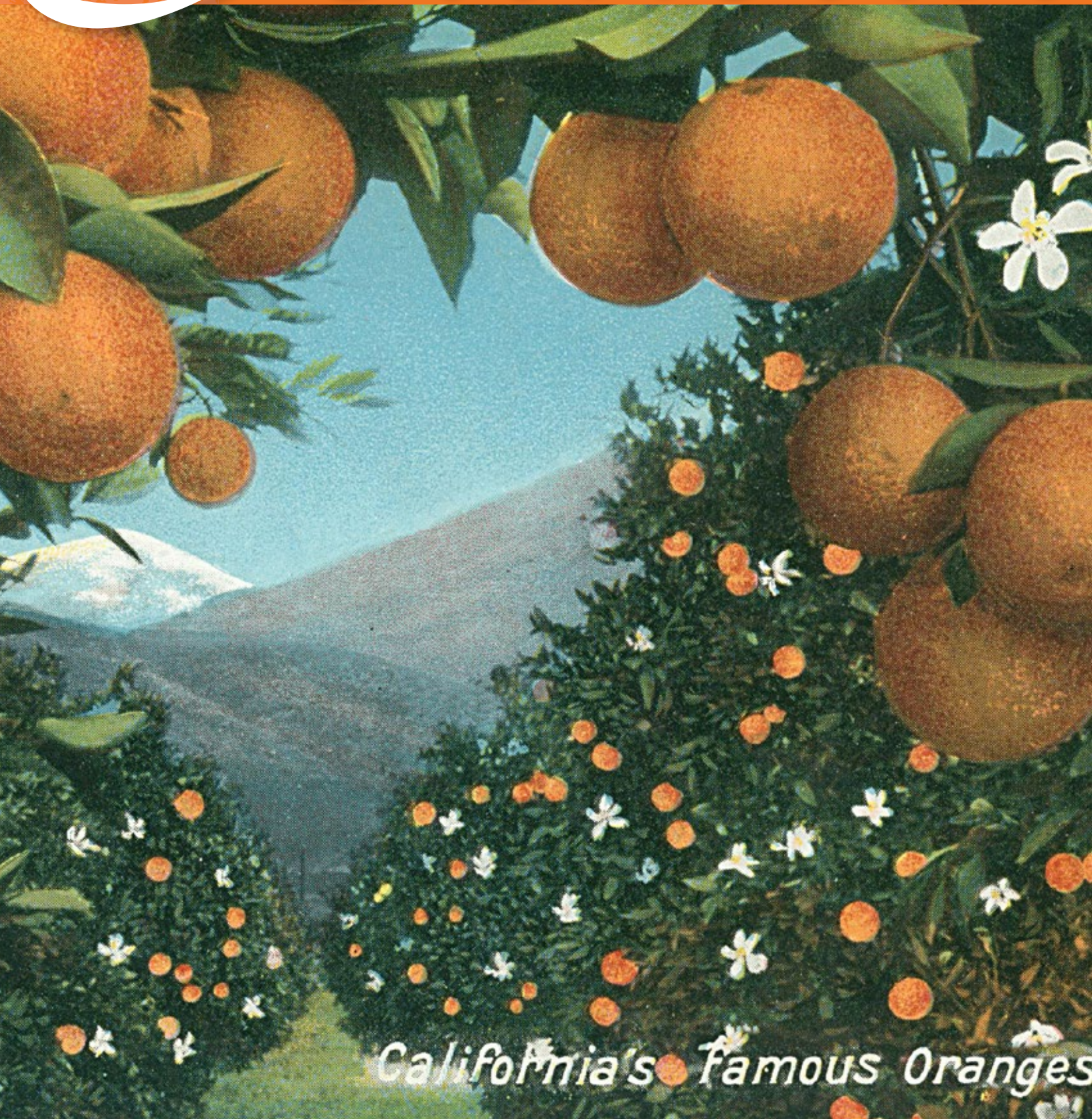


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Bulletin



California's Famous Oranges



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Back Cover. Baseball Hall of Fame star and San Francisco Giants slugger Willie Mays and Tom Vano posed for this memorable photograph with the Golden Gate Bridge in the background. See article by Gary F. Kurutz, pp. 16-23.

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This Newman Company postcard puts California's orange crop center stage as something worth seeing and even sending postcards about.



“You Don’t Know Oranges until You Come to California”

Postcards, Agritourism and Boosterism in
Turn-of-the-Century Los Angeles *By Elena Smith*

In late September, in the heart of downtown Sacramento, residents and visitors gather to listen to music, eat local produce, and meet with farmers at the annual Farm-to-Fork Festival. Put on by the Sacramento Convention and Visitors Bureau, this festival is part of a far wider push to promote area agriculture, a push that includes tours of area farms, a speakers series, and more. While the Farm-to-Fork Festival is a relatively

recent invention, the idea of agriculture-based tourism has deep roots in California, particularly in another region of the state, Southern California.¹ In fact, the California History Room’s postcard collection contains evidence of a push by Los Angeles County boosters to promote citrus-based tourism at the turn of the last century.

As with many success stories, the turn-of-the-century Los Angeles citrus industry had its roots in failure, specifically the

failure of the Los Angeles land market in the late 1880's. Glen Gendzel, a scholar on Southern California history, wrote that after out-of-state land speculators pulled out of Los Angeles land markets, area businessmen, attempting to recoup their financial losses, chose to market Los Angeles as the ideal environment for growing a specific type of crop, namely citrus. By promoting the area as ideally suited for growing a luxury crop known for its special growing requirements, Los Angeles promoters could attract a different sort of settler than they had previously. Instead of investors, they were aiming for upper-middle class farmers.²

In order to attract this new type of landowner to the area, Angelenos had to convince midwesterners that Los Angeles was ideal for farming. This sort of persuasion took many forms. Gary and KD Kurutz, in their book *California Calls You*, pointed out several of the full-color brochures produced by Los Angeles stakeholders such as Southern Pacific. These not only promoted the area but also provided practical farming information such as proximity to goods transportation.³ Similarly, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce collected crop statistics and published them in leaflets that circulated in the Midwest.⁴ Los Angeles citrus farmland promotion also took the form of tourism, albeit tourism with a peculiar twist, as boosters invited Americans to come see Los Angeles County's citrus groves.⁵

The promoters' push for citrus-based tourist traffic in Los Angeles is very evident in area tourist literature. In the 1903 version of *The Traveler*, a publication designed to orient Los Angeles visitors, tourists were invited to take a drive or train-ride through the orange groves, which it listed as one of many "points of interest."⁶ The Pacific Sightseeing Company, similarly offered an auto tour through Los Angeles' famed citrus groves.⁷ Of course, organizations like the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce which put on their own displays and even

area realtors were hopeful that they would turn tourists into landowners, so much so, that realtors complained if orange groves started looking run-down.⁸ Not only did turn-of-the-century Angelenos use pamphlets to encourage out-of-town visitors to see their orange groves but they also used a very typical promotional device of their time; postcards.

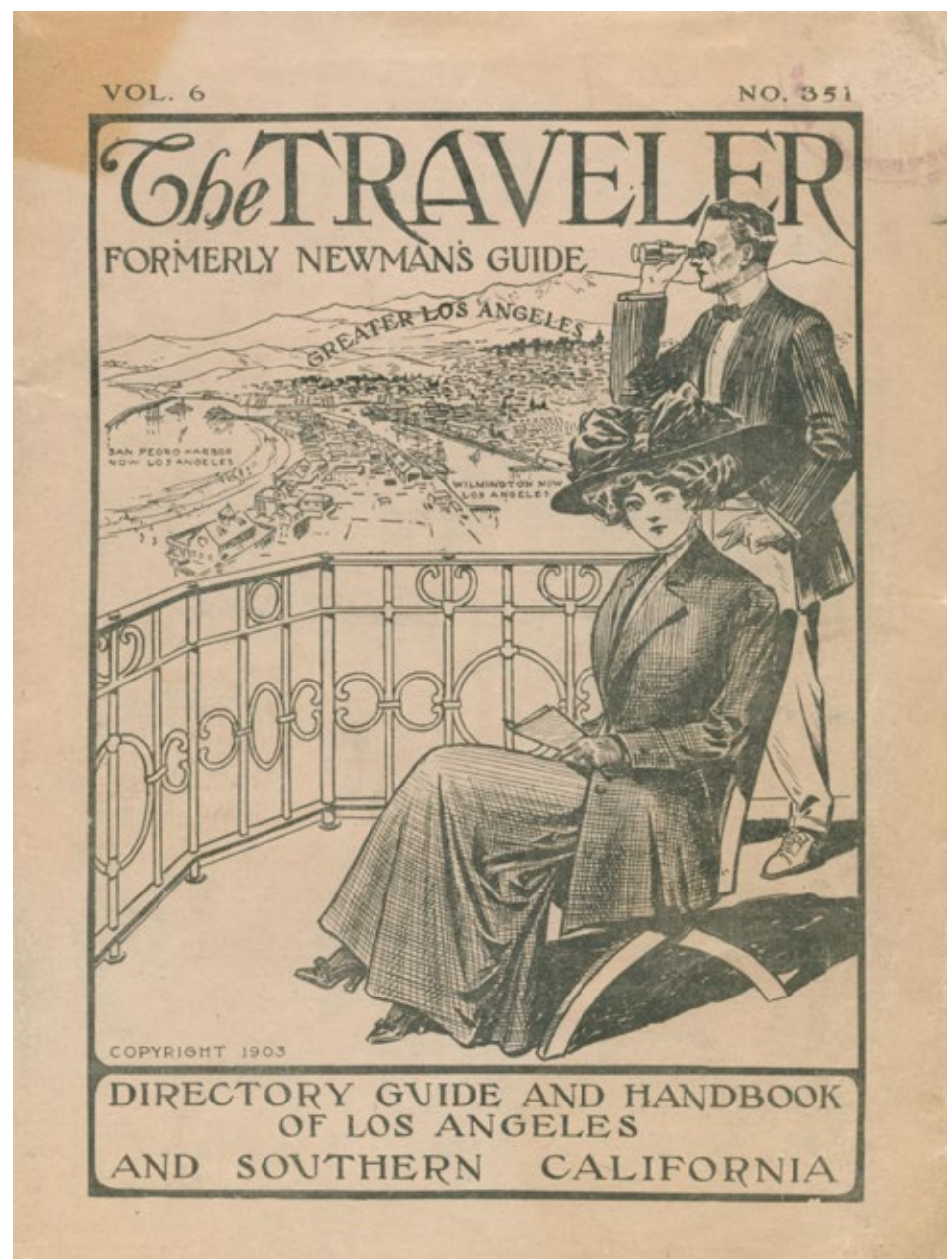
Postcards gained popularity in the United States after 1907, when the innovation of a divided back allowed correspondents to



EDITOR'S NOTE

Elena Smith is a reference librarian in the California History Room at the California State Library. She has a strong background in local history and archival work, with master's degrees in both Public History and Library Science, and a work history that includes a wide variety of local libraries and archives. Her favorite research topics include California postcards, and anything related to the California History Room's collection.

The Traveler, a guidebook for tourists in Los Angeles, highlighted many local sights in the region, including orange groves.



SEE LOS ANGELES



PACIFIC SIGHTSEEING COMPANY

HALF DAY AUTOMOBILE TRIP \$1.00
205 MERCANTILE PLACE
PHONE BROADWAY 7641 AND F7220



MERCANTILE PLACE BETWEEN 5TH AND 6TH STREETS
EXTENDING FROM BROADWAY TO SPRING STREETS

One of the Pacific Sightseeing Company auto tours advertised in this brochure offered sightseers a panoramic view of the orange groves.

write longer messages without obscuring the image. With that change, they took off as a tourism product.⁹ Indeed the correlation between postcards and tourists is so strong that Carson Hendricks, in his *Bulletin* article on the medium stated, "Postcards are, after all, made for tourists."¹⁰ Companies across the United States used this advertising medium to encourage tourism in certain areas. Yolonda Youngs, in her article on the Teich, a major postcard company, and its postcards of the Grand Canyon stated that the prevalence of certain canyon views in Teich works were largely due to the wholesale purchasing patterns of the Fred Harvey Company, which sold postcards promoting areas where it had concession stands.¹¹ Los Angeles based companies took a similar approach.

At the turn of the century, many Los Angeles postcard publishers made use of citrus grove images to promote the area. One excellent example of this is a 1910 postcard produced by the Los Angeles-based Newman Company. By depicting the navel orange on the card, this company essentially highlighted area citrus as an important local sight.¹² The Van Ornum Colorprint company likewise highlighted oranges in postcards featuring Southern California vistas.¹³

While it might be possible to explain away one or two images as anomalies, the sheer volume of postcards related to Los Angeles citrus agriculture suggests a widespread effort to promote area citrus tourism via postcards. The California History Room's postcard files have many examples of boosterism for Los Angeles citrus agriculture. One particularly clear example is a 1912 postcard arguing that only people who had visited California could truly consider themselves experts on oranges.¹⁴ Other earlier postcards made use of the taunt "I'll eat oranges for you, if you'll throw snowballs for me" to lure visitors out west as can be seen in one 1908 example.¹⁵ The orange motif proved so popular that other agricultural indus-



This Van Ornum Colorprint Company postcard highlights California's mountains and orange groves simultaneously, but it emphasizes the oranges.

By juxtaposing tourists and oranges, this Western Publishing and Novelty Co. postcard asserts that oranges are a major California attraction.



Even out-of-town postcard makers such as the Mitchell company, recognized and used oranges to promote California.