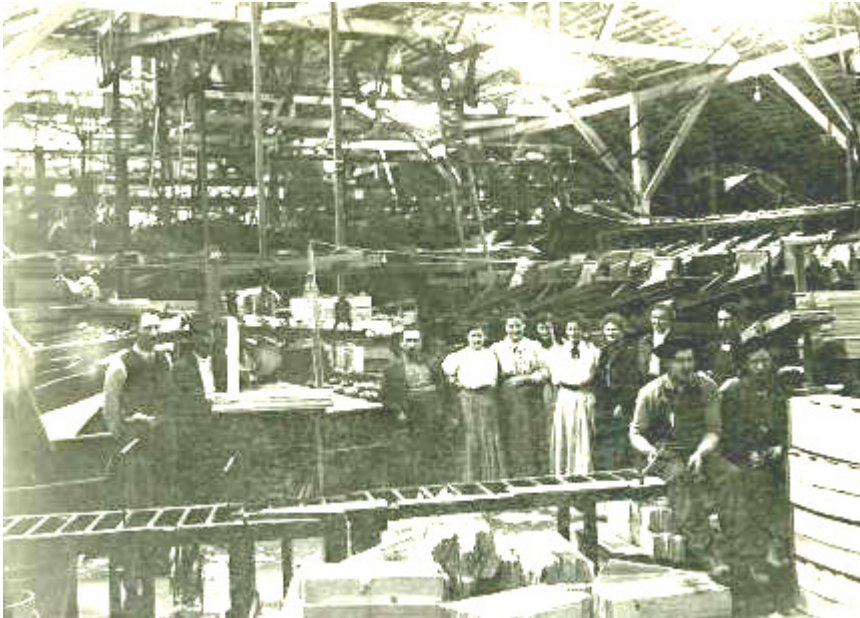


Photo: Interior of East A Street packing house - no date. (courtesy of the Ontario Public Library, Model Colony Room, Ontario, CA)

In 1923, the Ontario Citrus Fruit Association announced the construction of their new packing house between the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific tracks at South San Antonio Avenue at the cost of \$75,000. The association was moving

from their original East A Street location. "The changing of the location of this packing house was significant in that it indicated the direction of citrus development."⁶⁸ During this period, many of the citrus trees were being removed on the eastern side of Ontario for residential subdivisions. In addition, on the west side of the city, modern residences were being constructed on the newly paved Vine Avenue between State and Fourth Streets. This symbolized that new residential development in Ontario in fact occurred throughout the city. The city estimated some \$65,000 was to be spent on the land subdivisions and road improvements.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Lee. pg. 77.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

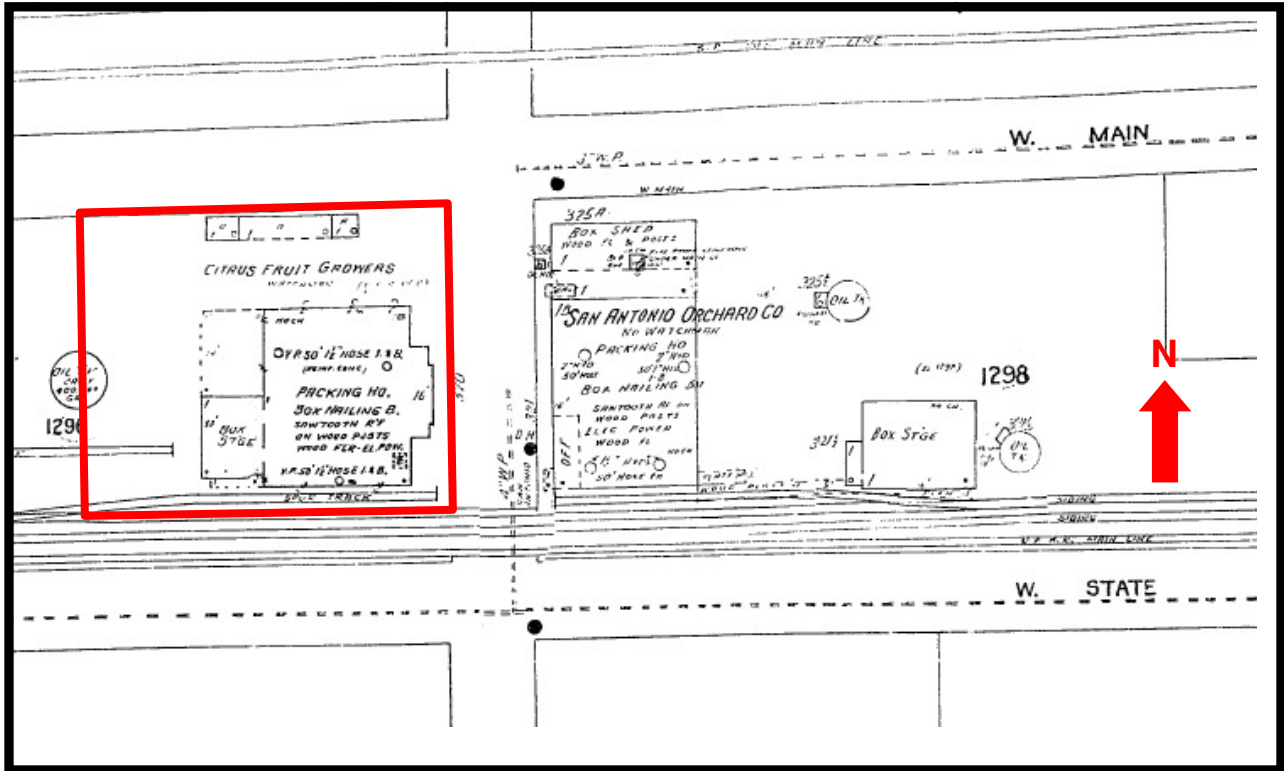
⁶⁹ Los Angeles Times. "Subdivisions for Ontario." June 17, 1923. pg. V6.



Photo: Illustrating Ontario citrus groves subdividing in the 1920s as land development was forcing growers to sell off portions of their groves for new residential housing. (courtesy of the Cooper Museum, Upland, CA)

The new packing house was described as being of, “reinforced concrete construction and was one, “of the most modern and up-to-date plants of its kind in Southern California.”⁷⁰ Many of the packing houses constructed prior to this time were of wooden construction, resembling a barn-type structure with a large warehouse feel on the interior. As seen in photograph to the right, the original packing house for the Ontario Citrus Fruit Association (located on East A Street) had a first floor interior with high wooden beamed ceilings to maximize space the natural light. The floors were usually concrete slab and vertical posts extended from the ceiling to the floor positioned throughout the building.

⁷⁰ *Los Angeles Times*. “Great Gain Shown in Resources.” July 22, 1923. pg. V6.



1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: The location of the newly constructed packing house for the Ontario Citrus Fruit Association on South San Antonio Avenue. (Sanborn Map courtesy of proquest.com)

In 1925, the West Ontario Citrus Association announced the completion of its new packing house in the following excerpt from a *Los Angeles Times* article detailing the design of the building:

Recently completed at a cost of approximately \$200,000, under the direction of Manager William Hartly, the new plant of the West Ontario Citrus Association is said to be the "last word" in packing plants. The packing-house proper, of reinforced concrete, is 198x142 feet with a floor area of 28,116 square feet... There is a full basement, ten and a half feet in the clear. Precooling rooms occupy half the basement, and the rest is devoted to box-making, labeling and shook storage. The saw-tooth roof is supported by steel trusses and these in turn by ten steel posts eighteen feet apart, the only posts in the building. Five rows of windows running the entire length of the north side of the building, furnish light and ventilation.

The fruit is received on the north side of the building, which stands between the Southern Pacific and Union Pacific tracks. A 14-foot clearance from the trusses to the floor level permits 16-foot doors to be raised for the reception of fruit. The doors are slotted for ventilation while the fruit awaits the graders. A 12-foot canopy along the full length of the building protects the receiving floor from rain. This department is 180x60 feet and will care for about 10,000 field boxes. The washing and drying apparatus adjoins the receiving department, while sorting tables and sizers occupy the south half of the structure. The fruit moves directly across the building for loading on cars for shipment. During the icing season the packed boxes are placed on conveyors and go direct from the presses to the precooling rooms in the basement, and fruit comes under refrigeration in less than a minute after the lid is nailed on. The capacity of the

precooling department is sixty carloads. In loading iced refrigerator cars a closed vestibule extends from the loading door to the car to prevent warming. The engine room, freezing tank and storage rooms of the ice plant are at the rear and occupy a space of 44x150 feet. The freezing tank has a capacity of forty tons of ice a day. The precooling rooms are cooled by a cold-air circulation system. To insure enough ice for the peak of the season when some seventy tons are needed for car refrigeration alone, a storage room 44x60 feet and 4 feet high has been built. This room will store 1500 tons of ice and is to be filled when shipping is light. The washing, sorting and packing equipment is one of the latest type and designed to eliminate lost motion. Offices, directors' rooms and employees rest rooms occupy the west end of the building.⁷¹

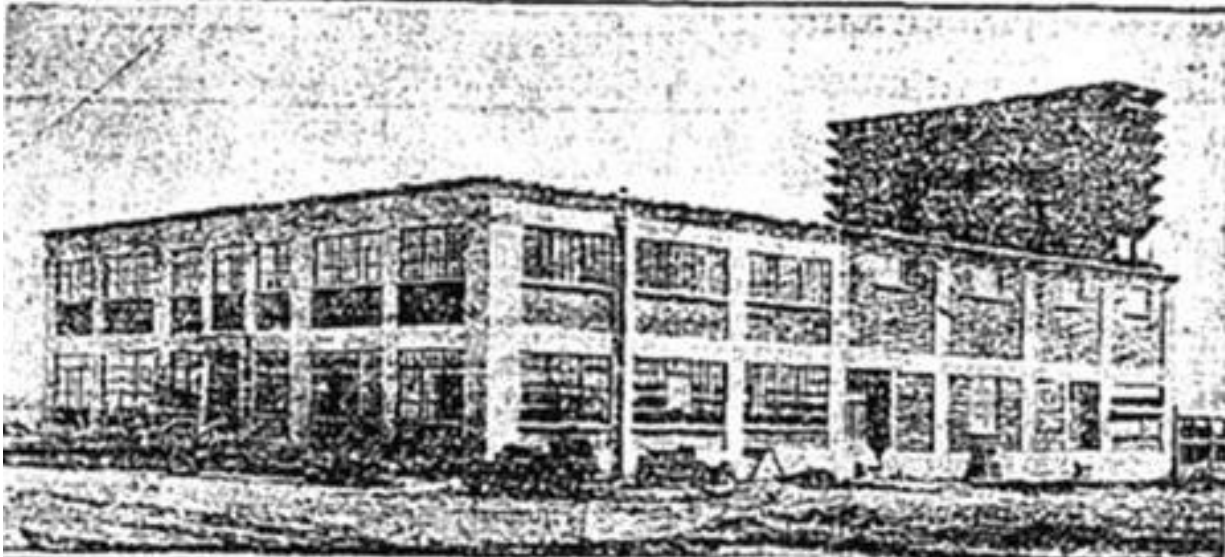


Photo: Sketch of the new Ontario Citrus Exchange plant as it appeared in the 1926 Los Angeles Times article which announced its completion.

In 1926, the largest of the Ontario packing plants was completed for the Ontario Citrus Exchange, a citrus by-products company. The estimated cost of the building was \$300,000 and it was described as a, "two-story and basement concrete warehouse, a fruit house, roll room, dryer structure and boiler house. The main structure, 125x100, will house the offices and laboratories. The plant will be used for orange packing and to manufacture orange extract, prepare orange juice and by-products. The project was completed in 45 working days, according to the Austin Company of California builders."⁷² This plant was part of the California Fruit Growers Exchange (originally called the Southern California Fruit Exchange) and its purpose was to handle a large part of the unmarketable fruit in Ontario. The company earned its appreciation among local growers during the wind storm of December 1926, when it handled thousands of boxes of wind-falls.⁷³

This plant brought the well-known Sunkist brand to Ontario. The California Fruit Grower's Exchange had adopted the Sunkist trademark in 1907 during its massive

⁷¹ *Los Angeles Times*. "New Association Plant is Up-to-date." May 17, 1925. pg. J6.

⁷² *Los Angeles Times*. "Packing-house Completed for Ontario Citrus Exchange." November 21, 1926. pg. E7.

⁷³ Lee. pg.78.

marketing campaigns orchestrated by the firm, Lord and Thomas. The name Sunkist was used to recognize oranges of the highest quality. This plant became the central location for the Sunkist citrus by-products operations, and in 1952, the exchange officially changed its name to Sunkist Growers, Inc.



Photos: The Ontario Citrus Exchange building photographed in the 1930s. (courtesy of the Ontario Public Library, Model Colony Room, Ontario, CA)

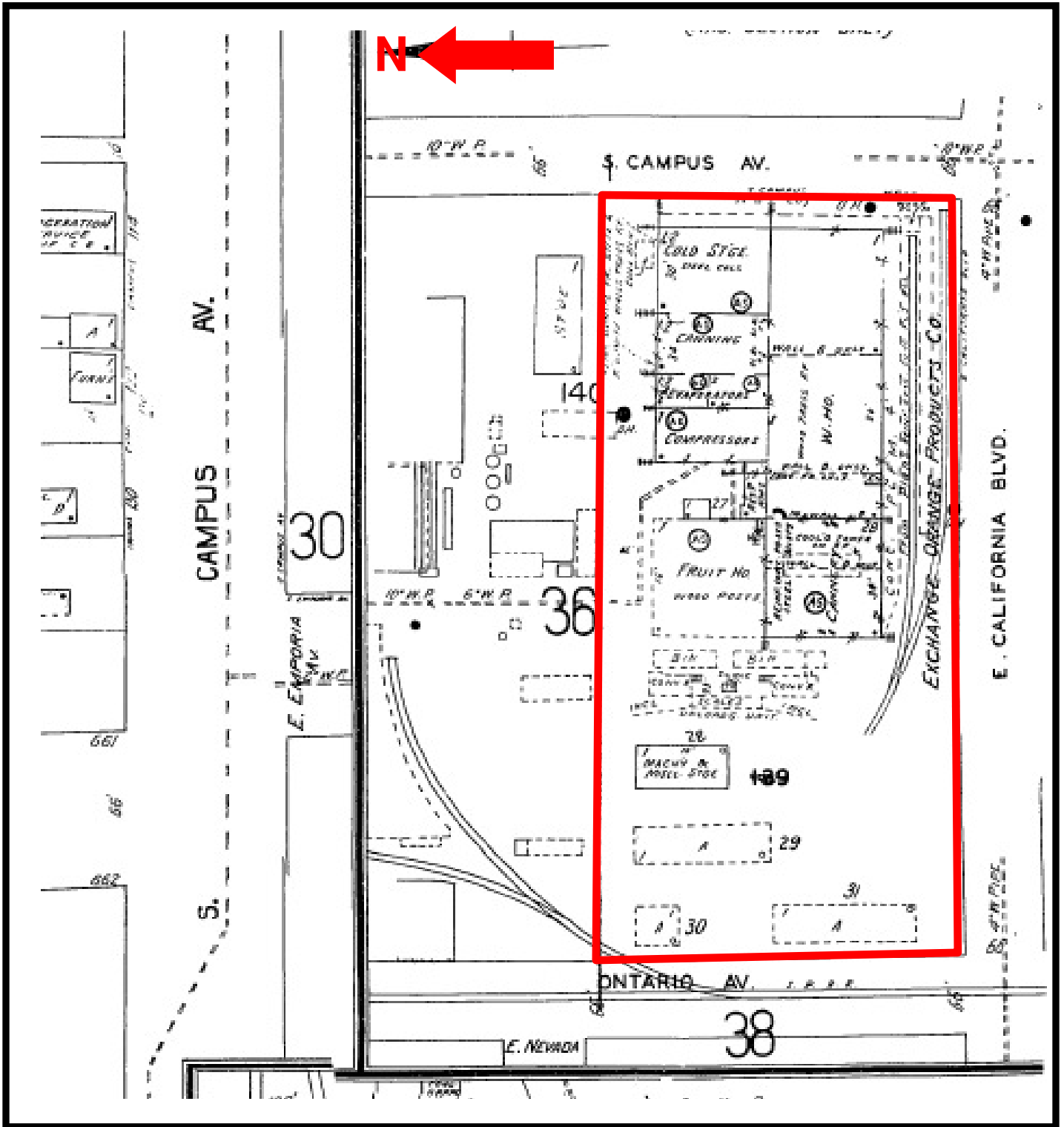


Ontario packing plants usually employed close to a hundred or more employees, including many women and school students. According to Alford and Halfpenny in their 1928 term paper on Ontario, "The fruit packing house...has given employment to women so that many leave their homes for outside work. The high cost of living has made this necessary. Although there is more of a tendency for women to go out to work they still keep their homes. The summer canning season gives employment to women and also to many young people who are in school during the school year."⁷⁴ This was especially true around World War II, when men workers became scarce.



Photos: (left) Employees of the Ontario Citrus Exchange in 1935. (above to left) Women employees packing oranges for the Sunkist brand in Ontario in the circa 1930s. (courtesy of the Ontario Public Library, Model Colony Room, Ontario, CA)

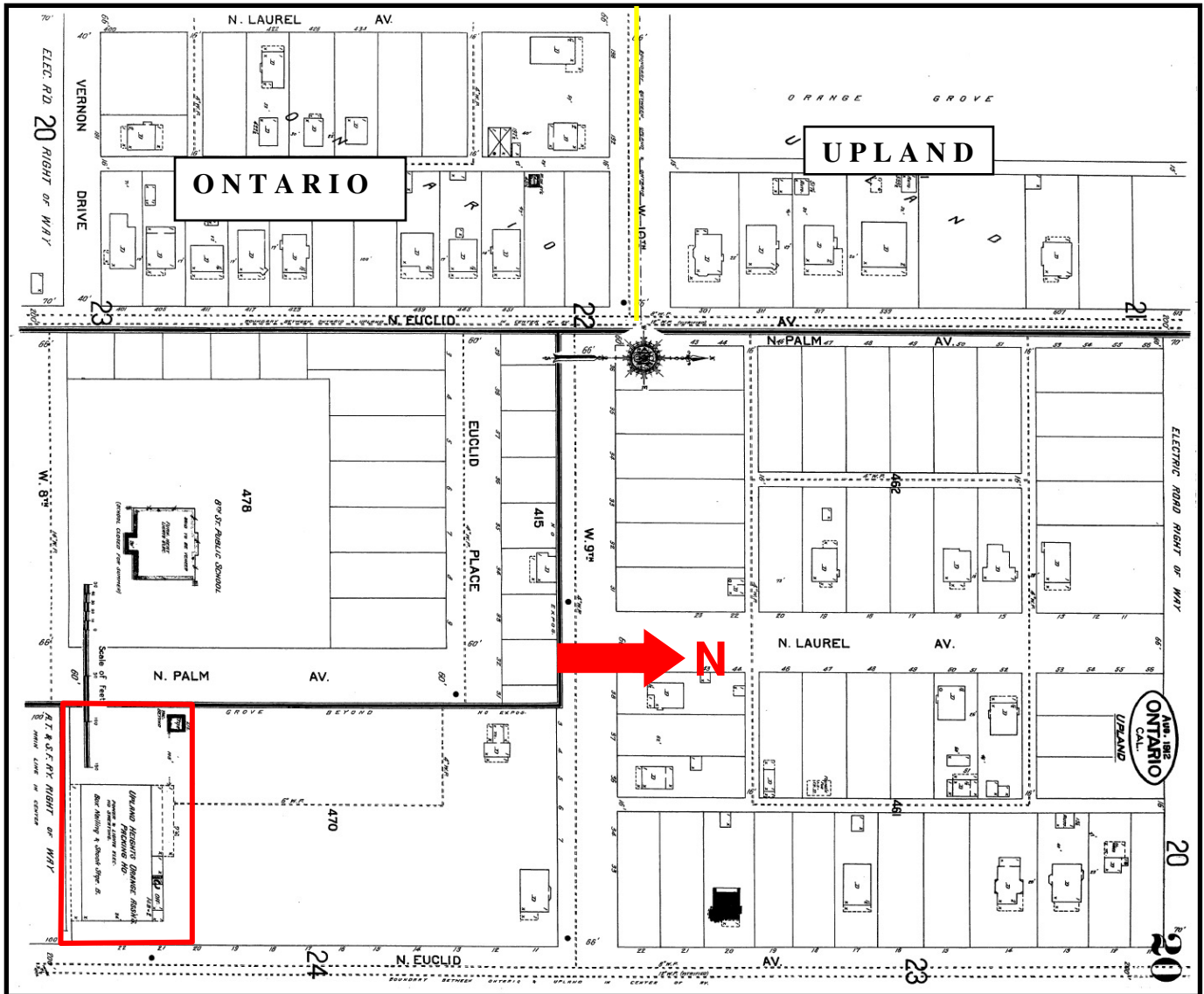
⁷⁴ Alford and Halfpenny. pg. 8.



1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: The Ontario Citrus Exchange (now the Sunkist Growers, Inc.) plant, located between Ontario Avenue, East California Boulevard and Campus Avenue. (Sanborn Map courtesy of proquest.com)

Ontario's Relationship with Neighboring Upland

In 1901, the residents of the area then called North Ontario disputed the incorporation of their land into the area known as simply Ontario. To stay separated, the residents voted to change the name from North Ontario to Upland and maintain a hold on the land north of the Santa Fe tracks to Tenth Street, on the west side of Euclid Avenue, and beyond the Santa Fe on the east side of the Avenue to a point which would include the North Ontario Santa Fe Depot. Although this angered many Ontarians, Upland residents were able to maintain a separation from Ontario and incorporated their area on May 16, 1906.

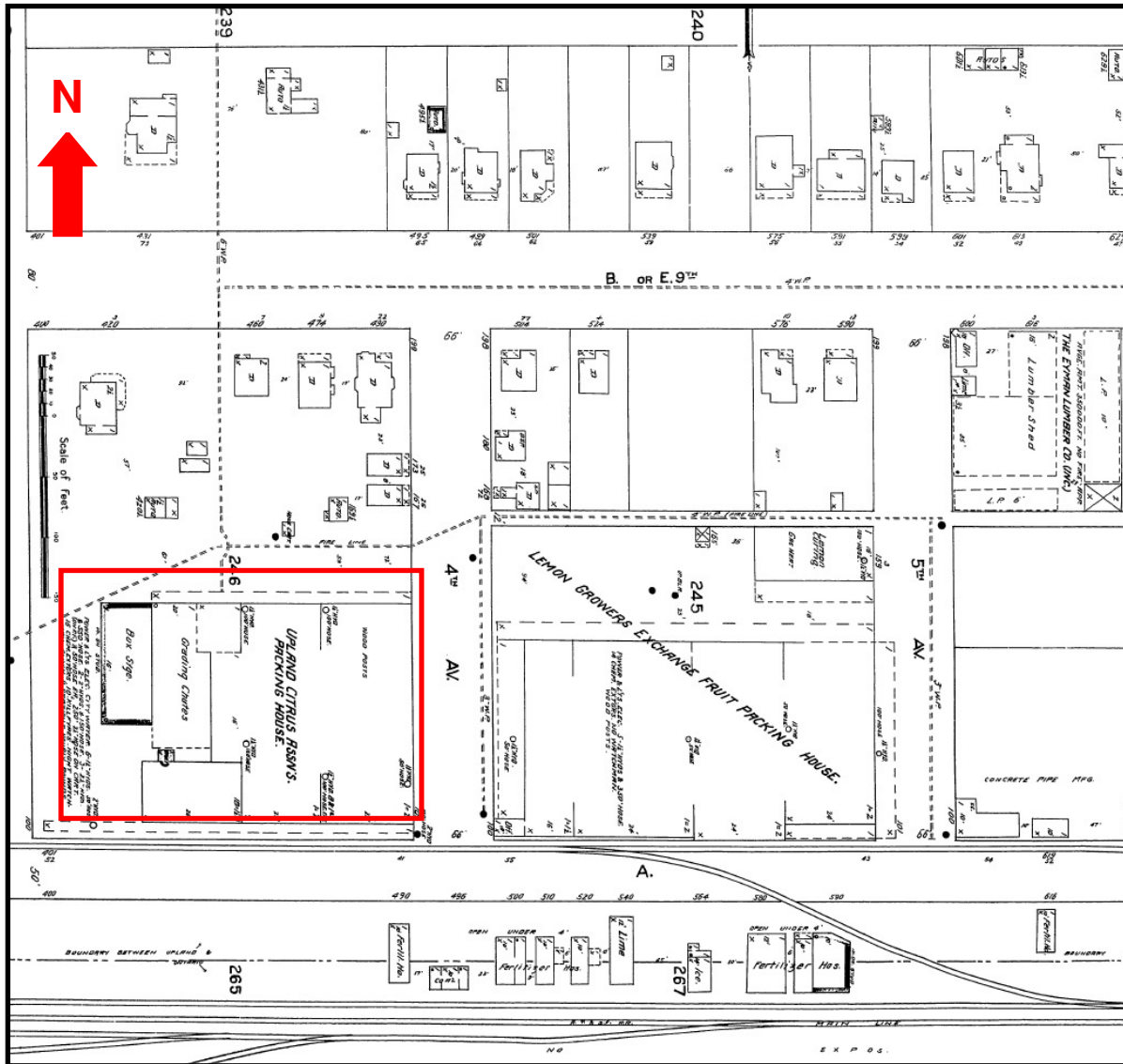


1912 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: Showing part of the boundary (—) on North Euclid between Ontario and Upland. Map also shows the location of the Upland Heights Association's packing house. (Sanborn Map courtesy of proquest.com)

Upland and Ontario were very similar communities. They both were originally an irrigation colony established by the Chaffey brothers, and when founded, they both were small rural towns based on agriculture, specifically citrus fruits and grapes. Being right

next to each other they shared the same soil type, weather and both benefited from the innovative Chaffey irrigation system. And as Ontario flourished in the citrus industry, so did Upland.

Upland's citrus industry began as Ontario's did by planting groves close to Euclid Avenue, the North-South street that runs through town. Upland also formed citrus associations, constructed packing houses and had its own citrus brands and labels. Many of Upland's packing houses were also constructed close to the railroad tracks to provide easy access to the rail transportation of its citrus products.



1912 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: Showing the location of the Upland Citrus Association's packing house at the intersection of 4th and A Streets. (Sanborn Map courtesy of proquest.com)

It also appears that the Upland and Ontario citrus associations cooperated among themselves and sometimes leased packing house space to one another. The West Ontario Citrus Association had permanently located one of their packing houses in Upland. The two city's citrus associations also met periodically to discuss their ideas of better technology and ways to protect their crops from bug infestation and freezing

temperatures. Overall, the citrus industries of both Upland and Ontario appear to overlap in many ways.

Citrus Industry Labor Force



Overall, the citrus industry had a very diverse labor force. Many different ethnic groups worked in the industry, providing inexpensive labor to help the growers turn a profit. “First the Chinese through about 1900, then the Japanese to about World War I.”⁷⁵ And after the Mexican Revolution large numbers of Mexicans crossed the border, and by 1914, Mexicans had become the dominant work force.

Photo: *Picking oranges in Ontario in circa 1902. (courtesy of the Cooper Museum, Upland, CA)*

The first major labor force to impact the industry, and the first to be employed by Ontario orchard and vineyard owners, were the Chinese. The Chinese had originally come to America during the Gold Rush and found themselves victimized by discrimination. Because of their masonry and agricultural skills, they were conscripted into providing labor for the railroads and agricultural industries. During growing season, the grower would contract to have his crop picked and packed through a Chinese labor contractor, who represented several hundred Chinese laborers, to provide a work force for his fields. The contractor provided a foreman to ensure the completion of the job, and he also paid his workers directly from the revenue received from the grower.

“By the 1890s there was a large and thriving Chinese settlement in North Ontario (later Upland).⁷⁶ It has been speculated that the Chinese workers were the ones who began using small scissors or clippers to remove the fruit from the trees. Before this innovation, the citrus was being pulled from its stems causing tears to the skin. This type of damage caused the fruit to decay much more quickly. The Chinese workers had been harvesting fruit in their own country for thousands of years. They would snip as close to the fruit as possible to avoid leaving a stem which could puncture other fruit during packing. They were also creative packers who could uniformly pack a citrus crate by just eyeing the various sizes of the fruit.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Wagner. pg. 55.

⁷⁶ Austen. pg. 63.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

By 1890, anti-Chinese sentiment was strong and statewide bias was causing the Chinese workers to loose favor with citrus growers. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prompted Ontario growers to exclude Chinese workers. And “by the mid-1920s most Ontario and inland area Chinese settlements were ghost towns and memories.”⁷⁸ To supplement for the loss of the Chinese laborers, the Ontario citrus growers began employing Japanese workers. Japanese laborers began working in the citrus groves as early as the 1880s. “By 1910 there were more than 72,000 Japanese workers in California.”⁷⁹ Japanese workers were initially welcomed by Ontario growers until they began acquiring land and producing their own crops. They lost their desirability among growers because they were no longer considered inexpensive day laborers.

Various other ethnic groups contributed to the citrus industry in Ontario. Some of these included the Hindus, Armenians, Portuguese, Italians, Swiss and Filipinos. Each of these groups worked for a short time in the Ontario groves before becoming land owners themselves and blending their own cultures within the Ontario community.⁸⁰



Photo: Postcard of grove workers in Ontario – no date. (courtesy of the Ontario Public Library, Model Colony Room, Ontario, CA)

The labor force which dominated the Ontario citrus industry for the longest period of time was the Mexican laborers. Early in Ontario’s history, growers had used Mexican labor to “clear the land and prepare it for building and planting.”⁸¹ By 1914, growers were using the Mexican labor force in all phases of the fruit planting and harvesting. Mexican families would work together and camp in the fields at night. “Between 1914 and 1919, the number of Mexican laborers climbed dramatically from 2,317 to 7,004.”⁸² Ontario benefited from this plentiful labor force providing year round employment with the growing of both navels and Valencias. The Mexican workers were also employed by the packing houses to help with the processing of the fruit for shipping. Ontario growers benefited from this steady labor system until 1934 when many of the Mexican

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Austen. pg. 75.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Wagner, pg. 55.

children who had grown-up working in the groves were now establishing families of their own and wanting something better for their children than a life of fruit picking.

Also, the onset of World War II affected the labor supply by young men being drafted into the service. Inland Empire growers and farmers nationwide were facing a critical labor shortage.⁸³ Local associations began formulating plans to import workers directly from Mexico. Labor organizations in Washington D.C. immediately responded by forging a “labor agreement with Mexico in 1942.”⁸⁴ The Labor Importation Program of 1942-64, also called the “Bracero program,” contracted Mexicans to come to the United States to work in the agricultural fields for a specific period of time. Once their contract period was up they could either return to Mexico or negotiate another contract if their labor was needed. “Wages were to be set at the prevailing rates and all transportation and housing was furnished free; workers paid only for their board and personal necessities.”⁸⁵ Although this system brought relief to the farmers, it also created a class system between the Mexican Americans, resident Mexican nationals and the Braceros. The Mexican Americans felt that the Braceros were undercutting wages by working more cheaply.⁸⁶

Ontario participated in the Bracero system and according to Philipip Lee, the grandson of Ontario citrus pioneer Dorr B. Lee, in his oral history interview, the Braceros were brought to the area by the local packing house associations. The associations housed the workers and local growers hired them through the packing houses.⁸⁷ In 1943, the following excerpt appeared in the *Ontario Daily Report*:

*Arrival this week of 108 more citrus pickers from Mexico, fills the quotas of most packinghouses in this area for picking help. Detraining at Pomona Sunday 37 men were assigned to Upland Lemon Growers association, brining the total number there to 75, but about 50 short of their quota; 40 were assigned to West Ontario Citrus association, increasing their force to 68, but 12 short of their quota. Houses whose quotas were filled by the latest arrivals included: Upland Heights Orange association, receiving 10 men, completing their quota of 25; Cucamonga Citrus association, 8, completing their quota of 16, and Alta Loma Heights Citrus association, 12, completing their quota of 23. Old Baldy Citrus association added two more men to the five which arrived a week ago, but are expecting more. The association today was granted a building permit by Upland building inspector for erection of dormitory, kitchen and shower room facilities for additional workers. Another group of workers is expected to arrive from Mexico in about a week, it is said.*⁸⁸

Mexican workers stayed the dominant labor force for the Ontario citrus industry until its disintegration beginning in the mid-twentieth century.

⁸³ Ibid. pg. 59.

⁸⁴ Gonzalez, Gilbert G. Labor and Community: Mexican Citrus Worker Villages in a Southern California County, 1900-1950. University of Illinois Press. Urbana and Chicago, 1994. pg. 163.

⁸⁵ Ibid. pg. 164.

⁸⁶ Wagner. pg. 59.

⁸⁷ Lee, Philip. “Oral History Interview.” October 18, 2006. Recorded for Lee Family Historic Context project. Interviewed by Rebecca Smith. pg. 6.

⁸⁸ *Ontario Daily Report*. “More Citrus Pickers Arrive.” April 6, 1943. pg. 1.

Environmental Challenges to Citrus Crops

Although the agricultural workers were an essential element to the success of the citrus industry, both the citrus growers and workers experienced challenges in producing successful citrus crops. Winds and cold weather could cause the fruit to drop to the ground and rot completely on the inside. The loss of crops due to these circumstances could be financially devastating to the livelihood of the growers and also the workers, who depended on a regular paycheck. Ontario experienced several of these natural disasters beginning December 14, 1887, with the “big wind.” It was estimated that the newly developing Ontario colony lost some forty buildings and almost all of its young citrus trees. The next wind came in January 1896, accompanied by frost, destroying over five percent of the citrus crops which were ready for harvest. It also blew down the North Ontario Presbyterian Church, and damaged many other buildings.⁸⁹ Then in 1913, a devastating frost killed 75 to ninety percent of Ontario’s orange and lemon crops. An article reporting on the devastation of the frost in a *Los Angeles Times* article stated:

*The cold wave is broken, but the harm's done, and Southern California orange and lemon growers have suffered a loss of many millions of dollars in a few nights of frost such as no person now living may ever see again...Citrus men yesterday estimated the loss at from \$15,000,000 to \$24,000,000, or a shortage of 31,250 to 34,000 cars in what has been estimated as a 42,500-car crop still on the trees. This takes no account of the damage to trees, which is admittedly heavy.*⁹⁰



Photo: *Typical smudge pot used in citrus groves. (courtesy of the Ontario Public Library, Model Colony Room, Ontario, CA)*

The next cold seasons hit in the winters of 1921-22 and 1926-27. However by this time, the growers had started using smudge pots which burned crude oil to heat the groves during the nights of low temperatures and heavy frosts. Workers would have to relight the pots and refill them with crude oil about every six hours throughout the night. This was tedious work and the “smudge” from the pots cast a heavy cloud of black smoke over Ontario, causing the women residents to spend much time cleaning the black residue from their homes after a night of heavy smudging. According to oral history interviewee Philip Lee, many of the growers employed high school students to assist with the lighting of the smudge pots and they would get the day off from school the following day. The smudge pots were widely used among citrus growers until the 1940s when clean air acts were passed due to the influx of residents to the Ontario area and residential subdivisions were springing-up at a fast pace.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Lee. pg. 31.

⁹⁰ *Los Angeles Times*. “Cold Wave is Broken but Vast Harm Done.” January 8, 1913. pg. 11.

⁹¹ Philip Lee Oral History Interview. pg. 9.

Another threat to the citrus crops was infestations by bugs and vermin. In 1914, fears over the possible destruction by a mealy bug caused Ontario growers to go to extreme measures to try and free their crops of the bug. Unfortunately, the damage done to the crops from their efforts far outweighed the real threat of the bug, which was determined to be harmless. The public fear of this insect was described in the following *Los Angeles Times* article:

Ontario, Jan. 16.-After having battled for weeks in an effort to exterminate from their orange and lemon groves the supposed citrus mealy bug, which they were led to believe threatened the very foundations of the citrus industry of Southern California, and after the radical measures adopted to root out the alleged pest had damaged their groves to an extent that is estimated at between \$15,000 and \$20,000, citrus ranchers were informed today by E.O. Essig, secretary of the State Horticultural Board, that the mealy bug, which infested Upland groves to the north of the city, recently, is not the dreaded citrus pest at all but a comparatively harmless variety, known as the Baker mealy bug, or pseudococcus Bakeri.⁹²

The Ontario Citrus Industry in the Mid- to Late-Twentieth Century

By the 1930s, citrus had become the dominant agricultural crop for California. The citrus industry had become very organized and growers were keeping a close eye on their revenues and the market in general. In 1932, a meeting was called at Chaffey College in Ontario by local growers to “study orange prices and control of surplus fruits.”⁹³ The meeting was organized by the University of California and the chairman of the citrus department of the San Bernardino County Farm Bureau, R.O. Price. The speaker was H.R. Wellman, extension specialist in agricultural economics at the University of California. He spoke on the factors which affect the pricing of oranges and the issues of surplus control. And in 1933, Valencia growers were praised for establishing a much more uniform market. A *Los Angeles Times* article reported that:

The citrus trade and “exchange” salesmen all over the United States and Canada praise the stabilization efforts of California Valencia orange growers, according to T. H. Powell, general sales manager, California Fruit Growers Exchange, who has just returned from the annual divisional meetings of the exchange sales forces, held in San Francisco, Chicago and Boston. “California oranges and lemons are in a better position than almost any other staple product, even including those agricultural products that have already had the benefit of governmental help,” said Mr. Powell. “California Valencia shipments in August were greater than any previous year except one, and September shipments of over 5000 cars constituted an all-time record for that month. We have a remarkably uniform market, devoid of disturbing fluctuations and steadily improving throughout the season, even though prices have not been all the growers would like to have seen them.”⁹⁴

In 1936, the revenue from the citrus industry totaled \$97,000,000. This was second in

⁹² *Los Angeles Times*. “Fears Prove to Be Groundless.” January 17, 1914. pg. II11.

⁹³ *Los Angeles Times*. “Ontario Citrus Men Will Study Prices Tonight.” March 29, 1932. pg. 12

⁹⁴ *Los Angeles Times*. “The Citrus Industry.” October 29, 1933. pg. G4

profit only to the California petroleum industry, which totaled \$159,500,000.⁹⁵ At the height of citrus production, the industry produced sixty percent of the nation's citrus supply and twenty percent of the world's supply. The 1930s was also a time of great opportunity for many individuals to be employed within the packing industry. Men, women and teenagers could all find work as pickers, in the packing houses or for a by-products company. The Ontario Citrus Exchange was one of the largest employers for Ontario, employing a few hundred people to produce Sunkist products.

This success continued for citrus growers until the mid-1940s, when the citrus industry as a whole began its decline. After World War II, land values began to skyrocket and it was more affordable and desirable for growers to sell their land to developers. Groves began to be pushed away from downtown cores to outlying areas, and many times completely disappeared as new subdivisions were constructed. The Southern California citrus belt (mainly Orange, Ventura and Los Angeles Counties) lost some 75,000 acres of citrus groves from 1946-56.⁹⁶

As the urban development of these areas took place, cities began to receive complaints from new residents of the odors and residue from smudge pots and fertilizers used on the groves. Ordinances were passed to clean-up the air and accommodate these new citizens. In Ontario in 1944, the City Board of Health passed an ordinance against the use of hog manure and wet garbage as fertilizer due to a petition of a hundred signatures which had been passed within the community.⁹⁷ Also in the 1940s, the City began to address the problems with the air pollution created by the smudge pots. The following is from Philip Lee's oral history:

...one of the things that became a really difficult problem was the problem of orchard heating in the wintertime. For many years, they had used orchard heaters, which burned oil. And of course, when they burned, they made a lot of smoke. We called it smudge. And one of the things that happened in Ontario was the city council enacted an ordinance which prevented any heaters that made very much smoke from being used in the Ontario area. And this, of course, was a tremendous financial burden on the growers. There were really only two alternatives. There was, okay, I think it was in Upland, there was a company called the Scheu Orchard Heater Company. And they developed what was called a return stack heater. And this heater was one that would burn fairly low grade fuel, and not produce hardly any smoke. The other alternative was the so-called "wind machines." And the wind machines were like large, motor-driven propellers. Generally they consisted of two engines on the order of 100 or 150-horsepower each, would be mounted on a tower in the middle of the grove. And then they had propellers like an airplane that would blow air out over the grove. And the theory was that the propellers would create a partial vacuum at the center of the grove, pulling warmer air down from up above, and subsequently blowing it out over the grove. Well, this worked under certain conditions, but did not work all the time. One of the things that happens in the wintertime in Ontario is referred to as "the ceiling," which is actually, I'm sure, a convection. And when the ceiling is low, the warm air from the ceiling can be pulled down and blown out over the grove. When the ceiling is high, the wind machine does not have enough downward suction to pull that air down.

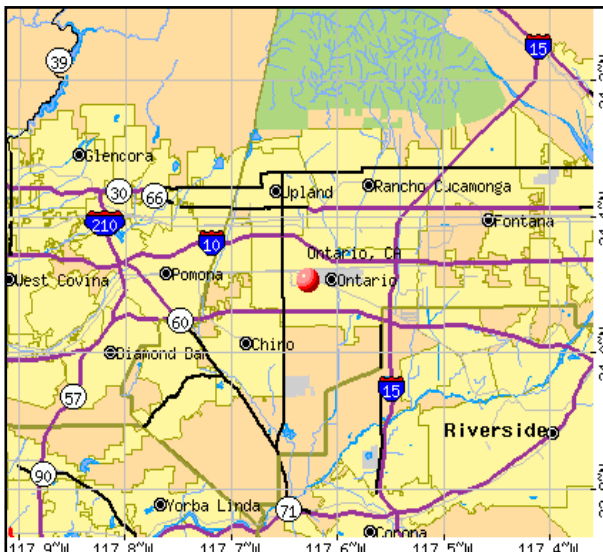
⁹⁵ Gonzalez. pg. 6.

⁹⁶ Ibid. pg. 182.

⁹⁷ Los Angeles Times. "Protest on Ranch Odors Bring Ban." June 21, 1944. pg. A2.

Consequently, it simply rebroadcasts the cold air out over the grove. And as a result, the wind machine will work some of the time, but not all of the time. I can recall an instance where one of the adjacent groves to the G Street property had a wind machine on it. And the temperature was quite cold that night. And the owner of that grove, I don't remember who it was. But anyway, when the temperature got down to about 23 in the grove, he figured his crop was frozen anyway, so he shut down the wind machine. And the temperature actually came up. One of the solutions that was tried, although it was not really widely accepted, was to put a ring of return stack heaters in the outer parts of the grove so that the warm air from them would be circulated by the wind machine. But this was a very costly solution, and was not widely accepted. So the result of all of this was that because it does get cold in Ontario, and probably an average of ten to fifteen nights a year some kind of orchard heating is required, because of the limitation on heaters, that really was the start of the end of the citrus industry there in Ontario.⁹⁸

Due to these factors, the Ontario citrus industry began its decline in the 1940s as demands for housing caused land values to rise and the demands by new residents for cleaner air, made it impossible for the citrus growers to continue operating as they had for the last sixty years. After World War II, population swelled in Ontario. Ten-acre orange groves in town were torn out by the owners and filled with homes. The construction boom was led by the California National Guard Armory at John Galvin Park. In 1952, over \$14,000,000 was spent on construction, \$11,000,000 of which was spent on 642 new single-family homes in 4 new subdivisions. In 1959, Ontario began to develop new areas to the east and south, including the Ontario Industrial Park, east of Campus Avenue between Mission Avenue and the Pomona Freeway. Although the Sunkist Growers, Inc. continued to sustain a large part of the city's economy, manufacturing industries such as the Hotpoint Factory and the Maglite Corporation offered a new direction for the city. Also, the establishment of the dairy industry and the expansion of the Southern California defense industry attracted many settlers to the city.



By the late twentieth century, manufacturing began to wane and much of Ontario's economy became dominated by service industries and warehousing. In 1996, the Ontario Mills mall was opened on the eastern side of the city and previously-undeveloped areas have undergone a surge of commercial and residential construction. And going into the twenty-first century, Southern Ontario is being developed into a mixed-use area of residential homes, industrial and business parks, and town centers, collectively known as the New Model Colony. Only remnants of Ontario's once great citrus industry are visible in the Victorian-era buildings, the street names and a few remaining citrus trees.

⁹⁸ Lee. pg. 9.

Timeline of Ontario's Citrus Industry

- 1771 – The founding of the Mission San Gabriel.
- 1774 – The expedition of Juan Bautista de Anza camps at what is now the corner of Euclid Avenue and Phillips Street in Ontario.
- 1839 – Governor Juan B. Alvarado awarded Tiburcia Tapia the tract of land which included Ontario, Upland, Etiwanda, Cucamonga, and parts of Colton and Fontana.
- 1847 – Tapia's grant passes to his daughter, Maria Merced Tapia.
- 1858 – John Rains purchases the Tapia grant.
- 1862 – Rains is killed and the majority of the land is broken-up with the house passing to his wife, Maria Merced Williams.
- 1873 – Luther and Eliza Tibbot of Riverside, California were given two navel orange trees during their visit to Washington D.C.
- 1880 – George B. Chaffey, Jr. arrives in California.
- 1881 – Richard Gird purchases the Rancho Santa Ana del Chino land tract and founds the city of Chino.
- 1882 – George Chaffey and his brother, William, purchase and found the area which would become known as Ontario.
- 1882 – The Chaffey brothers purchase 6,216 acres of the Cucamonga Rancho for the water rights of the San Antonio Canyon.
- 1882 – George Chaffey purchases 2,500 acres between the Ontario town site and Rancho Cucamonga to bring the Southern Pacific Railroad to his new colony.
- 1882 – George Chaffey purchases and additional 114 acres of the M.M. Kincaid Rancho to secure all of water rights needed for Ontario.
- 1882 – The Chaffey brothers sold all their water rights to the newly formed San Antonio Water Company.
- 1882 – Ontario lots were placed on sale to the public.
- 1882 – The first Ontario newspaper was established, The Ontario Fruit Grower.
- 1882 – Irrigation pipes began to be laid to carry water to Ontario.
- 1882 – The first orange grove is planted in Ontario by L.S. Dyer on San Antonio Avenue between Fifth and Sixth Streets.
- 1882 – Ontario citrus growers begin to pack their own citrus.
- 1883 – Homes began to be built on purchased lots.
- 1883 – By the summer, seven thousand orange trees had been planted in Ontario.
- 1885 – The first orange from a newly set Ontario orange tree is grown by Fred L. Alles, a plaster cast is made of it.
- 1886 – Electric power is “turned on” in Ontario.
- 1887 – Seven-hundred and forty acres of citrus fruit is planted in Ontario.
- 1887 – Ontario experiences a “big wind” which destroys many of the citrus crops.

- 1888 – The Ontario and San Antonio Heights Railroad file articles of incorporation.
- 1889 – The total acreage of citrus crops reaches two-thousand four-hundred seventy-one and Ontario is rated as the second community in the state in citrus acreage.
- 1889 – Ontario citrus associations had created their own trademark or label to identify brand name, type and grade of produce, place of origin, grower, packer and shipper.
- 1889 – In December, Ontario's first car-load of oranges is shipped to Denver.
- 1890 - Ontario held its first citrus fair for all surrounding communities.
- 1890 – The Pomona cannery offers to buy citrus fruits from Ontario, paying \$2.75 per box.
- 1891 – Twenty-one cars of citrus fruits are shipped and the Ontario lemons take all the prizes at the State Fair.
- 1892 – The Ontario Packing Company is organized and began to occupy a building just opposite of the Southern Pacific depot.
- 1892 – Forty-six and one-half train cars of oranges and lemons are shipped from Ontario.
- 1893 – The first train load of fruit was sent from Ontario by way of the Santa Fe Railroad and a large crowd formed to send-off the train.
- 1893 – Five thousand acres of citrus is under cultivation in Ontario.
- 1893 – A winning crop of Ontario citrus is sent to the World's Fair in Chicago.
- 1893 – The Ontario Fruit Exchange was organized.
- 1893 – The Ontario Lemon Growers Exchange was organized.
- 1893 – The Ontario Fruit Exchange becomes an association of the San Antonio Fruit Exchange.
- 1895 – The Ontario Fruit Exchange joins the Southern California Fruit Exchange.
- 1896 – Over five percent of Ontario's citrus crops are lost to wind and frost.
- 1897 – The Ontario Fruit Exchange joins the Ontario-Cucamonga Fruit Exchange (O.K. Exchange).
- 1898 – The Ontario Citrus Association is formed.
- Circa 1900 – The Ontario Fruit Exchange changes its name to the West Ontario Citrus Association.
- 1913 – A devastating frost kills seventy-five to ninety percent of Ontario's orange and lemon crops.
- 1914 – Fears over the possible destruction by a mealy bug caused Ontario growers to go to extreme measures to try and free their crops of the bug.
- 1915 – The Citrus Industry becomes a \$200 million industry for the state of California.
- 1916-17 – The O.K. Exchange ships four-thousand train cars of citrus fruits.
- 1920 – The West Ontario Citrus Association withdraws from the O.K. Exchange to become a member of the San Antonio District Exchange.
- 1921-22 – The Ontario crops suffer another cold season.
- 1923 – The West Ontario Citrus Association erects a new packing house.

- 1925 – The Citrus Association of Ontario erects a new packing house on South San Antonio Avenue.
- Circa 1925 – The inventing of the Brogdex Process which treated the citrus fruits with a certain chemical wax spray to seal and sterilize any minute cut or bruise on the fruit.
- 1926 – The creation of the Citrus By-Products Company (Sunkist) and the construction of its factory.
- 1926-27 – Ontario suffers another cold freeze and loses some of the citrus crops.
- 1927-28 – The O.K. Exchange markets three-thousand and seven-hundred and seventy cars of fruit and the West Ontario Citrus Association markets some four-thousand four-hundred thirty-five cars. This amounted to one million seven-hundred seventy-four thousand packed boxes which brought the Ontario growers \$9,842,319.63.
- 1928 – Ontario bears some fourteen thousand acres of citrus.
- 1930 – Citrus has become the dominant crop for California.
- 1932 – A meeting is called at Chaffey College in Ontario by local growers to “study orange prices and control of surplus fruits.
- 1936 – The revenue from the California citrus industry totaled \$97,000,000.
- 1942-64 – Ontario participates in the Bracero Program.
- Circa 1945 – The citrus industry begins to decline as demands for housing caused land values to rise and the demands by new residents for cleaner air, made it impossible for the citrus growers to continue operating as they had for the last sixty years.
- 1952 - The Citrus By-Products Company officially changes its name to Sunkist Growers, Inc.
- 1959 – Ontario begins to develop new areas to the east and south, including the Ontario Industrial Park, east of Campus Avenue between Mission Avenue and the Pomona Freeway, taking over citrus properties.
- 1996 –The Ontario Mills mall is opened on the eastern side of the city and previously-undeveloped citrus areas have undergone a surge of commercial and residential construction.

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