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EIGHTEEN MILLION MELONS WILL BE CUT THIS YEAR

Imperial Valley Acreage More Than Doubled and Marketing Plans Greatly Improved. Small Tracts Well Farmed Will be Bonanzas. Rocky Ford Experts Leasing Valley Lands. Imperial and Calexico To Join The Producers.

Imperial Valley melon growers are getting ready for the coming season, signing up acreage in the associations, securing seed and making contracts with distributors of the product, and the indications are that more than double the acreage of last year will be planted. Last year 535 carloads of cantaloupes were shipped from the valley, bringing net returns to the growers of between \$500 and \$600 per car on the average, or a total net return of more than a quarter of a million dollars.

Distributing agents, who have been perfecting organization of eastern agencies and studying market conditions, are confident that 1,200 carloads can be placed during the coming season, and the valley is preparing to supply the prospective demand. Until all the associations sign contracts with distributors, the total acreage cannot be estimated closely. Last year 2,000 acres were planted. Owing to lack of experience, to inattention and to careless cultivation a considerable area was unproductive. Successful growers gathered from 100 to 300 crates per acre, the average for the entire area planted, taking the good with the bad results, being about 85 crates. On that basis, making the same allowance for failures, the 5,000 acres, roughly estimated as the coming season's planting, would just about supply the 1,200 carloads required to meet market demands.

MELONS FOR MILLIONS

There are 330 crates to the car and 45 melons to the crate. To load 1200 cars, 400,000 crates, in round numbers, will be required, and that means 18,000,000 melons or about one melon to every five inhabitants of the United States. An average crop of 80 crates to the acre, allowing for failures, requires 5,000 acres to load 1200 cars. But a fair average yield of properly cultivated land in Imperial Valley is 150 crates to the acre. About 40 per cent. of the planted acreage is unproductive, or nearly so, because of the ignorance or negligence of the planter. The average loss of acreage at Rocky Ford, where cantaloupe-growing is presumably better understood than anywhere else, is not less than 25 per cent.

Cantaloupe experts—such men as H. B. Pearson, field manager for Crutchfield & Woolfolk; G. W. Oliver, former president of the Rocky Ford association, who is now in Imperial Valley; and other Rocky Ford growers of long experience—attribute a large proportion of failures to the attempts of inexperienced growers to handle more land than they can care for properly. Ten acres are all that one man can attend to, and he will get better results from six or seven acres. If he puts in twenty or thirty acres and does not hire enough competent help to cultivate the crop thoroughly, he makes an utter failure and his unproductive acreage lowers the apparent average of the valley's product.

CAUSES OF FAILURE

The best and most successful cantaloupe growers plant no more than they can attend to thoroughly, and they pay more attention to quality than to quantity. Ten acres, diligently cultivated by a man who knows the business, will produce more melons than are grown on forty acres poorly managed, and a crate of good melons brings returns, while poor melons go to the pigs.

Men who never grew a melon before come to Imperial Valley with high hopes, having read of the great profits made from cantaloupes, lease or buy large tracts and plant acres enough to keep ten times their number occupied every day of the season. They figure that if ten acres pay \$2,000, thirty acres must pay \$6,000, and they have visions of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. When they wake up at the end of the season they are about ready to begin to learn the rudiments of cantaloupe growing.

MARKET CONDITIONS

Imperial Valley growers have advantages which make large profits certain if they know the business and give proper attention to it. Their crop is ready for market when Rocky Ford is planting seed. Florida has about ten days lead in getting to market, or has had up to date, but the Florida product cannot be compared for quality with the Imperial Valley cantaloupe. Distributors believe that if they can put the California product into the Eastern market ahead of Florida for one season, or even get it there at the same time, the superior quality will win, and thereafter the Imperial Valley cantaloupe will be in demand in preference to all others.

Manager Pearson reports that Crutchfield & Woolfolk have planned a much extended system of distribution for the coming season, and have arranged for diversions which will meet market conditions promptly and place the product where it has not gone heretofore. Canadian markets will be supplied and other new markets are to be opened.

The El Centro Fancy Melon Growers' Association has signed up with Crutchfield & Woolfolk and secured seed, and the district will have from 650 to 800 acres in melons this year. Several growers from Rocky Ford have come into the district and leased land, and it is probable that their crops will operate to raise the percentage of successful growing. G. W. Oliver, former president of the Rocky Ford Association, has taken 40 acres of the Colby ranch and will put in melons and tomatoes.

CONFLICTING CONTRACTS

Directors of the Imperial growers association awarded a contract for marketing cantaloupes to the Edmund Peycke Company, but the deal was not satisfactory to the members. A minority of the board of directors resigned, and the prospective growers organized a new association and entered into a contract with the National Produce Distributing Company. The directors of the new association are Messrs. Ap-

lin, Bixby, Fuller, Conrad and Nelson, and the members have signed up 400 acres.

The Peycke Company insists that the growers abide by the original contract and threatens to undertake to enjoin the growers from doing business with the National company. The local paper deprecates the course of the Peycke company and characterizes it as a deliberate attempt "to bring about contention and litigation, with a view to making it difficult to engage in a legitimate industry."

Imperial district has not produced cantaloupes heretofore, but expects to come into the field with about 400 acres.

HEBER TO THE FRONT

Last Monday night thirty-five growers attended the meeting of the Heber Fancy Melon Growers' Association and elected as Directors Geo. Cline, W. A. Van Horn, W. S. Fawcett, J. N. Hoffman and L. E. Srack. J. N. Hoffman is president and O. P. Palstine secretary. Members of the association are pledged to plant 1,000 acres, and Field Manager Pearson of Crutchfield and Woolfolk, has the contract for distribution.

In addition to this a Japanese association, composed of Jap settlers, is about to be formed with an acreage of 400 to 500. This will also have a considerable acreage in tomatoes and peas; sufficient to ship in carload lots. A new district near Gleason is coming into the field with 200 acres and probably will distribute through the agency of Crutchfield and Woolfolk.

STRUCK OIL

Hundreds of Claims Filed on Carrizo Creek Field. Imperial County May be In It With Kern.

Oil has been struck in Imperial County. J. N. Holloway, of Bakersfield, has been prospecting for oil in Carrizo Creek canyon for some time, and recently struck a flow of light oil in a well 1080 feet deep.

Yesterday 162 filings on oil claims were received at the office of the County Recorder and placed on record, and a letter stated that 200 more would be forwarded immediately by express.

Apparently Bakersfield oil men located the whole Carrizo Creek country before making known the fact that they had struck oil. The field is said to be similar in formation to the Coalinga district.

HEBER VINEYARDS

Large Tracts Devoted to Grapes—Plans For Encouraging Settlement

A large acreage is being put in grapes in the Heber district this year. W. S. Fawcett is putting in 160 acres; O. P. Palstine, 80 acres; Wm. Moorehouse 40 acres, and many others are putting in ten and twenty acre vineyards.

Heber land-owners have generally adopted the plan of selling small tracts on easy terms, and making the annual payments cover the cost of planting and caring for vineyards. At the end of the period of payment, covering several years, the purchaser has an improved and productive vineyard.

NO GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF IMPERIAL IRRIGATION

Reclamation Service Not Negotiating, Having No Available Funds. Acquisition of Lower California Not Contemplated. Senator Flint Dispels Divers and Sundry Rumors. Southern Pacific Has Tail-Hold on Colorado River.

What disposition is to be made of the affairs of the California Development company is a question of paramount importance to the settlers of Imperial Valley, and it is a question to which no conclusive answer can be given by anyone not in the confidence of Mr. Harriman. All indications point to a wind-up of the old organization and concentration of nominal as well as actual control of the irrigation system in the hands of the Southern Pacific. The railroad was forced to take charge of the work and furnish the money required for protection of the valley and its own property, and now it appears to have determined to wind up the C. D. Co. and liquidate its affairs.

The property of the C. D. Co. has been transferred to the railroad by deed, and mutual water companies have been notified to pay money due for water rentals directly to the Southern Pacific. What responsibility for the obligations of the C. D. Co. goes with the property is a question which may be determined later by courts.

ANNEXATION RUMORS

There have been many and various reports of negotiations between the railroad people and the government and between the governments of the United States and Mexico affecting water rights, concessions, contracts and control of the Colorado river, and it has been asserted that a treaty providing for transfer of Lower California to the United States has been negotiated and is to be presented to the Senate for ratification. Although some of these reports have been circumstantial and apparently based upon definite information, their authenticity is questionable.

In a personal letter to the editor of the Press, Senator Frank P. Flint, chairman of the committee on Geological Survey, who is in close touch with all matters relating to reclamation and irrigation projects, says:

NOT NEGOTIATING

"I know of no negotiations now pending in reference to the Reclamation Service acquiring the rights of Mr. Harriman in the California Development company, and I am advised by Mr. Newell, the head of the Reclamation Service, that he knows of no negotiations now pending in reference to this matter.

"The representative of Mr. Harriman was in Washington some time ago and conferred with the President, the Director of the Reclamation Service, myself and other members of Congress in reference to an appropriation to reimburse Mr. Harriman and his company for a portion of the money expended in connection with the work along the Colorado river, but I have

not heard anything in reference to this matter for some time.

"I am advised that there are no negotiations now pending nor contemplated in the matter of the acquisition of land in Lower California by this government from the Mexican government. There have been some negotiations in the matter of the adjustment of water rights in the Colorado, but I am advised by the State department that no progress is being made along this line at this time.

NO MONEY AVAILABLE

"There appears to be little likelihood of the Reclamation Service taking over the property of the California Development company. This seems to be the opinion of the Reclamation Service, and in discussing this matter with members of Congress I am inclined to believe that there is no possibility of obtaining an appropriation to take over the irrigation project in the Imperial Valley and do the work necessary to complete the system. There has been so much agitation of this question now that the representatives from other states will not, if they can prevent it, permit the government to undertake this Colorado project for some time, for the reason that if we commence this work it would mean an expenditure of some ten to twenty million dollars to complete the project, and they realize that if the government is once committed to this work there would be no allotment for other states for years to come. On this account there would be strenuous, and to my mind effective, opposition to any measure that might be introduced along these lines."

A TAIL HOLD

From all of which it would appear that the Southern Pacific has the irrigation system of Imperial Valley, both in the United States and Mexico, on its hands for the present, and for the security of its heavy investment and the protection of its large interests in the valley will find it necessary and good business policy to maintain the efficiency of the system, even if it does not deem it expedient to invest more millions in extensions and improvements.

The S. P. took a good tail-hold on the yellow dragon of the Colorado and pulled him out of New river with a mighty yank last year, and now it can't let go.

Change of Management

Beginning Sunday morning the management of Hotel Franklin and the Franklin stables passes into the hands of Geo. Van Kirk and Wm. Lyman of Corona. Messrs. Kirk and Lyman are veteran hotel and liverymen and propose to conduct the Franklin as an up-to-date and thoroughly equipped hostelry.

W. W. Masten, proprietor of the hotel, Friday morning purchased a lot in the rear, fronting on Fifth street and began work at once on the erection of another stable.

Government engineers recommend extensive improvement of entrance to San Diego harbor.