

lesson 9 Agriculture

INTRODUCING THE SACRAMENTO HISTORY COLLECTION

OVERVIEW

This lesson introduces students to some of the unusual and interesting document types in the **Sacramento History Online Collection (SHO)** at <http://www.sacramentohistory.org> that are related to agriculture. Before using the database with your class, take some time to browse the SHO collection online to get an overview of the types of photographs and documents that are included. (These lessons use the term document to refer to any of the items in the database, including photographs). You can view or print the single images in this lesson directly as a JPEG file. **Lesson 9 does not require students to work online.** (*For more information on the types of documents in the SHO collection, see Lesson 1 in the Transportation Lessons*).

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

1. Give examples of several types of documents that are in the SHO collection.
2. Recognize an exaggerated or tall-tale postcard.
3. Identify modern ephemera related to agriculture that might offer clues about modern life in your own community.

CALIFORNIA HISTORY STANDARDS

This lesson emphasizes several unusual types of documents in the SHO collection, rather than specific history content.

BACKGROUND ARTICLE 9

The Sacramento History Online Collection (*pages 9-5 - 9-7*)

STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET 9 AND KEY

Introducing the Sacramento History Online Collection (*pages 9-9 and 9-10*)

DOCUMENTS TO DISCUSS

The documents shown below provide examples of several interesting types of documents in the SHO collection, including panoramic photos, crate labels, and postcards.

Photographs

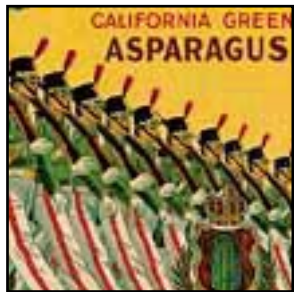


1. Working the land [ca. 1900]
Men and horses posing in front of row crops planted in a field next to a river. Wiseman family ranch.



2. Kuhn California Project [1912]
Panoramic photo showing views of farms served by Kuhn irrigation project.

Ephemera



3. King's Cadets

label [ca.1925]

Vegetable crate label for the King's Cadets brand asparagus. Label depicts marching soldiers dressed in green parade uniforms. They are symbolic representations of stalks of asparagus.

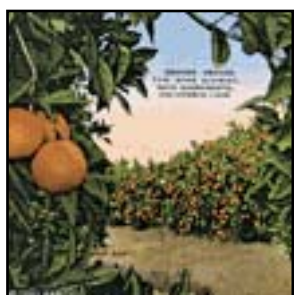


4. B-Wise Pears

label [ca. 1925]

Fruit crate label featuring an owl.

Postcards



5. Orange grove

[ca. 1910]

Postcard showing orange grove at Fair Oaks.



6. Carload of Mammoth Navel Oranges

[1909]

Exaggerated or tall-tale postcard by Edward H. Mitchell.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Print any of the images and PDF files shown above that you will use in your discussion, as well as **Student Activity Sheet 9 and Key**.

2. Read **Background Article 9**. You may wish to read it to your students or have them read it by themselves. Discuss any questions that they may have.

3. Introduce students to the SHO Collection by using printouts of the documents above or by showing them several records from the online database.

4. Ask students to look at some of the different documents (printed or online). Can they tell how the items are related? (subject, age, etc.)

5. Tell the students that the *Sacramento History Online* website has documents related to the history of agriculture in California from 1849-1929. Many of these materials are primary sources. Materials include books, ephemera, maps, manuscripts, photographs, postcards, prints, and technical drawings.

6. If students are not already familiar with the term *primary sources* (introduced in Lesson 1), discuss how primary sources differ from textbooks and modern books written about a historical time period.

7. If students are not already familiar with various types of documents (introduced in Lesson 1), discuss each type and ask students to give examples of each. (*books, ephemera, manuscripts, maps, photographs, postcards, prints, and technical drawings*)
8. If students are not already familiar with the term *ephemera* (introduced in Lesson 1), ask what they think the word *ephemera* might mean. Do they know any other words that sound similar? The word *ephemera* relates to objects that are *ephemeral*. The term *ephemeral* means something that lasts only a short time (originally it meant lasting only a day). Once students understand the concept, ask if any of them have items in their family that came from another time period, something not necessarily intended to have lasting value. (*e.g. an event ticket, a food wrapper*) Do any of them have a scrapbook? What kinds of things do they save? What is often thrown away?
9. **Photographs: Panoramic photos.** Show and discuss **Document 1, Working the land**. Ask students what they think the photograph shows. (*a farm, horses, dog*) How old do they think the image is? Why do they think so? What kind of farm equipment is shown? (*apparently plows for cultivating*) How does it look different from modern equipment? (*horse-drawn*) Show students **Document 2, Kuhn California Project**. Beginning in 1908, J.S. and W.S. Kuhn of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, purchased and then completed the Central Canal project. The irrigation project served farmland in Colusa and Glenn Counties. How does this photograph differ from the first? (*shape, size*) Explain that this image is an example of a panoramic photo, a format that was popular during the early part of the twentieth century. For what types of subjects would this type of photo be useful?
10. **Ephemera: Fruit labels.** Show and discuss **Document 3, King Cadets label**. Ask students how they think this label was used? (*asparagus crate*) Why does it have this shape? (*packed in a box that was narrower at the top, matching the shape of asparagus spears standing on end*) Show and discuss **Document 4, B-Wise pear label**. Ask students how this label was used. (*pear crate*) Why does the label say B-Wise? (*suggests that you might be wise if you buy that brand*) What other food brands do they know that use a name to suggest that the product is high-quality or the buyer is smart to buy the product?
11. **Postcards.** Show and discuss **Document 5, Orange grove**. What kind of document is this image? (*postcard*) Show and discuss **Document 6, Carload of Mammoth Navel Oranges**. Compare the two postcards. Is there anything odd or funny about the second postcard? Which card gives a more accurate view of how oranges grow? Why did people make exaggerated postcards? What other types of transportation could be shown on an exaggerated postcard? (*answers might include airplane, ship, truck, crane*)
12. Give students **Activity Sheet 9: Introducing the Sacramento History Online Collection** (*page 9-7*). After they have finished the activity, discuss their answers as a group.

FOLLOW-UP

1. **Search the SHO collection** to find other examples of panoramic photos, fruit labels, and exaggerated postcards, using keyword or advanced searches. Try the keywords *Mitchell* to find more exaggerated postcards and *Kuhn* to find more panoramic photos.
2. **Compare labels** from modern canned and packaged goods to fruit crate labels. Make your own crate label for a crop that was grown in your area or for a modern product.
3. **Make a list of materials** representing aspects of agriculture that would tell someone in the future about life in the 21st century in your community. What things should be shown in photographs in order for them to be included? What maps should be included? What ephemera?
4. **Collect other examples of exaggerated postcards.** If your community is famous for growing a certain crop or manufacturing a product, make your own exaggerated postcard.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- Edinger, Monica. *Seeking history, teaching with primary sources in grades 4-6.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000. (includes a CD-ROM).
- Rubin, Cynthia E. and Williams, Morgan. *Larger than life: The American Tall-Tale Postcard, 1905-1915.* New York: Abbeville Press, 1990.

RELATED LINKS

Taking the Long View: Panoramic Photographs, 1851-1991

(<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/pnhtml/pnhome.html>)

Panorama-rama! A Short History of Panoramic Photography

(<http://www.sav.org/e/panorama.html>)

Panoramic Cameras (<http://www.cirkutpanorama.com/cameras.html>)

Fruit Crate Labels of the Golden State

(<http://www.lemongrovehistoricalociety.com/fruitlbls.html>)

A History of California Citrus Crate Labels

(http://www.lnholt.com/citrus_labels/citrustext.htm)

History of Sunkist's Crate Labels (http://www.sunkist.com/about/crate_labels.asp)

California Historical Society | Exhibits | Past Exhibits Online

(http://www.californiahistoricalociety.org/exhibits/big_orange2/create.html)

Packing Labels: A Unique Look into California History

(<http://www.cratelabelsonline.com/history.html>)

Exaggerated Postcards (<http://www.kshs.org/cool2/coolpost.htm>)

Fantasy Photographs by W. H. Martin -- American Museum of Photography

(<http://www.photographymuseum.com/talltale.html>)

The Golden Age of Picture Postcards

(<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/msscfa/qc16510.htm>)



The **Sacramento History Online** (SHO) Collection is a digital database of primary sources for studying history. Primary sources include documents, paintings, photographs, letters, newspapers, and other materials that originate in a specific time period rather than accounts that are written at a later time. In this collection, the primary sources categories are books, ephemera, manuscripts, maps, photographs, postcards, prints, and technical drawings.



Photographs are one of the most common items in the agricultural collection. Many of these photos show different crops that were grown in California and how they were harvested and processed. Some photos show small family farms, while others document large company-owned agricultural projects.

Some of the photos in the collection are examples of panoramic photography. Panoramic photos allow viewers to see a wide-angle view, as much as 360 degrees. They are usually at least twice as wide as they are tall, although they can be as much as 10 times wider than their height.

Experiments with panoramic photography began around 1840. At first, photographers made panoramic photos by taking regular-sized daguerreotypes of different views of a scene and arranging them side-by-side. Later, many different types of panoramic photography processes and cameras were invented. A swing-lens camera pivoted around to pan the scene. A rotating camera panned in one direction while mechanically moving the film in the opposite direction.

Commercial photographers were the main users of the early panoramic cameras. One of the most popular cameras was the Kodak Cirkut, introduced in 1907. This type of camera let photographers take pictures of large groups of people from a closer viewpoint. Before the invention of photo enlargers, negatives were as large as the finished image. Panoramic negatives could be as big as four feet wide by one foot high. By 1911, smaller and easier-to-use cameras that used film rolls were produced for amateur photographers. Although some modern photographers still create panoramic photos, this style was probably most popular during the early part of the twentieth century.



Ephemera include miscellaneous items such as brochures, advertisements, menus, and tickets. Ephemera is a word to describe materials that are not usually saved or even meant to be permanent but that have managed to survive the years, perhaps in someone's scrapbook. Ephemera might include a souvenir button or a can label.

One type of ephemera that is well represented in the agricultural collection is called *agrilithography*, which refers to printed labels that were used on wooden crates for fruit and vegetables. Growers and packers used crates to ship fruit and vegetables to market, and store owners used them for displays.

Railroads began shipping California produce to the east coast as early as the 1870s, but no one is sure exactly when crate labels were first used. However, these labels became a big industry in the 1880s, with the increased shipping created by the success of new crops and the development of refrigerated railroad cars. Fruit was often individually wrapped, so the label identified and advertised what was in the crate through attractive colors, designs, and brand names. Thousands of different labels were created, with a variety of themes, including animals, scenic landscapes, and patriotic icons.

The shape and size of a particular label depended on the box used for the product. For example, tomatoes could not be stacked, so they were packed in shorter boxes. Asparagus crates and crate labels used a keystone design, narrower on the top, which reflected the shape of the vegetable. Today, many people collect crate labels because of their variety and colorful images. Because labels that have been glued to a crate are almost impossible to remove, collectors prize unused labels, extras left over after a crop was harvested and packed into crates.

Many labels were printed in San Francisco by immigrants from Germany, a country that was famous for its high-quality printing industry. One of these immigrants was Max Schmidt, who founded the Schmidt Lithographic Company. Most early labels used a process called stone lithography, which was later replaced by the use of metal plates in the 1920s.

Some labels had recognizable logos, such as the Blue Anchor brand of the California Fruit Exchange, a group of citrus growers established in 1905. The Exchange later created the Sunkist brand. After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, the California Fruit Exchange formed the Fruit Growers Supply Company to purchase timber for crates. Eventually, they even established their own logging railroad. Crate labels continued to be used as late as the 1950s, when cardboard boxes rapidly replaced wooden crates.



Postcards are also well represented in the agriculture collection. Many of these are examples of *exaggerated* or *tall-tale postcards*. They show huge fruit or vegetables, sometimes on railroad cars. California was famous for its produce, so tourists often sent these cards to friends and relatives in other states. Following their introduction in the 1890s and until World War I, collecting picture postcards was a popular American pastime.

Between 1905 and 1915, hundreds of millions of postcards were mailed each year in the United States. In those years, people often saved their postcards in elaborate albums and shared them with friends as entertainment.

The first private picture postcards were printed for the 1893 Chicago World Columbia Exposition. At that time, it cost two cents to send such a card. Only government-issued postcards could be sent for one cent. In 1898, a law was passed to change the postal rate for private picture postcards to one cent, starting the penny postcard craze. The U.S. Postal Service did not allow any writing on the address side of cards until 1907, when the split design for a message and address was approved.

Until a law was passed that charged a tariff on certain imports, many picture postcards were printed in Germany. In the United States, the largest postcard company in the west was that of Edward H. Mitchell, of San Francisco, who printed most of the exaggerated postcards in this collection. The Martin Post Card Company, Alfred Stanley Johnson, and others were also known for unusual cards. E. Curtis created cards showing characters made from vegetables or fruit, such as a pumpkin-head man.

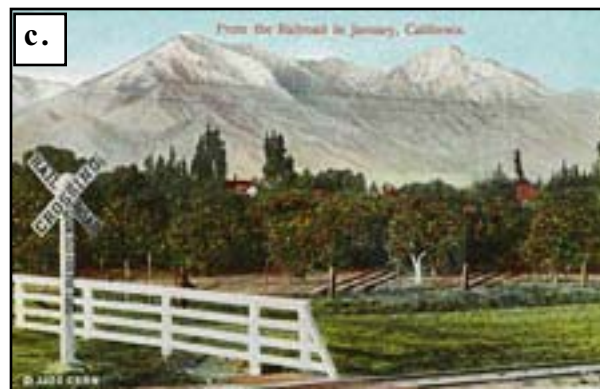
Some exaggerated postcards were made by illustration and lithography techniques. Others were created by taking close-up and wide-shot photos. These photos were cut, reassembled, and glued into a photomontage, which was then re-photographed and printed.

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INTRODUCING THE SACRAMENTO HISTORY ONLINE COLLECTION

I. Document Match: (documents are not shown to scale)

Place correct letter by each description to describe the document.



_____ 1. Realistic postcard

_____ 4. Exaggerated postcard

_____ 2. Panoramic photograph

_____ 5. Vegetable crate label

_____ 3. Fruit crate label

_____ 6. Standard photograph

Modern Ephemera

Name a modern item related to food and agriculture that might often be thrown away. Give an example of what it might tell someone in the future about life today.

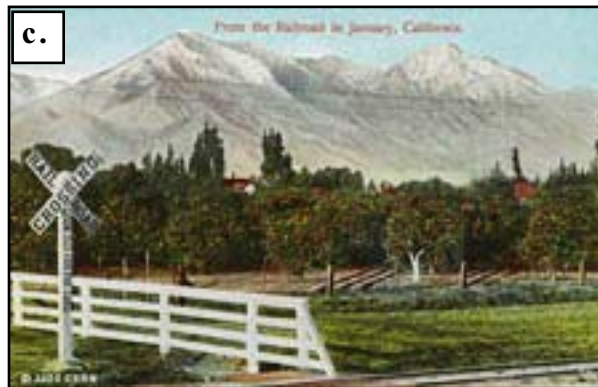
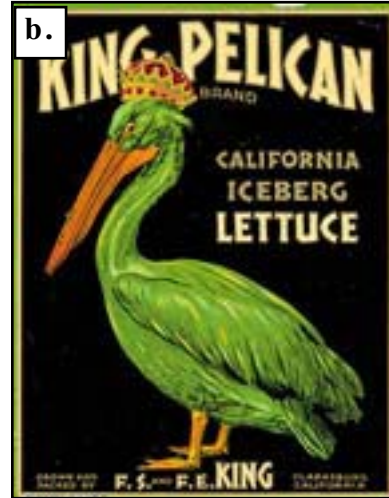
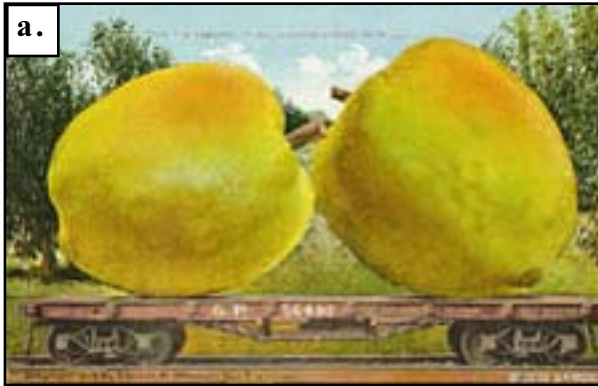
activity sheet 9 Agriculture

INTRODUCING THE SACRAMENTO HISTORY ONLINE COLLECTION

KEY

I. Document Match: (documents are not shown to scale)

Place correct letter by each description to describe the document.



 c 1. Realistic postcard

 a 4. Exaggerated postcard

 e 2. Panoramic photograph

 b 5. Vegetable crate label

 f 3. Fruit crate label

 d 6. Non-panoramic photo

Modern Ephemera

Name a modern item related to food and agriculture that might often be thrown away. Give an example of what it might tell someone in the future about life today.

(answers will vary but may relate to social customs, date, cost, subject, format, location)