

# San Diego Olives: Origins of a California Industry

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James S. Copley Library Award, 2007

Olives are big business in California. The state produces 99 percent of the United States crop, a \$34 million industry centered in San Joaquin and Northern Sacramento Valley. Today, growers struggle to compete with cheap imports but, around 1900, they participated in a highly profitable venture.<sup>1</sup>

In 1909, San Diego led all California counties in the number of acres devoted to olives. Boosters promoted the fruit as an ideal crop for the climate. Processing plants made olive oil, pickled olives, and canned ripe olives. Producers included Frank A. Kimball of National City and Charles M. Gifford of San Diego, neither of whom have received much attention from historians. The names of other San Diegans and businesses important to the early olive industry are all but forgotten.<sup>2</sup>

Olive culture spans the history of San Diego from its eighteenth-century origins at the Mission San Diego de Alcalá to its early twentieth-century decline. Promotional literature that created the olive boom identifies little-known olive ranchers and olive processing businesses. Gifford and Sons Olive Works, for example, was the first company in the United States to package and market ripe olives in a tin can. A century later, almost all the olives produced in California are sold in the manner that Gifford originated at his San Diego processing plant.<sup>3</sup> In the end, however, unrestrained “boosterism” caused the decline of the olive industry in San Diego.

## The Always and Enduring Olive

The olive threads through human experience, tangibly as a source of food and useful oil and powerfully as a symbol, whether as Athena’s everlasting gift to Greece, carried in the beak of Noah’s exploratory dove or clasped in an eagle’s talon on a national seal. Olives are one of the world’s oldest cultivated fruits and a hardy survivor of the Columbian exchange, the transfer of plants and animals between the Old and New Worlds.<sup>4</sup>

There are wild, native olive plants in the Americas, but *Olea europaea*, the domesticated producer of abundant fruit, was brought from Spain to the New World in 1560.<sup>5</sup> The olive later generated some interest in the British colonies and early United States. That dedicated farmer, Thomas Jefferson, urged greater

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*Olives were cultivated at the Mission San Diego de Alcalá in the late eighteenth century. Written on the back of the photo: "Farm-house, San Diego Mission. Olive trees 120 years old." Collection of Marjorie Reeves.*

knowledge of the olive and its planting in southern regions. Jefferson's report in favor of olive trees enlists the same contestable claims used to promote the California olive boom one hundred years later: the tree was said to grow in poor and otherwise barren soil, to need little water or care, and to yield a generous crop ensuring economic gain. "Of all the gifts of Heaven to man, [the olive] is next to the most precious, if it be not the most precious," Jefferson effused.<sup>6</sup>

Growers of olives do not simply produce a crop, they forge a connection with Greek antiquity and the Bible. Authors of otherwise prosaic agricultural advice on olive culture routinely include sentimental references to Homer, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Mount of Olives. Every tree stands as a growing legacy, promising to enrich not just the original planter, but generations of descendants.<sup>7</sup>

The olive was first cultivated in California at Mission San Diego de Alcalá, established in 1769. Exactly when the olive arrived and whether it was propagated from seed or cuttings or both are matters of long debate. It is often assumed that the olive was imported at the mission's inception, but Franciscan historian Father Zephyrin Engelhardt once opined that olives probably were not brought to San Diego with the first missionaries.<sup>8</sup> He believes that the olive came to the mission after Fermín Francisco de Lasuén succeeded founder Junípero Serra as Father-President in 1784. One source sets the olive planting date around 1795 when

artisans arrived to build screw presses and stone mills at the San Diego Mission.<sup>9</sup> Lasuén does confirm the existence of bearing olive trees in his *Biennial Report of 1803*, writing that “in some missions they have begun to harvest olives; and at San Diego they have already made some very good olive oil.”<sup>10</sup> Further confirmation is found in a reference to “olives of San Diego” being served at an 1816 feast held to celebrate the inauguration of Governor Pablo Vicente Solá at Monterey.

Once established, the trees at Mission San Diego furnished cuttings used to start olive orchards at other California missions. When the missions were converted to parish churches by Mexico’s 1834 Decree of Secularization, buildings and crops at San Diego de Alcalá were largely abandoned to nature. When a government-appointed inspector of missions visited four years later, his report described two olive orchards, one of 300 trees and another of 167 trees.<sup>11</sup> Thirty-five years later, these “Madre trees” were the source of cuttings used to produce new trees for the California olive planting boom. The stage for this development was set by numerous articles promoting the suitability of California as olive country.

### **Crops to Astound a Yankee**

California’s early and intense grip on the American imagination was forever sealed by the discovery of gold in 1848. The nation’s authors and journalists mined their own gold as every California story seemed to find an audience, including those suggesting the great promise of agriculture. References to the olive appear very early in this literature. An 1852 *San Francisco Herald* story reprinted in Massachusetts is typical: “In the natural production of the earth conducive to the sustenance of man [California] is abundantly prolific, [growing] the banana, the orange, the lemon, [and] the olive.”<sup>12</sup>

California won praise in an 1853 Brooklyn lecture for “its vast resources, both



*Mission Valley, 1872. The photo shows the home of Thomas Davies who leased former San Diego Mission land, sold tree starts, worked the olive groves, and made olive oil. ©SDHS #80:3288.*

agricultural and mineral...its myriad gardens of flowers, and grapes, and figs, and olives, and apricots;...[and its suitability for] the successful cultivation of every variety of vegetable."<sup>13</sup> Newspapers more widely reported that, along with gold, California should be of interest for its agricultural potential. "The very general, but erroneous, impression that California could never be much of a farming country" was refuted. One correspondent said that all known farm products could be grown in California and the matchless climate would produce unique crops as well, including olives, prunes, oranges, and lemons.<sup>14</sup>

One of Horace Greeley's overland travel letters, reprinted by the influential *Farmers Cabinet* in 1859, specifically mentions that the "olive grows finely in Southern California."<sup>15</sup> A few years later, readers of *Scientific American* learned about the fruit harvest in 1863-64 from old fig and olive trees growing around the California missions. The oil made from olives picked at San Fernando, San Gabriel, and San Diego compared favorably with that of Italian oil from Florence, according to this article, and the olives in some years surpassed the flavor of those grown in Seville.<sup>16</sup>

After the Civil War, the *Chicago Tribune* weighed in with its credible first-hand report from John Goodale, an official on his way to Alaska to witness the formal annexation of Russian America to the United States. Touring the farming districts of California for ten days while awaiting other diplomats, he wrote: "In Central and Southern California, grapes, peaches, figs, pomegranate, and olives grow with a profusion which would astound a Yankee."<sup>17</sup>

## Promoting the Olive

Urging wider cultivation of the olive, a New York newspaper described an early commercial orchard in California. Cuttings just 15 inches long were planted at Santa Barbara in 1868. Within four years, trees from 10 to 13 feet high had sprung from those cuttings. According to an article in *New York Observer and Chronicle*, "The successful cultivation of the olive in this country would supply a great want and would unquestionably be remunerative."<sup>18</sup>

By 1872, *Scientific American* was noting—prematurely—that "the culture of the olive tree and the manufacture of oil from its fruit is gradually becoming a leading industry in California." A decade later, readers of *The Century* were told that the olive was a newly acquired American interest because it is so "easily and profitably grown in California."<sup>19</sup>

The economic promise of commercial olive growing got more press by the mid-1880s, with enticing phrases such as "great demand and big profit." California author and poet Joaquin Miller echoed popular reporting: "This hardy little tree, the olive, is always assigned the ugliest and stoniest, and meanest bit of land...and the olive takes kindly to any place you choose to put him...What a country this will be when the olive becomes established here as in Italy!"<sup>20</sup>

Although the question of whether planting olives in California could be made to pay was resolved in the negative as early as 1867, the sober economics of olive cultivation tended to be lost amid promotional claims. A Chicago paper did point out the length of time between planting and financial returns. It acknowledged the difficulties in processing a crop so that it was fit for the market either as olive oil or pickled olives. One source finally admitted that in California the growing of olives



The original wooden olive press from the Mission San Diego de Alcalá was displayed in Old Town on the grounds of the Old Mission Brand Olive Oil Company. Today, it is on view at the Junípero Serra Museum in Presidio Park. ©SDHS #80:7019.

as an industry is yet in an experimental stage.<sup>21</sup> These cautions were quickly swept aside by assurances that processing problems “have been surmounted” so that the industry can really pay, and a report stating that the “notion that the trees do not bear for many years after planting has been proved to be without foundation.”<sup>22</sup>

The *Semi-Tropical Planter*, a publication read by farmers and orchardists, ignored bad news and printed the familiar claims of profitability and the “gold mine” potential of olive trees. To the broader public, the *Los Angeles Times* became an advocate, publishing very long articles on olive cultivation. The editors found sufficient empirical evidence in the experience of growers in Santa Barbara, Solano, and San Diego “to demonstrate that the tree thrives well and bears well in California, and hence to establish the fact that it is a profitable tree to cultivate.”<sup>23</sup> By 1895, the *Times* found it “difficult to overestimate the importance which the olive industry of California may assume during the coming decade.” The olive compared more than favorably with other products and was likely to make Southern California “a populous and wealthy State.”<sup>24</sup>

In part, this optimism rested on the fact that the demand for pure olive oil exceeded supply and that imported oil was almost always adulterated. So few olive oil mills were operating in California, according to the *Times*, that the total annual production sold out in ninety days. The editors predicted that the olive would eventually rival the orange as a California crop because the trees could thrive in such a wider range of soils. They wrote, “There is little fear of overdoing the market for olives.”<sup>25</sup>

Frank Leslie’s popular monthly *The American Magazine* in May 1895 took a long look at the California olive business in “The Reign of the Olive” which included illustrations of Chinese workers at an olive oil mill. Several growers were

interviewed on the economics of olive production. Yields and profits, production details, medicinal benefits, and the adulteration of foreign imports were set out. An “advantage of olive growing over other fruits, for the poor man or the man of moderate means” was asserted on the basis that California offered cheap land adapted to raising profitable olive crops without irrigation.<sup>26</sup> This reference to olives as the poor man’s crop perfectly illustrates the point historians have long made about the appeal of California to ordinary Americans: it was a place that encouraged humble people to reach beyond themselves. “Olive culture is so simple that one of ordinary intelligence may engage in it,” assured *Scientific American*.<sup>27</sup> In California, olives could enrich the poor and genius was not required.

As more growers ventured into the olive business, publications on olive culture appeared. John Ignatius Bleasdale had studied olive culture in Europe and presented both a scholarly and practical discussion as early as 1881 in San Francisco. He quoted various sources, including Frank A. Kimball’s article in the *Southern California Horticulturist*, while extolling the usefulness and profitability of the olive tree.<sup>28</sup>

Professional advice, complete with scientific tables showing yields and oil production of various varieties of olive trees, was offered in a report by the University of California Agriculture Experiment Station in 1894. The introduction cryptically states that the report is intended “to forestall the repetition of the numerous expensive mistakes heretofore made in connection with the olive industry.”<sup>29</sup> The “mistakes” are not set out, but presumably included planting untested varieties, taking literally the oft-repeated advice that olive trees need no water or care, and failing to learn or employ proper techniques of processing the fruit. Official publications from the State Commissioner of Horticulture advised on the different varieties of olive trees and methods of their culture.<sup>30</sup>

Napa resident Adolphe Flamant translated into English his previously published French booklet on olive growing and processing, with hope, he said, that olive culture would stand foremost among the great industries of the state. “An olive plantation is a gold mine on the surface of the earth,” he concluded.<sup>31</sup> As a nurseryman specializing in selling olive trees, John S. Calkins was an energetic promoter of the olive business. He presented both a romantic and practical view of olive culture in his 1895 pamphlet, substantiating the longevity of the species with reference to 500-year-old olive trees in Europe.<sup>32</sup> Finally, in a departure from writing California history, Hubert Howe Bancroft distributed *Where Grow the Best Olives*, an attractive illustrated pamphlet promoting his Helix Farms olive crop, planted near Spring Valley in San Diego County.<sup>33</sup>

## A Discouraging Word Ignored

By 1890, young olive orchards were found in every county of central and southern California, and some had been planted as far north as Redding. An estimated 90,000 olive trees were in commercial cultivation in the state. The tendency of settlers in California to faddishly over-plant a single crop was pointed out in an 1892 newspaper article: “Olive-growing is now all the rage in California, and...is likely to be overdone....Californians are prone to excess in the matter of fruit culture.”<sup>34</sup>

Unintentionally critiquing its own work, the *Los Angeles Times* stated that too

many glittering generalities had been written about the profitability of olives. A careful 1892 article attempted to set the record straight. Sellers of nursery stock were accused of manipulating production figures to sell trees.<sup>35</sup> The point may have been well taken. When the State Board of Horticulture warned “at present olive growing is not a profitable pursuit,” it was attacked by a nurseryman for its “rash and ill-considered” position.<sup>36</sup>

Warnings of irrational exuberance in the olive business had little impact. Instead, the tide of boosterism continued to surge. This may be partially explained by the tendency to extrapolate too broadly from the profits of a few successful growers and by lagging communication about crop failures and production problems. While the 1892-93 warnings appeared in California, the *New York Times* was still writing that the olive industry “promises to become very profitable.”<sup>37</sup>

The dampening potential of bad news about the industry was effectively countered by reports on the direction of “smart money.” Olive trees were an investment choice of Andrew McNally, of the Rand & McNally publishing firm in Chicago and well-known historian Hubert Howe Bancroft. Even Vice President Adlai E. Stevenson, “had a very large olive grove” in California.<sup>38</sup> Around this time, lenders who read *Bankers’ Magazine and Statistic Register* were told that the olive tree thrives and bears well in California and is profitable to cultivate. *Garden and Forest*, carrying the prestige of horticulturist Charles Sprague Sargent and Harvard’s Arnold Arboretum, noted the increase of olive culture in California and concluded that “the production of olive oil can hardly be overdone.”<sup>39</sup>

In Chicago, the year 1895 was publicized as the most profitable season ever known for the California olive industry. Continued expansion was predicted because growers could have sold three times more olives than produced.<sup>40</sup> American consumers were developing a taste for the California olive. With more buyers than product, prices shot up and newspapers reported that California olives were “at a premium.”<sup>41</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* refined this story by making a distinction between the availability of really *good* pickled olives which were “undoubtedly scarce” and the lesser products being turned out by inexperienced or careless processors. These poor products were a bad precedent for a new industry and this California-invented food product, the ripe olive.<sup>42</sup>

Just one year after bemoaning the unavailability of California olives, the Chicago papers were able to report that many more trees had been planted and that others had matured enough to bear fruit. “It is predicted that at no very distant date California will produce as much olive oil as Italy and Spain together.”<sup>43</sup> A year later readers were told to “expect a great olive crop.” Although processing problems were supposed to have been surmounted a few years earlier, it was again reported that processing difficulties had been overcome. The putative simplicity of cultivation again saw print: “One joy of an olive orchard is that the care of it is practically nothing. Its fruit can be cured by simple, primitive means.”<sup>44</sup>

As olive fever reached a high pitch, the demand for trees could not be met. *Sunset* magazine’s article, “Gold Mines Atop the Ground,” furthered the popular perception of the crop value of the olive. As a trendsetter, *Sunset* undoubtedly assisted the industry by describing olives as a tasty and nutritious food that “multitudes” had yet to discover. The magazine also warned consumers against imports, citing a study showing that not one of sixty-six samples of imported “olive oil” tested by the Department of Agriculture was pure. Analysis showed that

lard and oils of the cotton seed and peanut were being deceptively sold as olive oil. Urging readers to try real California olive oil and foretelling a rosy future for growers, the article asserted that “the lover of California believes in the olive.”<sup>45</sup>

The Southern Pacific Railroad distributed 20,000 copies of its *California Olive Primer* in 1912, intending to promote its own business through the agricultural development of California. By that late date, however, the heavy lifting of olive promotion had been underway for decades. One of the railroad’s land agents did enhance the California olive industry through his agricultural experiments and by testing imported olive varieties, showing which could thrive in the Sacramento and Tulare area and writing extensively on olive cultivation.<sup>46</sup>

### **Madre Trees and the Commercial Olive Business**

The olive orchards at Mission San Diego contained more than 460 healthy trees when the post-secularization survey was conducted in 1839. Substantial damage was inflicted after United States troops occupied San Diego during the U.S.-Mexican War and established a military post at the former mission in 1847.<sup>47</sup> Army soldiers collected firewood from the mission orchards during the decade of the post’s existence. Despite depredations, these venerable olive trees gave birth to a new agricultural industry in California in the late 1860s. The remainders of the mission orchards in Santa Barbara and elsewhere became the source of cuttings for new commercial olive orchards about the same time.

Because the missionary skills of olive cultivation and oil making were not transferred out to the general population before secularization, it is frequently assumed that the mission olive trees received no care and that their crops went unharvested for decades. One historian found few examples of olive oil making and processing in California between the 1834 abandonment of the mission grounds and 1872. The earliest commercial endeavors are described as small-scale production in Northern California by Italian immigrants and at the Ventura County Rancho Camulos, near the Mission San Fernando in 1871.<sup>48</sup>

Additional research shows that a productive and commercial use of the olive trees at the San Diego mission was occurring at least a decade earlier. *Scientific American* made reference to olive products from the 1863 harvest of California mission trees, including those at San Diego.<sup>49</sup> Judge Benjamin Hayes wrote about a visit to San Diego’s old mission ruins in his California travel diary in November 1867. He found Anastario Navarro, a Sonoran, making and selling pickled olives and olive oil from the mission groves. Hayes ate his first olives and recorded the processing methods used by Navarro, who had leased the mission property. The circuit-riding judge carried off Navarro’s coffee pot full of olives as he left.<sup>50</sup>

The following year, the *San Diego Union* reported that E. F. Sanborn was working the mission olive orchards. During his ten-year lease term, Sanborn planned to pickle olives from the trees and to make enough olive oil “to show that a good product can be made in San Diego.” His olive oil press was in transit. The olive trees were loaded with fruit and it was predicted that Sanborn’s business would be profitable “as the olive tree grows here without care or cultivation.”<sup>51</sup> However, it was Sanborn’s “careful culture” of the trees that was subsequently credited with renewing the orchard. *The San Diego Union* called the olive oil he pressed in 1869 “the finest we have ever seen.”<sup>52</sup>





"Franciscan Presenting the Olive to California." Historian Hubert Howe Bancroft copyrighted this advertisement for olives growing on his Spring Valley farm in San Diego County. ©SDHS #91:18469.

Despite Sanborn's long lease, a new tenant took over the mission groves in 1871. Thomas Davies was from the Petaluma area, having been attracted to San Diego by the prospect of the Texas Pacific Railroad. He leased a portion of the former mission grounds, pruned the orchards, built a "trim neat cottage," and began producing pickled olives and olive oil from the old trees.<sup>53</sup> A reprinted newspaper story analyzed Davies' predicted production figures, noting that he worked in the state's oldest olive grove: "If 300 trees can be made to produce 3,000 gallons of oil, as he says, then the production of the olive must be much more profitable than that of any grain, fruit or nut." The newspaper then advised, "farmers who are setting out trees will do well to put in as many olive trees as practicable." One or two hundred trees "will be a small fortune" in a few years.<sup>54</sup>

Three months later, *The San Diego Union* reported the actual—and substantially lower—productivity of Davies' trees. As with other types of fruits, the olive trees were "taking a rest," Davies explained, but still "the yield this year will pay handsomely." Meanwhile, Davies had sold 4,000 tree cuttings to a pair of Anaheim partners planning to start an olive grove.<sup>55</sup> The optimistic production forecast Davies had put forward may have helped to sell these and other cuttings to new growers. Except for the labor of actually taking the cuttings, selling starts for new trees was pure profit and did not harm the olive grove. Davies did so well that his landlord, the Catholic Church, decided not to extend his lease, but rather to seek a more financially beneficial arrangement.<sup>56</sup> When this did not work out, the orchard was again neglected. By 1881 the mission orchard was "fast falling to decay" and in need of attention, with only about 80 trees surviving.<sup>57</sup>

As the San Diego mission trees were in decline, their commercially grown offspring were extending roots in many new orchards. This “Mission olive” remained popular and widely grown for many years. Californians also imported numerous Mediterranean olive varieties to test their adaptability and productivity. The Picholine was the first import, brought into northern California from France in 1872. French nurseryman Ernest Benard, who had settled in San Diego in 1887, introduced the Ascolano. Benard’s Mission Valley nursery is known today for its introductions of roses, but he first specialized in imported olive trees. Several new varieties were tested in Santa Barbara after Dr. F. S. Gould imported six hundred “young olive trees of the best Italian varieties.”<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, the United States Department of Agriculture was also making newly imported varieties available for experimentation. By 1916, it was reported that more than seventy varieties of olives had been tested as California developed its “thriving and profitable” industry. More recent writing on the early olive industry substantially increased the count of imported varieties tested in California.<sup>59</sup>

Olive culture—using Mission olives and other varieties—was undertaken in many areas of San Diego County. Charles M. Gifford planted olives in the Jamacha area; Frank A. Kimball near National City. Hubert Howe Bancroft located his large plantation in Spring Valley.<sup>60</sup> Major L. H. Utt of Redlands had an orchard in Pala and several growers planted in the Fallbrook area. In 1913, San Diego was said to be the largest producer of olive oil in the country.<sup>61</sup> The production of this so-called “wonder crop” had begun with small operations, first at the San Diego mission groves, then on individual ranches around the county. Oil making and olive processing were gradually engineered into central packing plants, some operated by businessmen who had never cultivated an olive tree. The history of this transition in olive processing began with the most famous and longest lasting olive venture in San Diego: that of Frank A. and Warren Kimball in National City.

### **Frank A. Kimball as “Father of the Olive Industry”**

Frank A. Kimball is a leading figure in San Diego history. With his brothers, Kimball purchased El Rancho de la Nación Mexican land grant and other large tracts of land in south San Diego County in 1868. He built a home and saw his new development, National City, incorporated in 1887. He engaged in numerous business enterprises, kept a daily diary, and maintained a huge correspondence, as documented in his letter books preserved at the National City Public Library.

Alone or in partnership with his brothers, Frank Kimball invested in real estate, construction, railroads, a wood mill, a marble quarry, and factories making matches, carriages, and watches. He frequently took an active role in these businesses, served on countless civic boards, and at one time was the State Commissioner of Horticulture. In addition to being known as the father of National City, Kimball is also called the father of the olive industry in Southern California. He specialized in culture, production, and processing olives while his brother Warren managed the orchards.<sup>62</sup>

Soon after settling in San Diego County, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Kimball made a sightseeing excursion to the former San Diego mission in 1869. E. F. Sanborn was leasing the olive groves at that time and provided a guided tour. Kimball wrote in his diary about the broken down orchard walls, weed-choked grounds, and

the poor condition of the olive trees. Kimball was allowed to take some cuttings from the century-old trees and, to his delight, they easily rooted on his National City ranch.<sup>63</sup> This early discovery of the ease with which olive trees could be propagated from a small cutting encouraged further experimentation. Kimball developed a keen interest in olives and the olive business that survived to the end of his days. With his usual thoroughness and vigor, he became the leading San Diego grower-processor of olives and one of a handful of national experts on olive cultivation and processing.

Kimball had the beginnings of an olive crop three years after setting out his first trees. Employing the traditional Spanish method of soaking the fruit in numerous lye, water, and salt baths, he began to process and sell pickled olives for \$1.00 per gallon. Kimball also sold cuttings from his olive trees for 10 cents each. While most early sales were made locally, Kimball shipped 50,000 cuttings to Los Angeles in 1883. He was also propagating and selling young trees by that date.<sup>64</sup>

Kimball expanded his olive orchard with additional cuttings from the San Diego mission and from the olive trees at San Luis Rey and San Juan Capistrano missions. He purchased cuttings from Baja California and acquired new olive varieties through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. After importing cuttings from Syria and testing many kinds of olives, Frank Kimball remained convinced that the local Mission variety was the best choice for most growers.<sup>65</sup> Over the next few years, his National City ranch was a major supplier for the olive tree planting



*"Olive Day" promotions aimed to increase public familiarity with the taste of California ripe olives, ca. 1922.*  
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boom underway in California. Kimball was swamped with letters seeking his advice on olives but, at the same time, he inaugurated correspondence to learn more himself and to establish new outlets for his products.<sup>66</sup>

Kimball's rival for the title of father of the olive industry in Southern California is Ellwood Cooper of Santa Barbara. It has been written that they began their orchards about the same time. In fact, Kimball was already harvesting his earliest crop when Cooper began planting his first trees. Cooper was, however, the first to make olive oil.<sup>67</sup> He always captured more national headlines, perhaps because important visitors regularly traveled to Santa Barbara or because his eccentric personality enlivened news stories (he thought olive oil an elixir of youth and married at age 84 after being attracted by his bride's aura).<sup>68</sup> After Cooper successfully sold 1,000 gallons of his olive oil on a single trip to San Francisco in 1879, two newspapers wryly reported on the probability of a California "olive excitement."<sup>69</sup> Late in 1886, Kimball decided to add oil processing to his olive pickling and tree cuttings business. He started construction of an olive oil mill on the day after Christmas.<sup>70</sup>

Cooper and Kimball personified the California olive industry. For most of their public lives, each remained active in his own olive business. In 1891 they were called the only successes in twenty years of "stray attempts" to cultivate olives on a commercial scale.<sup>71</sup> Cooper sold out to an English syndicate the next year but Kimball continued in the business. His processing operation was expanded beyond his own crop when he began purchasing olives from other local growers.<sup>72</sup>

Kimball and Cooper were prolific speakers and writers on the subject of olives. Kimball noted as early as 1878 that he was preparing an article for the *Horticulturist* and an 1892 diary entry said he was up until midnight meeting a printing deadline for "Olive Growing and the Manufacture of Olive Oil."<sup>73</sup> Cooper published books and in journals such as the *Californian Illustrated Magazine*. Helen Hunt Jackson wrote about Cooper and the olive business in *Glimpses of California*.<sup>74</sup> Kimball and Cooper served on the California State Horticulture Board and with olive industry trade organizations.

To build a market for his products, Kimball tirelessly exhibited at fairs and expositions. He helped organize the First Annual Agricultural and Horticultural Fair for San Diego County in 1880. One of his duties was to convince the U.S. Army to run a telegraph wire and assign an operator to the exhibit hall so that messages could be transmitted directly from the fair.<sup>75</sup> He traveled across country for important expositions and was hired to go to the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904. He installed the San Diego agriculture exhibit and stayed on for months to greet visitors and promote San Diego products. His exhibited products received many prizes and awards over the years, none more prestigious than a bronze medal for his olive oil at the ultimate nineteenth-century showcase, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where bottles of California olive oil were stacked into the shape of a tall Cleopatra's Needle to invoke the Mediterranean.<sup>76</sup>

Locally, Kimball promoted his products and the olive business by welcoming groups like the Press League and individual visitors to his olive mill.<sup>77</sup> In fact, the Kimball ranch became something of a tourist attraction. Kate Sanborn, author of early travel books, advised against eating a tamale when visiting San Diego but told her readers to see the Kimball olive works.<sup>78</sup>

Well into his industrious and productive life, Frank A. Kimball was reduced

from millionaire business tycoon to pauper. He made bad investments and was victimized by business associates who used his name and credit during an economic downturn. Kimball lost everything in 1897, including his lands and home. Intriguingly, Kimball's diary records that in 1896 he was visited by "Mr. Heintz [sic] the great goods packer of Pittsburgh" who came to open negotiations for purchase of the olive oil works.<sup>79</sup> Whether this transaction could have altered Kimball's financial fortunes is unknown because the sale did not occur. After years of struggle, Kimball paid his debts and was able to repurchase his olive oil mill in September 1905. He resumed the oil and olive pickling business and established enough tree cuttings to continue selling olive saplings as late as 1910.<sup>80</sup>

## **Other Processors**

Like Frank A. Kimball, other early San Diego olive growers established processing operations on their ranches to handle their own crop. Dr. Charles Pratt's Loma Ranch in Fallbrook had its own olive oil press and bottling plant, producing large quantities of high-grade olive oil annually from the late 1890s until 1919.<sup>81</sup> Red Mountain Ranch, an 1887 homestead northeast of Fallbrook, sold Red Mountain Olive Oil for many years. Movie director Frank Capra, whose family came from Sicily, became one of the most famous Red Mountain Ranch olive growers, residing there in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>82</sup>

Between 1913 and 1915 olives were the largest cash crop in Fallbrook.<sup>83</sup> The development of olive processing and packing businesses—independent of the growers themselves—was foretold by a service that grew up to handle the crops of smaller growers. A mobile olive processing plant moved from ranch to ranch as the harvest progressed. Eventually, small processing plants were built in close proximity to olive orchards. Large-scale independent processing businesses emerged as San Diego's olive production exploded, transportation improved, and olives could be packaged in tin cans. In Fallbrook, for example, a small processing plant was built on Alturas Street. Later, a cannery was built at Main Avenue and Mission Road. By 1917 it was shipping canned ripe olives as far away as New York. Nearby, the Escondido Packing Company managed by W. F. Sechrest produced 15 gallons of olive oil per day, while also packing citrus fruit, before it burned to the ground in 1908.<sup>84</sup>

Five partners opened the Bernardo Winery in 1889 on a former Spanish land grant now subsumed within the town of Rancho Bernardo. When prohibition constricted the business to sacramental wine and grape juice, the partners sold out in 1927 to Vincent Rizzo whose business flourished in later decades. He also produced Cold Pressed Virgin Olive Oil from trees on the property. Today, land development has overcome the vineyards and olive orchards, but the Bernardo Winery continues to operate, surrounded by a collection of shops and restaurants.<sup>85</sup>

Beginning about 1920, olives were processed by the Bolivar Packing Company located in downtown San Diego at 1339 Beardsley (near today's Harbor Drive and the Coronado Bridge approach). The company received a passing reference in a San Diego newspaper column, but little was written about its proprietors, H. A. Barraclough and Gilbert Thompson. Thompson was an Iowa native who came to San Diego as a schoolboy. At his death in 1965 he was described as a retired chemist who "worked for olive and citrus packing plants."<sup>86</sup> Bolivar's last business

directory listing was in 1942, leading to speculation that its demise may have resulted from the rapid transformation of the San Diego waterfront after the Pearl Harbor bombing.

In El Cajon, Leonardo Diciara produced Rancho la Morada olive oil in a relative modern plant using heavy equipment, but the dates and details of the business are obscure. Two long-lived companies are better documented. Both the Akerman & Tuffley and C. M. Gifford companies made news and had multi-year listings in the San Diego business directories.<sup>87</sup>

### **Akerman & Tuffley and the Old Mission Olive Works**

As growers stopped pressing and pickling their own olives as a cottage industry, a new San Diego business took shape and eventually flourished. English businessmen Edward W. Akerman and Robert Alfred Tuffley were not olive growers, but started their olive processing business near the San Diego mission, perhaps as early as 1890.<sup>88</sup> Although a definitive connection with the orchards at the San Diego mission has not come to light, it is likely that the first Akerman & Tuffley olive products were from the mission orchard crop.

By 1900, the partnership had moved its operation to San Diego's Old Town. Its first business listing appears in the city directory the next year. For years, Akerman & Tuffley ran their business from the leased premises of Casa de Bandini, the historic Old Town home that had been enlarged and converted into the Cosmopolitan Hotel in 1869. They remodeled the downstairs, creating an office and olive processing and packing rooms. According to one account, olive processing also occurred in the large barn that had formerly been Seeley's Old



*Old Town's Casa de Bandini, pictured in 1909, served as the olive processing plant for Akerman & Tuffley for more than a decade. ©SDHS #1136.*



Workers label olive oil bottles at the Old Mission Olive Works processing plant owned by Akerman & Tuffley in Old Town, 1908. ©SDHS #5728.

Town stable. The partners and some employees and friends lived upstairs with their families, occupying Casa de Bandini from 1900 until 1919.<sup>89</sup>

Akerman & Tuffley announced plans to build a modern olive processing plant in Old Town—big news in 1911. The large packing house was architect-designed as a handsome Mission Style building covering almost an entire block. Located at the foot of Juan Street within Old Town Block 409, it was completed in 1915 and demolished in 1950-51 for the construction of the Caltrans District 11 office building.<sup>90</sup> Akerman & Tuffley continued in business until 1919 when they retired and sold out to a corporation with local and New York investors. Five years later the company was recapitalized as Old Mission Products Company. The Old Town packing business was expanded to process pimentos, chiles, and other agricultural products, in addition to olive oil.<sup>91</sup>

While the date of Akerman's arrival in California is unknown, Robert L. Tuffley came to San Diego in 1888 from England. His son recounted that he and his father lived with Edward W. Akerman before the partnership moved to Old Town. Tuffley is listed in the San Diego City Directory as a Mission Valley rancher from between 1893-97 and then in 1899-1900 as a mechanic in Old Town. After retirement, Tuffley spent another thirty years in San Diego, dying in 1951 at age 93.<sup>92</sup>

As the Mission Packing Corporation Limited, Akerman & Tuffley sold what were considered superior olive products and earned many national and international awards.<sup>93</sup> They were the largest, most successful, and longest-lasting olive packers in San Diego with no direct ties to the cultivation of olives.

## C. M. Gifford and the Canned Ripe Olive

San Diegan Charles Myrtelle Gifford inaugurated the modern olive industry in the United States.<sup>94</sup> The first processor to package ripe olives in a tin can, he created a new food product and a new way for olive growers to deliver their crop to the marketplace. Most sources do not credit Gifford or San Diego with this achievement. Instead, the name most often mentioned is Frieda Ehmann of Oroville. Ehmann deserves credit for aggressive and successful national marketing but she was not the first to produce canned ripe olives.<sup>95</sup>

Before revolutionizing the olive business, Gifford showed his willingness to try something new by making a dramatic career change. In 1888 he left his work as a Great Lakes tugboat captain to raise oranges and grapefruit in the Jamacha area of San Diego County. After tasting pickled olives for the first time, he changed his principal crop from citrus to olives.<sup>96</sup>

Gifford initially processed his olive crop on his East County ranch. Each week, he drove a horse-drawn wagon around San Diego, selling bottles of oil and pickled olives from a large barrel. The Hotel del Coronado was an early customer and he supplied many local grocery stores. Later the family and the business moved into San Diego. By 1897 Gifford was operating an olive processing business at 525 Ninth Avenue between H and I Streets. The company had a change of address in 1906, moving to the corner of 13th Avenue and M Street (later Imperial) and continuing to produce both olive oil and pickled olives. The Gifford plant packed eight to ten tons of olives per day and employed as many as seventy-six workers in the season.<sup>97</sup>

From the first, Gifford experimented with new processing methods. He consulted with an agricultural scientist, Professor F. T. Bioletti of the University of California who, in 1899, had helped to perfect the process for canning olives.<sup>98</sup> Gifford's business changed dramatically in 1902 when he began packaging olives in tin cans. He won the first ever award for "canned pickled olives" from the San Diego Agricultural Association in 1902 and collected many subsequent prizes for his olive products. In 1906, it was reported that San Diego canneries had produced "not less than 120,000 cans of ripe olives" in the past year and that the industry was expected to double in San Diego County.<sup>99</sup>

Realizing that San Diego was not the best place to grow olives, Gifford sold his Jamacha olive orchards and planted in other locations. In 1908 he started a large



*Charles M. Gifford in 1905, wearing badges of the International Order of Odd Fellows. ©SDHS #11928-2.*





Charles M. Gifford used a two-horse rig to deliver pickled olives and olive oil to his San Diego customers. Photo courtesy of the Automobile Club of Southern California Archives.

Ascolano olive grove east of Brawley, predicting that olive-growing would be profitable in the Imperial Valley. The following year he put in another 2,000 trees in the Imperial Valley and started 11,000 cuttings. Gifford encouraged others to plant olives and promised to build a packing plant in Brawley if the local crop became large enough. Gifford & Sons were long-served by these orchards. The 1930 harvest was reported in the *Los Angeles Times* as a good crop headed to the San Diego processing plant.<sup>100</sup>

Gifford further assured his olive supply by planting trees in 1915 on the western side of Kings County after irrigation promised fecundity on what had long been considered worthless land.<sup>101</sup> Nine years after this initial investment, Gifford added to his Kings County holdings and by 1928 had become the largest grower and handler of olives in the area, with more than 200 acres in cultivation. The crop produced by smaller local growers was also purchased for shipment to the Gifford processing plant.<sup>102</sup>

Gifford's children worked in the family business. Dewitt, the elder son, was plant foreman for C. M. Gifford & Sons Olive company for many years and became well-known in the industry.<sup>103</sup> Younger son Orville joined his father as

Ripe Olives

In Cans

OLIVE OIL  
in bottles and cans  
for shipping East

GIFFORD'S  
OLIVE OIL WORKS

BOTH PHONES  
1062

Thirteenth and M  
Streets

A 1915 Gifford's advertisement reminded San Diegans to share California's unique olive products with those living out of state. *San Diego City Directory*. Author's collection.

an active participant in the California Olive Association and later served as the organization's president. After his father's death in 1924, Orville became president of C. M. Gifford & Sons. Ruth, sister of Dewitt and Orville, is not mentioned as being active in the business until 1940, but her son, Robert L. Smedley, joined his uncles at Gifford's. The company remained a wholly-owned family enterprise until 1961 when Orville D. Gifford retired and the business was sold to Westgate-California Corporation.<sup>104</sup>

Charles M. Gifford did not pioneer olive growing and processing in San Diego, but his early success in canning olives foretold the future of olive packaging and sales. His was a longer lasting enterprise than others, as Gifford shrewdly adopted the most modern processing methods while continuing as a grower to supply his own packing business. Founded during the infancy of modern commercial olive processing, Gifford & Sons remained a viable San Diego business for more than sixty years.

## Conclusion

Despite initial optimism, San Diego's venture into olive production failed to meet expectations. J.W. Mills of the Agriculture Experiment Station in Pomona said that "colossal mistakes" were made during the olive boom. Growers placed trees in the wrong areas, gave them poor care, improperly pruned, or planted varieties not fully tested. In 1903, low prices and foreign competition caused many San Diego olive growers to adapt their land to other uses with the result that many unproductive orchards throughout California were destroyed. By the time prices were recovering, San Diego had lost many acres of olive trees. In 1909 San Diego County had more olive trees than any other California county. It fell to third place in olive acreage by 1915, fourth in 1918, and sixth in 1924.<sup>105</sup> Olive processing plants survived by importing fruit from other regions of the state.

To some extent, San Diego was the victim of boosterism. Newspapers and magazines had fueled the fever with get rich promotions that denied the need for skillful horticultural practices in olive cultivation. Local growers fell victim to misleading information about the ease of producing a crop and successfully processing it for the market. The few who succeeded in the olive business adapted to new realities and employed scientific methods to keep their businesses alive and privately held.

An unknown, but intriguing, sideline to the San Diego olive story is the degree to which the olive oil industry and the tuna industry benefited economically from their proximity in San Diego. Oil-packed tuna processing was surely economically facilitated by the existence of olive oil factories in the same San Diego neighborhood as the tuna canneries. At the same time, the olive oil industry had an immediate market for bulk quantities of its product. When San Diego reigned as the "tuna capital of the world," synergy must have existed between local olive and tuna packers.<sup>106</sup>

San Diego retains an important place in the history of the California olive industry, despite the fact that it did not prove to be the best "olive country" in the state. It is the historic home of the olive in North America, producing many leaders and innovators in the industry. The story of San Diego's olive culture is particularly important at a time when, according to a recent article, California



*Akerman & Tuffley moved their olive processing plant from Casa de Bandini to this factory at the foot of Juan Street in Old Town, now the site of the CalTrans building. Pictured ca. 1928. ©SDHS #6716.*

farmers “are pushing olive oil as though it’s the new thing, hoping to profit from denser planting methods and a growing U.S. appetite for the heart-healthy cooking ingredient.”<sup>107</sup> The “boosterism” that produced the olive boom around 1900 appears to be alive and well today.

## NOTES

1. The United States is a net importer of olive products since the California crop meets only a small percentage of the domestic demand. Daniel Burden, “Olive Profile,” Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (November 2005), <http://www.agmrc.org/agmrc/commodity/fruits/olives/oliveprofile.htm> (accessed April 30, 2007). 95 percent of the olives grown in California are canned as black-ripe or green-ripe olives. “Olive Fact Sheet,” University of California, Davis, Fruit & Nut Research and Information Center. [http://fruitandnuts.ucdavis.edu/crops/olive\\_factsheet.shtml](http://fruitandnuts.ucdavis.edu/crops/olive_factsheet.shtml). (accessed July 6, 2007).
2. “Olive Industry Threatened,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1912, VII; Judith M. Taylor, *The Olive in California* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2000). Taylor’s study of the subject is a commendable achievement but necessarily lacks in-depth information on every region of California.
3. Despite the fact that Gifford perfected the California olive industry’s most long lasting commercial innovation—olives in a can—he rarely gets credit. The typical misstatement reads like this example from a regional newspaper: “Mrs. Freida Ehmann of Oroville discovered ripe olives could be canned.” “3 California Cities Responsible for \$30 Million A Year in Olives,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 14, 1965, A2.
4. “Olive,” in Alphonse de Candolle, *Origin of Cultivated Plants* (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1959), 279-85; Kenneth F. Kiple, *A Moveable Feast: Ten Millennia of Food Globalization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
5. Antonia Ribora brought plants to Lima, Peru. According to one account, three plants survived the trip, one of which was stolen and carried to Chile. The trees produced fruit in Peru. French botanist

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Amedee Grancois Frezier confirmed, no later than 1700, that Chilean-grown olive trees were mature enough to produce olive oil. John Ignatius Bleasdale, *The Olive and Its Products: and The Suitability of the Soil and Climate of California for Its Extensive and Profitable Cultivation* (San Francisco: Dewey, 1881), 12.

6. Early agricultural magazines offered practical advice on cultivating the olive in the American South. "On the Culture of Olive Trees," *Southern Agriculturalist and Register of Rural Affairs*, (October 1828), 459. Plantings were made but, by 1872, it was recognized that the olive was not going to succeed as a fruit crop in southern states. "The Manufacture of Olive Oil in California," *Scientific Monthly*, XXVII, no. 13 (September 28, 1872), 192; Thomas Jefferson, "Notes on the Olive Tree," *Massachusetts Magazine* (June 1792), 353.

7. The following appears in a scholarly botanical description of the tree: "the olive tree has in all ages been celebrated as a special gift of Heaven...it was one of the trees of the promised land of Canaan...the olive was cultivated by the ancient Egyptians and by the Greeks...and has few rivals in its usefulness to the human race. "The Olive Tree," *Garden and Forest* 1, no. 24 (August 8, 1888), 284-85. See also John I. Bleasdale, "The Olive Tree," *The Californian*, III, no. 15 (March 1881), 257; "Orchard and Farm: The Age of Olive Trees," *Los Angeles Times*, April 28, 1894, 10.

8. The Chief Horticultural Officer of California published this explanation of the olive's importation to the state in 1900 and it was long repeated. B. M. Lelong, "California Olive Industry," in *Investigation Made by the State Board of Horticulture of the California Olive Industry, Report to Governor Gage* (Sacramento: A. J. Johnson Superintendent State Printing, 1900), 7; Taylor, *Olive in California*, 18-21; Winifred Davidson, "Olives of Endless Age," *California Garden* (Spring 1954), 7.

9. "Mission Olive History," <http://www.moprep.org/history.html> (accessed May 29, 2007).

10. Father Zephyrin (Charles Anthony) Englehardt, *San Diego Mission* (San Francisco: James H. Barry Co., 1920), 154; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Pastoral*, 423, <http://www.1st-hand-history.org/Hhb/34/album1.html> (accessed September 7, 2007).

11. William Hartnell had been appointed inspector of missions by Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado in January 1839. Englehardt, *San Diego Mission*, 240.

12. "From the San Francisco Herald, Address before the Agricultural and Mineral Fair," *Pittsfield Sun*, January 1, 1852, 4. See also Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) and Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 44-47, 160-164.

13. The Rev. Isaac Brayton preached in California for several years before lecturing on the East Coast. "The Wealth of California," *Pittsfield Sun*, November 3, 1853, 1.

14. The information was extracted from a letter in the *Southern Patriot*; "Miscellany, California," *Farmer's Cabinet*, April 27, 1854, 1.

15. "California—Her Resources," *Farmers Cabinet*, October 26, 1859, 1, reprinting Horace Greeley's letter XXXI (Marysville, September 2, 1859).

16. "California Fruits," *Scientific American*, 11, no. 25 (December 17, 1864), 385. In 1863 the trees yielded heavily and considerable quantities of olive oil were made. In the post-mission era, this is one of the earliest accounts of olive oil making.

17. John H. Goodale, "California, Agriculture in the Golden State," *Chicago Tribune*, October 12, 1867, 2. Promotion of California as an agricultural Mecca saw rapid success. The number of farms in the state increased by 700 percent from 1859-1929. By 1899 California was the nation's top fruit producer. Paul W. Rhode, "Learning, Capital Accumulation, and the Transformation of California Agriculture," *Journal of Economic History* 55 (1995), 775, 778.

18. "Agricultural," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, 50, no. 7, February 18, 1872, 56. The Santa Barbara grower was identified only as "Mr. Mayhew" who had obtained five hundred cuttings in February 1868.

19. "The Manufacture of Olive Oil in California," *Scientific American* 27, no. 13 (September 28, 1892): 192, using information from "The Olive and Its Oil in California," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* (September 1872), 207; Bim Sherman, "Outdoor Industries," *The Century* (May 1883), 819.

20. "The Olive in California," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 16, 1886, 9 (subtitled "Success in Its Growth—Great Demand and Big Profit").

21. "Cultivation of the Olive," *Prairie Farmer*, July 6, 1867, 7 (recounting a debate waged in the pages of *California Farmer*); "California Olives," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 24, 1876, 7, reprinting an article from the *Santa Barbara (Cal.) Index* about the economics of olive growing in Southern California. Dana B. Clark has 1,000 trees growing in Montecito.
22. "Olive and the Fig, How they Blossom and Yield in California," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 10, 1894.
13. San Diego's Frank A. Kimball said that "trees at three years old will pay expenses, and at four and five will yield handsome profits." "Olive Culture in California," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 13, 1891, 35.
23. "The Olive," *Semi-Tropical Planter* 1, no. 3 (July 1887), 45; Maj. Lee H. Utt, "Olive Culture in California," *Semi-Tropical Planter* 1, no. 8 (December 1887), 100; "Plant Olives," *Semi-Tropical Planter* 1, no. 8 (December 1887), 101; "Olive Plantations," *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 1882, 3.
24. "The Olive," *Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 1895, 16. The leading centers of olive production were identified as Pomona, San Diego, and Santa Barbara. By 1902, the largest olive orchard in the world was in the San Fernando Valley. Helen Lukes Jones, "A Great American Olive Ranch," *The World's Work*, 3, no. 4 (1902), 1751-56.
25. "How Things Grows [sic]," *Los Angeles Times*, August 15, 1895, 18.
26. Frederick M. Turner, "The Reign of the Olive," *The American Magazine* (May 1895), 631.
27. "The Manufacture of Olive Oil in California," 27, no. 13, *Scientific American* (September 28, 1892), 192. Hubert H. Bancroft is quoted as saying that the meaning of California is that "ordinary men can do great things." Starr, *Americans and the California Dream*, 119.
28. Bleasdale, *The Olive and Its Products*. According to the Mission Olive Preservation, Restoration & Education Project, California planting numbers are: 1855 (503 commercial trees); 1876 (5,603 trees planted); 1885 (large orchards planted in National City, Oroville, and Sacramento Valley); 1890 (50,000 acres planted in Corning, Northern Sacramento Valley); and 1901 (539,568 trees planted). "Mission Olive History," <http://www.moprep.org/history.html> (accessed May 29, 2007).
29. *Report of the Agricultural Experiment Station, University of California, 1892-93 and Part of 1894* (Sacramento: Superintendent of State Printing, 1894), 16. Data in the report was gathered by Arthur P. Hayne, son of a Santa Barbara olive grower and a chemist at the College of Agriculture, University of California, Berkeley.
30. California State Commission of Horticulture, *The Olive in California: Varieties, Budding, Grafting, New Methods, and General Observations* (Sacramento: Superintendent of State Printing, 1888).
31. "Dedication," in Adolphe Flamant, *A Practical Treatise on Olive Culture, Oil Making and Olive Pickling* (San Francisco: Louis Gregoire & Co. Booksellers, 1887), 76.
32. Calkins had 850,000 young olive trees in his Pomona Valley nursery in 1892. "Pomona Valley," *Los Angeles Times*, October 21, 1892, 2. This article breathlessly announced that electricity would power an olive mill under construction in the Pomona area. John S. Calkins of Pomona had published *The Olive-Growers Handbook* a few months earlier, giving information on the longevity of olive trees, with examples from the California missions and Europe. The article "Olive Culture," *Los Angeles Times*, January 12, 1895, 10, remarks on the pamphlet's advice that the olive industry could be very profitable, even for beginners. "Old Olive Trees," *Los Angeles Times*, April 6, 1895, 12.
33. "Development of the County: The Olive Boom," *Los Angeles Times*, January 16, 1898, 22.
34. Charles Howard Shinn, "Notes Upon the Olive," *The Independent* 42, no. 2171 (July 10, 1890), 34; "Olive-Growing in California," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 22, 1892, 43.
35. "The Olive," *Los Angeles Times*, October 21, 1892, 12.
36. John S. Calkins refuted the State Board's analysis by citing various growers who were doing well in the olive business. William B. Unruh, "Orchard and Farm and Stockyard," *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 1893, 11.
37. "California Olive Raising," *New York Times*, August 11, 1893, 9.
38. "Three Big California Olive Groves," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 15, 1896, 30; reprinted in the *New York Times*, March 20, 1896, 2. The grandfather and namesake of a future presidential candidate, Stevenson served under Grover Cleveland. His California olive holdings were at Etiwanda, between Ontario and San Bernardino, northwest of Los Angeles. "The Vice President's Olive Grove," *New York Times*, January 8, 1897, 3.

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39. "Olive Trees in California," *Bankers' Magazine and Statistic Register* 38, no. 1 (July 1883): 60-61. The article specifically mentions an income of \$1,250 per acre. *Garden and Forest* 1, no. 22 (July 25, 1888), 264.
40. "Olive Industry in California," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 10, 1895, 3. Col. J. S. Howland of the Olive-Growers' Association said that the Southern California olive crop for 1895 was worth from \$100,000 to \$120,000 and that growers could have sold three times the amount of available olive products. "Three Big California Olive Groves," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 15, 1896, 30.
41. "California Olives at a Premium," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 31, 1896, 9.
42. "Pickled Olive Trade," *Los Angeles Times*, August 31, 1896, 8.
43. "Olives in California," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 5, 1897, 6.
44. "Expect a Great Olive Crop," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 25, 1898, 29.
45. "Development of the County," *Los Angeles Times*, January 16, 1898, 22; A. J. Wells, "Gold Mines Atop the Ground: The Olive-Growing Industry of California and its Promising Future," *Sunset* (January 1901), 97.
46. *California Olive Primer* (San Francisco: Southern Pacific Co., 1912). This is an example of the propaganda said to have soured many new and existing Californians on railroads as economic disillusionment set in and the utopian promises of "railroad fever" proved empty. See William Deverell, *Railroad Crossing: Californians and the Railroad, 1850-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). For a view that railroad land development activities had a positive effect, see Richard J. Orsi. *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 287-88.
47. The post was created at the mission on January 29, 1847. Mark J. Denger, "Historic California Posts: Post at Mission San Diego de Alcalá," California Center for Military History, <http://www.militarymuseum.org/SDMission.html> (accessed December 12, 2007).
48. According to Judith M. Taylor, Italian immigrants living in Northern California produced only enough olive oil for home use and very localized sales. This assessment seems too limited when historian Kevin Starr's description of the density and vigor of the Italian community in Northern California is considered. Taylor, *Olive in California*, 36-39, 80; Starr, *Americans and the California Dream*, 375-79. Although the name of Rancho Camulos is incorrectly spelled, this early operation is also mentioned in "How Things Grows [sic]," *Los Angeles Times*, August 15, 1895.
49. "California Fruits," *Scientific American*, 11, no. 25 (December 17, 1864), 385.
50. Benjamin Ignatius Hayes, *Pioneer Notes from the Diaries of Judge Benjamin Hayes 1849-1875*, ed. Marjorie Tisdale Wolcott (1929; New York: Arno Press, 1976), 260, 294.
51. *San Diego Union*, October 17, 1868, 3.
52. "The Old Mission Olive Groves," *San Diego Union*, May 19, 1970, 3.
53. Sanborn is listed as the purchaser of 40 acres of land and may have given up his lease after acquiring this land. Some sources refer to him as Thomas Davis. "Is It So," *San Diego Union*, March 2, 1871, 2; "Old Mission Being Photographed," *San Diego Union*, March 19, 1872, 3. By 1872, Frank A. Kimball of National City had olive trees growing. In that year, Ellwood Cooper began planting his large olives groves in Santa Barbara. His first harvest came about four years later. Shinn, "Notes Upon the Olive."
54. "The Mission Olive Orchard," *San Diego Daily Union*, August 8, 1872, 3.
55. "The Mission Olive Orchard," *San Diego Daily Union*, November 8, 1872, 3.
56. On May 23, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed legislation enacted on March 3, 1860, returning ownership of California mission lands back to the Roman Catholic Church. The U.S. Surveyor General had a plat of San Diego mission lands prepared in September 1860. A facsimile of the document prepared by surveyor Henry Hancock is displayed in the Mission San Diego de Alcalá Museum. It shows three tracts of land, including an olive orchard of more than 5 acres, surrounded by two intact adobe walls and two sides of "wall ruins."
57. Robert R. Benson, "The Ups and Downs of the Olive Industry," *Los Angeles Times*, September 27, 1925, J3; "Old Mission Orchard," *San Diego Union*, April 20, 1881, 4. Irene Phillips reports that Father Ubach allowed Frank Kimball in 1883 to dig up many dead trees to sell the pieces as souvenirs to raise

money for the Grand Army of the Republic Post at the National Conclave being held in San Francisco. Phillips, *Development of the Mission Olive Industry*, 9.

58. *Investigation Made by the State Board of Horticulture of the California Olive Industry, Report to Governor Gage*, 52. Among the imported varieties were: *Cacco*, *Correggiolo*, *Frantoio*, *Moribello*, and *Palazzaolo*. "Notes," *Garden and Forest*, 2, no. 71 (July 3, 1889), 324.

59. Earley Vernon Wilcox, *Tropical Agriculture* (New York: D. Appleton, 1916), 108; Robert Glass Cleland, *March of Industry: California* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 86. Taylor found records of 234 varieties. Taylor, *Olive in California*, 103.

60. Bancroft was improving his land with irrigation pipes and planting 60 additional acres of olives, increasing the size of his olive orchard to 200 acres. "San Diego County," *Los Angeles Times*, September 19, 1898, 13. Bancroft had purchased the ranch once owned by Judge Augustus S. Ensworth and later Rufus King Porter. The Ensworth adobe home was renamed the Bancroft Ranch House in 1958 and designated California Historical Landmark No. 626. Today it is a museum managed by the Spring Valley Historical Society. See [www.sandiegohistory.org/societies/springvalley/ranchhouse.htm](http://www.sandiegohistory.org/societies/springvalley/ranchhouse.htm) (accessed December 16, 2007).

61. "Olive Culture," *Los Angeles Times*, January 12, 1895, 10; Victor W. Killick, "Wonder Crop of the Fertile Southland," *Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 1913, VI158.

62. Phillips, *Development of the Mission Olive Industry*, 85, 91. J. Austin Hall, "San Diego," *Californian Illustrated Magazine* (February 1893), 378-91.

63. Frank A. Kimball, Diary, May 12, 1869, Kimball Family Collection, Morgan Local History Room, National City Public Library; Irene Phillips, *Development of the Mission Olive Industry and Other South Bay Stories* (National City, CA: South Bay Press, 1960), 4-5.

64. Phillips, *Development of the Mission Olive Industry*, 7-10.

65. In what may have been his first visit to San Luis Rey, Kimball described finding just seven or eight living trees in the mission's original olive grove. With the July 4, 1876, Independence Day celebration coming up, he "took a cutting from one of them to plant as a Centennial tree." Kimball, Diary, June 21, 1876; Phillips, *Development of the Mission Olive Industry*, 4-9.

66. In one letter Kimball pressed a fellow grower about ingredients for a solution that washed away black scale, the most damaging disease of olive trees. "Must *whale oil* be used?" Frank A. Kimball to Ellwood Cooper, August 18, 1889, Kimball Family Collection. Letters to potential customers in Cleveland, Boston, and other cities emphasized that every drop of his product was absolutely pure olive oil, unlike the diluted imports. Typical of these is Frank A. Kimball to S. W. Otis, October 1, 1889, Kimball Family Collection.

67. Taylor, *Olive in California*, 39, 42-43; Phillips, *Development of the Mission Olive Industry*, 9. Phillips erred when she wrote that Cooper was the only person in the country making olive oil.

68. Cooper was called the "Father of the American Olive Industry" when, at age 84, he visited Los Angeles for "Olive Day" in 1915. Cooper came to Santa Barbara for the first time in 1858. He later started an olive grove with cuttings from the San Diego mission (possibly supplied by Frank Kimball or Thomas Davies), but certainly not in 1865, as this story claims. "Half Century's Purple Vistas," *Los Angeles Times*, March 31, 1915, III; "Author, 84, Weds Young Widow, 60," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 6, 1913, 5.

69. "Olives in California," *New York Times*, July 31, 1879, 12, reprinting an article from the *San Francisco Alta*.

70. A diary entry records the ordering of \$250 of stone for the mill from the San Diego Granite Company. Kimball, Diary, January 4, 1887.

71. Cooper and Kimball are credited with first placing the "promising" olive industry on a commercial basis and as "the two leading pioneers." "A Midwinter Scene," *Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 1892, 1; "Olive and the Vine," *Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 1897, 15; "Pomona the Peerless," *Los Angeles Times*, December 4, 1891, 10.

72. "The Olive," *Los Angeles Times*, October 21, 1892, 12. This surprising information is documented in references to the prices paid by Kimball for olives at his processing plant.

73. Kimball, Diary, January 5, 1878, January 3, 1892.

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74. E. Cooper, "Olives in California," *Californian Illustrated Magazine* (Winter 1891-92), 51; Helen Hunt Jackson, *Glimpses of California and the Missions* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1907), 254-56.
75. Frank A. Kimball to Col. C. A. Booth, September 5, 1880, Kimball Family Collection.
76. Kimball records the belated delivery of his award certificate and the bronze medal from Chicago. Kimball, Diary, May 25, 1896. The San Diego Historical Society Research Library has this award and a number of others presented to Kimball. Included are the a gold medal for olive oil from the Cotton States International Exposition in Atlanta, 1895; an award for olive oil from the California Sixth District Agricultural Association, 1889; a gold medal diploma for olive oil from the California Midwinter International Exposition, San Francisco, 1894; and an honorable mention for olive oil from the Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1889. See also Charles Edwin Markham. "California at the World's Fair," *Californian Illustrated Magazine* (November 1893), 764.
77. Kimball specially ordered boxes that could be used to present sample bottles of his olive oil to visiting journalists. He also wrote about being all day at the olive mill as "lots of excursionists" visited. Kimball, Diary, January 23, 1892, February 12, 1896.
78. Kate Sanborn, *A Truthful Woman in Southern California* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1893).
79. Phillips, *Development of the Mission Olive Industry*, 91-92, 97; Kimball, Diary, February 21, 1896.
80. Phillips, *Development of the Mission Olive Industry*, 97.
81. Vincent Nicholas Rossi, "Olive Once Reigned As Fallbrook's Prime Crop," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, May 28, 2006, <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/northcounty/20060528-9999-lzlm128theway.html> (accessed August 31, 2007).
82. Ivan Gillis: "Facts & Figures for Fallbrook, Calif.," <http://www.e50plus.com/public/282print.cfm> (accessed August 22, 2007).
83. The earliest date that olives were grown in Fallbrook is not known. "The Olive Industry of Fallbrook," <http://www.fallbrook.org/history/olive-industry.asp> (accessed May 29, 2007). Barbuscia and Potter are listed as the operators of the first processing facility. F. F. Adams is also identified as a Fallbrook olive grower, but whether he was independent or associated with the Loma Ranch or Red Mountain Ranch is not clear. "San Diego County," *Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 1897, 11.
84. "The Olive Industry of Fallbrook," <http://www.fallbrook.org/history/olive-industry.asp> (accessed May 29, 2007); Rossi, "Olive Once Reigned"; Vincent Nicholas Rossi, "Little Known of Early Citrus Industry Leaders," *San Diego Union*, August 5, 2007, N2. The San Diego business directories separately listed olive packers and olive oil makers after 1900. For more than 20 years Girolamo Navarra is listed as an olive oil producer in San Diego, but nothing more is known about the business.
85. The Bernardo Winery is located on Paseo Del Verano Norte in Rancho Bernardo, San Diego, [www.bernardowinery.com](http://www.bernardowinery.com) (accessed May 29, 2007).
86. Carl Plain, "City's Last Olive Processor Looks Beyond County Groves," *San Diego Union*, November 4, 1962, 4; "G. A. Thompson [obituary]," *San Diego Union*, April 12, 1965, 23.
87. Evidence of this operation is a one-gallon olive oil can displaying the brand and maker, along with a heavy metal press, pump and filter once used to produce the oil. These relics of the Rancho la Morada olive oil business were housed at the Motor Transport Museum in Campo, California as of December 2007.
88. "Tuffley [obituary]," *San Diego Union*, January 23, 1951, 7. When they retired in 1919, Akerman & Tuffley were said to have "started business in a small way more than 30 years ago." "Pioneer Olive Plant is Sold; To Be Enlarged," *San Diego Union*, July 4, 1919, 5.
89. "Historic Structure Report for the Casa de Bandini, Old Town San Diego State Historic Park, San Diego, California," prepared for the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation, September 2004, 35; Victor A. Walsh, "Casa de Bandini, California Historical Landmark #72 [Information Sheet]," Office of the Historian, Old Town State Park, 2007.
90. "Akerman & Tuffley to Have Big Modern Pickling and Oil Factory," *San Diego Union*, April 9, 1911, 11; "Historic Architectural Survey Report and Historic Study Report for the Caltrans District 11 Office Complex, Old Town San Diego, 11030-113161," prepared by Dorene Clement and Thad M. Van Bueren, November 30, 1993, 30-31.



91. "Pioneer Olive Plant is Sold; To Be Enlarged," *San Diego Union*, July 4, 1919, 5; "Recently Organized Old Mission Products Company Will Operate Big Olive Packing Plant in Old Town," *San Diego Union*, November 16, 1924, 21; "San Diego Men to Provide Mart," *Los Angeles Times*, November 16, 1924, E12.
92. "Robert Alfred Tuffley, May 29, 1883–October 10, 1967." Biographical Files, San Diego Historical Society Research Library.
93. "Recently Organized Old Mission Products Company Will Operate Big Olive Packing Plant at Old Town," *San Diego Union*, November 16, 1924, 6. The San Diego Historical Society Archives owns a handsome certificate for a gold medal awarded Akerman & Tuffley for their Old Mission Brand Pure California Olive Oil at the 1902 International Exposition in Lille, France.
94. Gifford was born in Erie, Pennsylvania on May 7, 1858, son of Frank and Kate Gifford. He married Rachel Wheelock on June 24, 1884, and fathered Carrie Eula (who died at age eight), DeWitt, Ruth, and Orville. He died while seeking medical care in Rochester, Minnesota, on April 30, 1924, at age 66. "Eulogizes C. M. Gifford, Olive-Packing Pioneer," *San Diego Union*, May 11, 1924, 17.
95. Taylor, *Olive in California*, 50-54, 134. Mr. Blackburn in Ontario also canned ripe olives at an early date. "Nutritious Harvest of Olive Growers," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 1903, A2.
96. *Ibid*, 133.
97. Margaret M. Thornburgh, "Why Olives are 'Supreme,'" *Westways* (November 1961), 19.
98. Taylor, *Olive in California*, 50. Frederic Bioletti also published practical guides on olive cultivation in agricultural bulletins.
99. Thornburgh, "Why Olives are 'Supreme,'" 18; "Canned Olives," *Los Angeles Times*, October 21, 1906, V23.
100. "Growers Not Discouraged," *Los Angeles Times*, August 17, 1908, I15; "Spread Olives in the Valley," *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 1909, I17. The 40-acre orchard is described as being near near Wiest, east of Brawley. No reference to a packing plant was found. "Our Neighbors: Weekly Review of Agriculture Activities in the Southwest," *Los Angeles Times*, October 26, 1930, J4.
101. C. M. Gifford followed the lead of David Murray of Hanford who first planted olives in the area. He visited, secured 160 acres of land, and planted 7,000 Ascalano olive trees. "Promising Olive Prospect," *Los Angeles Times*, April 11, 1915, VI4.
102. "Olives a Promising Kings County Crop," *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 1924, H6; "Olives in Kings Will Bring \$50,000," *Los Angeles Times*, December 24, 1928, 13.
103. Some family history appears in "Charles M. Gifford," in James Miller Guinn, *A History of California and Extended History of South Coast Counties* (Lost Angeles, Historic Record Co., 1907), 1321. Dewitt C. Gifford was referred to as a "pioneer olive packer" in a 1927 report on a meeting of the California Olive Association. "Olive Growers of State Meet," *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 1927, A9.
104. According to a published list of California Olive Association officers, Orville D. Gifford was president of the organization in 1942. Taylor, *Olive in California*, 198. Only Gifford's sister, Ruth Smedley, survived him. "Orville D. Gifford Dies; Olive Industry Leader," *San Diego Union*, May 31, 1968, B2.
105. "Olive Culture in California," *Los Angeles Times*, October 18, 1902, 6; "Olive Industry Threatened," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1912, VII.
106. Sardines also were first packed in olive oil when a San Diego cannery opened in 1909. The first tuna cannery started business in 1911. Wiley V. Ambrose, "History of the Fish Canning Industry in San Diego County," in *History of San Diego County*, ed. Carl H. Heilbron (San Diego: The San Diego Press Club, 1936), 202-04; Mellissa Garza, "San Diego's Big Catch: The Tuna Industry," master's thesis, University of San Diego, 2001, 11, 96.
107. Jim Downing, "Olive Oil Turns Golden," *Sacramento Bee*, May 10, 2006, D1.