

# IMPERIAL VALLEY PRESS

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## A DESERT KLONDIKE

### Imperial Valley Farmers Reaping Phenomenal Profits From Cantaloupe Growing

#### Operations of the Packing and Shipping Associations in Different Parts of the Valley and the Experience of the Individual Farmers Show Great Profits. A Splendid Industry Well Established

Cantaloupe growing is proving such a money maker in this Valley this season and the growers are getting such unheard of returns from their crops that it is almost dangerous to tell it for fear our readers will call us down for drawing the long bow. However, the facts are here to show for themselves and if our statements seem too large remember we won't come down a cantaloupe till those who doubt have come and seen for themselves. It will be remembered that some cantaloupes were grown at Brawley last year and the business fairly established.

The Brawley growers however did not make any big thing out of the business except in a few instances but like the wide awake and progressive farmers they are they learned a whole lot. So that while they all came out ahead and a few, like Judge Holloway, made more than one hundred dollars per acre, they all learned how to raise and care for cantaloupes and were encouraged to undertake it again. So this year they enlarged their packing house, got in the latest machinery and planted about one thousand acres to this crop. About 300 acres of this was across the river in No. 8 and consequently was lost with the failure of water on that side of New river. But the remaining 700 acres was well tilled and received first-class attention. The first cantaloupes shipped from the State of California and consequently the first to reach the markets from any place were shipped from Brawley and since then it has been fast and furious. Daily shipments of from six to ten cars are going forward from that one place. Their first full car load sold for \$2640, which after paying all expenses netted the growers more than five dollars a crate. Since then the price has dropped to some extent but the cantaloupes so far shipped will bring the growers net returns of at least three dollars a crate. The vines are now at the height of the bearing season, covering the ground with a mass of dark green foliage and literally teeming with melons. But nevertheless quite a number of acres have already turned out one hundred crates each and are good for that many more. While the Brawley growers are leading the van and reaping great rewards for their enterprise and careful study of the matter, the farmers of El Centro and Holtville are only one lap behind the leaders and gaining rapidly.

At Holtville some cantaloupes were grown last year but as no organization was perfected or shipping shed built there were no facilities for marketing them and none were shipped out. However, it was demonstrated that cantaloupes of surpassing quality could be produced there at just as early seasons as any other place. So the Holtville people got together and organized an association and went at it in business style. The association planted 160 acres of its own and it is fair to say it is the finest field of cantaloupes of its size that was ever grown in this

State. The Holtville people have about five hundred acres planted to cantaloupes and are shipping out about two or three carloads a day at the present time and expect to double this output in two weeks' time. They have built and fully equipped a packing shed and are running their business on the most up to date principles. Their output both as to quality and handling is fully up to the high standard of excellence established by Brawley for Imperial Valley cantaloupes. And right here at El Centro there is quite a lot doing in the cantaloupe line, too. Our association is shipping two cars of cantaloupes per day and the output is increasing right along. With us, as with Holtville, our vines got started later than those at Brawley or rather Brawley planted practically all her crop at the same time our earliest growers planted. Consequently while their output has probably reached its maximum ours will more than double within the next two weeks. There are however, some of the best cantaloupe fields in the Valley right here in the El Centro association and the demonstration has been made that our soil is just as good for this crop as any in the Valley.

There are about 400 acres of cantaloupes in the El Centro association but of these probably not to exceed 50 acres were planted as early as they should have been. There are several fields though that show forth pretty effectively what can be done on our lands when they are planted at proper season and treated right. One of these is the eight acre field of Messrs. Hart and Griswold. This was planted about the middle of February on land on which alfalfa had been grown, the planters plowing up the alfalfa and putting the land in cantaloupes. Their experience goes to prove that this is a profitable thing to do for they got the earliest cantaloupes in the El Centro association and sold several hundred crates for more than five dollars a crate net. They have already shipped about one thousand crates from the eight acres and will no doubt have five hundred crates more. It is altogether likely that they will receive five thousand dollars net for their crop on this eight acre field. And there is every likelihood that quite a number of other growers in the Valley will do as well. E. E. Forrester has six acres of cantaloupes which, while not quite so early as Hart and Griswold's will no doubt produce as many melons. He has a small patch of about one fourth of an acre planted in his old cow corral that we believe will turn out the largest output for its size of any land in the Valley. All the vines in the Valley everywhere are free from insect pests and disease and while the water shortage caused by the washing out of the main canal damaged the vines of the El Centro and Brawley associations and probably reduced the output at least one hundred car loads the vines have recovered from it and everywhere they are spreading and blooming and

setting more melons all the time. In fact they appear to be at the height of their growing season and are as thrifty as they could possibly be. The cantaloupe men are all "on velvet" so to speak and hereafter we expect to see barley ranching at a discount where the lands are close in to shipping facilities or especially adapted to cantaloupes. The L. M. Lyon Co. is handling all the melons in the Valley and this we believe to be a good thing for all concerned. It causes all the melons to be handled through one head and by causing a proper distribution of the crop prevents any market from getting glutted and breaking prices. By handling the cantaloupes in this way the markets can be kept keen for them, high prices can be maintained and everyone of the cantaloupes grown in this Valley can be marketed so as to bring the grower big money. There is no doubt but that the cantaloupe crop of this Valley will bring the growers at least three hundred thousand dollars or an average of nearly two hundred dollars per acre for the entire acreage planted. Mr. Lyon tells everyone to take just as good care as possible of their vines, for he can sell every cantaloupe they can raise until August 20th and get big money for them for the growers. As that is seven weeks away it can be seen that the growers with the late melons will get just as big a slice of the pie as the earlier ones.

And the quality of the Imperial Valley cantaloupes as compared to those raised in Florida and Georgia. This is best shown by the market reports received. While Georgia and Florida cantaloupes are quoted at \$1.50 per crate those from this Valley are selling for \$4.50 to \$5.50 per crate right along side of them. It is the quality that counts and that gives us the market. Our cantaloupes are fit for a king's breakfast and it is no wonder the eastern market gobbles up all of them they can get and cry out for more.

The cantaloupe harvest is making a big difference with business in all the towns of the Valley where they can be raised and the value of such a crop and of having good land in close proximity to the town has been amply demonstrated. During the height of the season the farmers find their hours are pretty long. We judge this to be the case by the fact that they all come to town after sundown with loads of cantaloupes which must then be loaded in the cars and the cars iced and gotten ready for shipment out on the morning train. The men in the shipping shed work nearly all night loading and icing cars. It is a busy scene and the beauty of it is that it is as near perpetual motion while it lasts in making money for the farmer as one could imagine.

Nearly every day Hart and Griswold bring in one hundred crates of cantaloupes and they have brought in as high as 128 crates in a day. With these netting them five dollars a crate as several hundred of them did they have a Klondike gold mine beat a mile. Every farmer who has a good cantaloupe field no matter whether it is early or late has a little Klondike of his own right here at home. And as long as sane business principles prevail and they don't cut the business up and get to competing against each other the cantaloupe growing business will be a desert Klondike. And it is remarkable to note what a change has come over some of our people as a consequence. Their views regarding land values are undergoing quite a change, a few who sold some time ago hustling to buy again and others enquiring the price of "all that joins

them." Just as soon as Mr. Cory is able to report encouraging progress on his work of shutting out the Colorado floods there will be the biggest kind of a boom in cantaloupe lands and in fact in all kinds of Imperial Valley lands except the hard alkaline adobe that won't raise anything but grain and not much of that. However, as there is only a comparatively small tract of this kind of land in the Valley it will not seriously retard the general boom which will come as soon as the water is under control. Already the people in other parts of the Valley where cantaloupes can be grown are agitating and getting ready to organize associations and engage in the business next year.

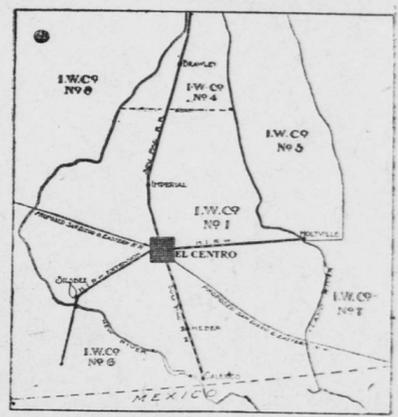
At Keystone the movement is well under way. One land owner has arranged to cut his 320 acre ranch up into twenty acre tracts and lease it to tenants who will be required to put ten acres in cantaloupes, no more and no less. It has been demonstrated by long experience that ten acres is all one man should undertake to raise and pick and he will have to have one man to every two acres during picking time. In this way this enterprising Keystone rancher will form the nucleus of a cantaloupe association and with the co-operation of his neighbors will promote this most profitable industry in that locality. The lands in the Mesquite lake basin and in the vicinity of and east from Keystone are as good as any in the Valley. It is here that some of the best and earliest apricots are grown and here cantaloupes would thrive to great perfection. Another locality where a cantaloupe association will probably be organized is at Heber.

There is a very large area of splendid lands within very easy distance of that station and all it needs is people with vim and enterprise to take up the matter and put it through. This we understand will be done and an association organized and shipping plant put in at that place backed by an acreage

of perhaps 500 acres of cantaloupes. Should this movement be carried out it will mean at least five cantaloupe associations operating in this Valley next year and very likely a total acreage of 4000 acres planted in this crop next season. With the rapid growth of the cantaloupe market and the unequalled quality of the Imperial Valley cantaloupes there will be no trouble in finding a market for all that can be produced provided due care is taken in marketing them and the farmers don't get to competing against themselves. In order to do this it is necessary to keep the distribution of the crop in the hands of one firm and not permit others to "butt in" and ruin the market. The Southern California orange growers had plenty of experience along those lines and the cantaloupe growers can take a leaf from their book and save themselves lots of bitter experience. The outlook for the prosperity of this Valley was never better. The farmers have all made some money this season and the experiments in fruits, grapes and asparagus have all brought the most encouraging results. To these facts add the ten strike made by the cantaloupe growers and it is apparent that the entire Imperial Valley will soon be, if it is not already, a veritable Desert Klondike.

Contractor Peterson arrived back from Holtville and went to work with his crew of bricklayers on the Opera House walls last Thursday morning. The walls of the bank building are pretty well up, but little being left to do on them but the fire wall. Now the Opera House walls will soon be up and the roof on. Then the work of finishing it can be carried forward, even if the weather should be hot.

Mrs. W. Van den Heuvel, of Imperial, announces the engagement of her daughter, Alice, to Homer Ray Balcom of El Centro. The wedding will take place in the near future.



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