Riverside Public Library Citrus Label Collection

Riverside Public Library
3581 Mission Inn Avenue
Riverside, CA 92501
951-826-5201
http://www.riversideca.gov/library/
© 2008
Descriptive Summary
Title: Riverside Public Library citrus label collection
Dates: Circa 1890-1950
Collection number: Consult library
Collector: Riverside Public Library
Collection Size: The collection is 2.5 linear feet contained in two boxes, 140 online items
Repository: Riverside Public Library
Riverside, CA 92501

Abstract: The Citrus Label Collection consists of citrus labels (mostly orange, but some lemon and grapefruit examples) mainly from the southern California counties of Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Orange. The collection ranges from early naturalistic labels like Gypsy Queen (1891) to a later example of commercial art, Terra Bella (1952). The subjects featured on labels in the collection vary widely and include sports (Athlete); animal and floral designs (Mallard and Camellia); architectural and natural landscapes (Mission Bridge and Yosemite); portraits of women and children (Co-Ed and Vulture); marine scenes (Chinook); western and other historical images (Yellow Aster); patriotic illustration (Columbia); and several depictions of citrus fruit and orchards. The collection also includes a number of stock labels, items that were illustrated but never printed. These labels were used to mark inferior fruit under another brand name or as an alternative to custom labels. As well as the wide range of subject matter, a few of the brand labels vary in size, with some noticeably smaller for 1/2-size boxes or larger than the standard. The collection includes some citrus related materials in the form of six printed orange wrappers and a slide collection. The citrus label collection can provide researchers with examples of the evolution of art advertising and local business history. But the collection is not limited to these two main subjects. For example, images of the noble savage (Prairie Belle) and other Native American stereotypes (such as Heap Good) could also provide information for the researcher investigating the use of American Indians in advertising. Citrus labels were created as a way of grabbing the eye of the buyer but their images endure.

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

http://content.cdlib.org/search?style=oac-img&sort=title&relation=ark:/13030/kt4199q92w

Access
Due to the physical and fragile condition of the 193 labels, the collection has certain restrictions regarding access and duplication of the materials. Please ask the local history librarian for further details.

Preferred Citation
Riverside Public Library citrus label collection. Consult library. [Institution Name], [City, State].

Acquisition Information
Collected by Riverside Public Library.

History of the Citrus Label
Oranges originally were grown for local consumption. But the completion of the transcontinental railroad in the 1880s changed the marketing of the fruit. A national network of transportation and the citrus friendly California climate encouraged more people to migrate west. This resulted in the increased need to differentiate one grower's product from another, to capture the attention of the wholesalers and customers back east.

Early identification on citrus boxes consisted of stenciling, stamping, or branding the wooden crates. The earlier paper examples consisted of six inch round paper labels, pasted in the middle of a stenciled rectangular pattern. The 10" x 11" label (9" x 13" for lemon labels) replaced these early efforts and between the mid 1880s and mid 1950s remained the industry standard.

The designs of California citrus labels can be divided into three stylistic periods. The naturalistic period, from the mid 1880s to the end of World War I, illustrated subjects in a realistic manner using stone lithography, which printed up to six colors to make the final image. Labels showed local subjects like the southern California scenery, the groves, the growers' homes, and orange harvesting. Tropical Queen is an example of a naturalistic label in the collection. The advertising period in citrus labels (1920-1935) reflected two trends: the development of product advertising and the nation's emphasis on youth and vitality. The rise of potential customers, as the population shifted to urban settings, resulted in an increased use of advertising on labels made to appeal to the eastern buyer, a switch from labels reflecting the grower's or packer's own interests. In 1918, a manager of the California Fruit Growers Association wrote a booklet recommending that the labels be distinctive, simple, content oriented with short brand names. These suggestions were made to grab the wholesaler's attention and to link the label with the product. The discovery of vitamins in 1915 fueled America's interest in health issues. The citrus industry responded by heavily marketing the Vitamin C content in the produce. After 1918, all three major
marketing co-operatives marked their labels with grade standards, with the most aesthetically pleasing fruit receiving the top grade, like Sunkist or Pure Gold. Blemished fruit had no grading on their labels. Some labels, like Peasant, encouraged buyers to purchase the cosmetically flawed fruit despite their appearances. By the 1920s, most lithographic companies had phased out the stone plates in preference for metal ones, using new ink formulations in their printings. The Fancia label, a colorful label printed in 1932, shows some changes made during the advertising period. It retains the use of a landscape, but artists updated the design by framing it with the human figure standing outside the frame. The figure's attire reflects the Hispanic heritage of the region, another carry-over from the naturalistic period. But the inclusion of his smoking on the label was a new design element reflecting the cultural changes during the 1920s. The commercial art period (1935-1955) marks the final stage in the development of the citrus label. The use of offset photolithography marked the major change in label designs. Airbrushing and color gradation had not been possible using the older techniques. Photolithography also decreased advertising costs, a needed measure for businesses during the Depression. The Depression also caused more competition between the various brands. Few new designs were introduced, as the citrus associations continued to use older labels with some updating. Those labels introduced during the commercial art period used bold colors and block letters to attract the buyer's attention. Sunny Heights (1930s) is a vivid example of the ubiquitous orange grove but with the brand name formatted in block letters with color gradation in the title that gives it depth and dimension. The Circle series (1938) also demonstrates the use of airbrushing developed at that time.

Scope and Content of Collection
The Citrus Label Collection consists of citrus labels (mostly orange, but some lemon and grapefruit examples) mainly from the southern California counties of Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Orange. The collection ranges from early naturalistic labels like Gypsy Queen (1891) to a later example of commercial art, Terra Bella (1952). The subjects featured on labels in the collection vary widely and include sports (Athlete); animal and floral designs (Mallard and Camellia); architectural and natural landscapes (Mission Bridge and Yosemite); portraits of women and children (Co-Ed and Vulture); marine scenes (Chinook); western and other historical images (Yellow Aster); patriotic illustration (Columbia); and several depictions of citrus fruit and orchards. The collection also includes a number of stock labels, items that were illustrated but never printed. These labels were used to mark inferior fruit under another brand name or as an alternative to custom labels. As well as the wide range of subject matter, a few of the brand labels vary in size, with some noticeably smaller for 1/2-size boxes or larger than the standard. The collection includes some citrus related materials in the form of six printed orange wrappers and a slide collection. The citrus label collection can provide researchers with examples of the evolution of art advertising and local business history. But the collection is not limited to these two main subjects. For example, images of the noble savage (Prairie Belle) and other Native American stereotypes (such as Heap Good) could also provide information for the researcher investigating the use of American Indians in advertising. Citrus labels were created as a way of grabbing the eye of the buyer but their images endure.

Arrangement
The collection is divided into four series. Series I contains citrus labels from the 1880s to the 1950s almost exclusively from the southern California region. Arranged alphabetically, this series is divided into eight folders: Folder 1 (Albion-College Heights), Folder 2 (Collegiate-Golden West), Folder 3 (Grove-Minnehaha), Folder 4 (Mission Bridge-Poinsettia), Folder 5 (Prairie Belle-Superfine), and Folder 6 (Sweetheart-Young Sports). Folder 7 contains stock labels, commonly used when shipping inferior fruit or as an alternative to using custom labels. Folder 8 has three over-sized labels, two of which are copies. Series II, Folder 1, contains the citrus wrappers used to cover the fruit during shipment. Series III consists of two folders. Folder 1 is a slide collection of most of the labels in the collection. It is not comprehensive as several labels do not have slides, and a few of the labels on the slides are not found in the label collection. Series III, Folder 2, is the index for the slide collection. Series IV, Folder 1, has a newspaper article regarding the publication, “The History of the Citrus Industry in the Riverside Area,” a typewritten index of the most labels in the collection, and a handwritten note regarding the accession of an additional gift to the collection.

Several varieties exist in the collection. For example, the National labels are double-sided with different brand and company names (Standard and the Overland Orange & Lemon Company) on the reverse. This may indicate a change in ownership with the new company reusing older labels. Hummingbird and Mountain, both from the Pachappa Orange Growers Association, are round circular labels. Most of the labels are made from paper except for Squirrel and Golden Orange, which are made from cardboard. Some labels appear to be similar, like Alpha. But different lithographers made the two labels. The lithographic company, which appears on some labels, can help determine a relative date, as well as determining the art style of the label. Some design elements like the Sunkist logo (developed in 1908) and the Red Ball logo (1911) can also help in dating a particular label. One lithographic company, Western Litho. Co, put a three or four digit number after its name on some labels. This number gives the month and year that the label was printed—not necessarily when it was designed.

Indexing Terms

Riverside Public Library Citrus Label Collection
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection.

Riverside, Calif.
Citrus labels

Series I: Citrus Labels

Scope and Content Note
This series makes up the bulk of the collection. The following labels may be of interest to the researcher. Folder 1 has Camel, the only label in the collection using an Arabian theme. It has also has the Red Ball logo blacked out. In Folder 2, Columbia and Conversation show label variations between different brands using the same design with some modifications. Folder 3 contains two Maduro labels showing the change from an early complex design composition with a woman as the focal point to a later simplified design with the lemon still life in the center. Folder 5 has the label Peasant, a humorous design of an old woman. Most labels depicted younger women as seen in Native Daughter, Princess, and Marquita, among others in the collection. Folder 5 also contains Red Rover, the only label in the collection with a black Americana male as its subject. Yellow Aster, in Folder 6, shows brand variation in terms of changes in the company affiliated with the brand and in the subject matter (from a buffalo hunt to an orange still life).

- Folder 1: Albion-Casa Blanca (twenty-eight items)
- Folder 2: Chinook-Geranium (thirty items)
- Folder 3: Golden-Maine (thirty items)
- Folder 4: Mallard-Peacock (thirty-two items)
- Folder 5: Peasant-Squaw (twenty-eight items)
- Folder 6: Squirrel-Young Sports (thirty-three items)
- Folder 7: Stock labels (nine items)
- Folder 8: Over-sized labels (three items)

Series II: Packing Materials

Scope and Content Note
These materials were used in the shipment of citrus. They provided a means of identification, which the sticker stamps have currently replaced. All are marked from Oatman's; four are from the Blue bird brand while two are for the Sunny Mountain brand.

- Folder 1: Citrus wrappers (six items)

Series III: Slides and accompanied index

Scope and Content Note
The slides are arranged alphabetically by packinghouse, starting with those in Riverside. Robert L. Allmon, Steve Nathan, and Lorne Allmon did the slide photography with Lorne Allmon responsible for the inventory, dated 10 June 1983. The 1984 notation at the end of the index by library volunteer Betty Irving is of particular interest. It relates background information regarding Robert Matthew Irving's Chinook label, including the inspiration for the label's subject matter.

- Folder 1: Slides (146 items)
- Folder 2: Index

Series IV: Miscellaneous

Scope and Content Note
The newspaper article (dated 3 March 1969) relates information regarding a booklet about the citrus business in the Riverside region. The 1985 index records the items originally bound in the six volumes. The handwritten note (26 March 1986) accompanied the later additions to the collection.

- Folder 1: Documents accompanying the collection (three items)