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BIG OLIVE PLANT TO BE ENLARGED

OROVILLE, February 1.—Announcement has been made by the Ehmann Olive Company of extensive improvements which it will make in its plant during the summer months. The improvements will include not only the enlargement of the plant, but many changes in interior arrangement.

At present the company property extends to Lincoln street. This is to be completely occupied by the building of the company. At the same time, the plant will be rearranged. All the pickling will be done in the rear of the building, while the oil will be made in the front portion. The fruit will be received and sorted in a room midway between the two, thus greatly increasing the convenience with which the olives and the finished product are handled. A large number of new vats for pickling olives will be installed. The Ehmann Olive Company's plant is now the largest olive pickling plant in the United States.

According to E. W. Ehmann, the demand for ripe olives is increasing very rapidly. Growers, he states, can be assured of a market, and at the rate the demand is increasing, those who plant olive groves can be assured that there will be a big demand for the product when the groves come into bearing.

Oroville Mercury
Sept 6, 1913

FIGS AND OLIVE PRODUCTS FEATURES OF FAIR EXHIBIT

The Butte county exhibit, gathered under the direction of the display committee, will be shipped to Sacramento Monday where it will be installed under the direction of E. B. Ward of the chamber of commerce.

As the time of the opening of the State Fair draws near, the exhibit is growing by leaps and bounds. A fine exhibit of Smyrna figs was tendered the committee this morning by Joseph Entzman of Table mountain.

The Ehmman Olive company has signified its intention of installing an instructive exhibit in olives. Five

cases of olive oil and five cases of olive oil will make up the Ehmman company's exhibit. According to the officials of the company, the exhibit is expected to be good enough to take first prize in olives and olive oil.

A monster eggplant, weighing seven pounds, the largest ever raised in this section, was brought to the chamber of commerce this morning by H. W. TeGrunde of Pleasant valley. The egg plant will also form a part of the exhibit. In color and in size the egg plant greatly resembles a pumpkin.

*History of California
Olive Industry Written
By One Who Knows It*

(By Mrs. Freda Ehmann.)

The history of the olive industry in California is one of the most interesting in its origin and development. Unlike any other branch of horticulture the olive tree connects us with the time when America was engaged in a bloody conflict to gain her independence from English sovereignty and Spain landed her first missionaries on the shores of California with a view of Christianizing the Indians and thus impress her religion upon the unknown land of what is now California. There is no doubt but these venerable priests planted orchards of various varieties of deciduous fruits, since traces of old abandoned orchards have been found in Southern California, but the gardens and orchards which once furnished fruits and vegetables to those first missionaries have disappeared and only the olive trees which were brought over from the home country and planted in the fertile soil and congenial climate of California are still in vigorous bearing and bid fair to still yield an abundance of fruit for centuries to come.

In connection with the age of the olive trees, the writer was shown olive groves in Italy where authentic dates place the age of olive trees at over 400 years, the grove still being in very good condition and the trees were bearing their regular annual crop. It is clearly evident that the medicinal and food value of the olive oil was so well known to these missionary fathers that they planted these first olive trees perhaps only for their own use not recognizing the fact that they were conferring a valuable blessing on a future generation.

It is perhaps only owing to the excitement following the discovery of the rich gold fields in California that horticulture lay dormant for a while. The thousands who poured into the State from all parts of the world were only bent on gathering gold and being more or less satisfied with their efforts turned their faces homeward. However, a small number of these miners recognized that California with its rich, fertile soil and warm, frost-free winters, offered opportunities to the agriculturist which promised to become eventually a far better enterprise than the shifting luck of the gold miner and so they tilled the rich soil and planted the fruits and grains which are known and praised the world over.

About the year 1840 the first olive trees were planted in Northern California and in the year 1870 the first California olive oil was marketed, being a small quantity only. Slowly but steadily the olive culture had drifted north but the olives were converted into oil only. In 1890 our first olive orchard of twenty acres was planted by my son. At this time the pickling of ripe olives was in the nature of a family product only, as owing to the unskilled preparation of the olives but few people considered it worthy of thought as of future commercial importance. In 1897 the writer first took up the pickling of ripe olives as a study to endeavor to place an olive on the market that would combine flavor and keeping qualities which the public had not been able to find in the few attempts made heretofore on the line of olive pickling.

In looking over those first pages of the history of our business one might truthfully say that I did not realize the enormity of the task which was before me. To appreciate this remark one must know something about the very perishable, delicate nature of the olive when ripe and it is therefore no wonder that the Spaniards do not allow their olives to ripen on the trees, but pickle the fruit in a green, unripe, immature state. But our California ripe olive is exactly what the name implies, a ripe fruit picked only after the fruit has attained a rich

purple color, like the color of a ripe Damson plum and after the oil is fully developed, but this very fact that you are handling a fully ripe fruit renders its successful processing extremely difficult. The fruit must be processed in such a way as to eliminate the pungent, bitter taste peculiar to the ripe olive, to retain a large percentage of oil, besides imparting a flavor which makes it the finest delicacy and a health food of great nutritive and medicinal value.

My task, therefore, was not at all an easy one as I soon found that there was another problem to solve in producing not only a good flavored olive, rich with oil and of the natural dark color, but the great problem was the keeping quality of the fruit, since olives furnished to the market had been found to decay within a short period of six or eight weeks after being delivered.

My first pickling plant was underneath the porch at the residence of my son-in-law in East Oakland. There was no water piped to the barrels, so I had to carry all the water in buckets. I was up at all hours of the night to watch the olives coming through the process and after the first lot was done it was with a sinking heart that I viewed the result. We obtained a formula from the head of the agricultural department of the University of California and I had strictly

followed this rule. The olives were all colors of the rainbow and I felt that I had made a mighty poor beginning. I was so ashamed of this experiment that I sent my daughter out to the University at Berkeley with a sample, but it was my surprise when the professor told her:

"Why, your mother has a fine olive and it is the best I have ever tasted."

Not quite believing this to be true I took a sample to the largest grocer in Oakland and he gave me an order for the entire lot on the spot. Then followed a series of experiments, lasting through the season under the most trying conditions, but every lot seemed to come through better than the last and when there were no more olives to be sent down from our ranch I felt that I was, in a measure, more equal to the task of experimenting in a larger way. I decided to go East with samples and interview the largest trade.

It must be remembered that all of the money which we had realized from our Eastern home had been swept away in an unfortunate real estate speculation and the olive ranch was all that remained. We had barely enough capital to make that Eastern trip, and have a few dollars left. My previous experience had been as a physician's wife, so you can imagine with what fear and trembling I approached some of the largest buyers in the United States. I found that most of them were in the

situation of the child with the burnt fingers and it was only by the utmost persuasion I could get even a sample order. In New York it was particularly difficult for several of the dealers informed me that they had received shipments of ripe olives which after being kept for a week "smelled to high Heaven" and they had to cart them off by night to be dumped in East river. Philadelphia merchants listened to my tale more favorably and I was able to make some contracts which were instrumental in bringing in good orders in other cities. I came home with contracts for over 10,000 gallons with about 1000 gallons from our own ranch for supply.

To make a long story short I contracted for the crop of a grower at Oroville and filled these contracts, using his equipment. We then formed a stock company and my son and son-in-law came into the business with me.

We built a factory at Oroville and to give you some idea of how the industry was still regarded the man who sold us the lumber for the vats told friends of ours, "Mrs. Ehmman must be crazy for she has ordered enough lumber for ninety olive pickling vats." We out-grow this factory

in two years and have added on to it three different times. In 1908 we decided to rebuild the entire factory and now have a two story building 150x300, with the most modern, up-to-date machinery and appliances of any factory in the world in our line.

In the meanwhile the Elmann olives and olive oil were finding their way all over the United States and last year, while in Europe, I was successful in establishing agencies, which will place our products all over the world. We shipped on the same day to the Island of Java and London, two opposite extremes of the world. As our experience in the business broadened we found that soil conditions and the situation of the orchards a vital point in the production of fine olives. The first olives had been planted hap-hazard in valley and foothill soil, but results proved that certain conditions of the soil and elevation together with an abundance of water for irrigating were the foundation for a successful olive grove and then came the right kind of care of the soil and the trees. While we have not solved all of these problems, still we have learned a great many methods which we are successfully using in our three large olive groves.

Going back to our early experience at the one I first commenced pickling, olives were in such disfavor that the growers were rooting out their trees. For years we found it cheaper to buy olives than to raise them ourselves, but suddenly there came a change. With the demand for the California ripe olive the price of the olives rose until it suddenly

dawned upon our company that we had better commence to raise our own fruit. The growers were beginning to realize a price which netted handsome return on a value all the way from five hundred to one thousand dollars per acre. In 1907 we purchased one hundred acres, eighteen-year-old trees, paying \$40,000 cash which six years before we could have bought at \$15,000. This gave us 120 acres of our own and we looked around for more. I found we could purchase a 120-acre olive grove that appealed to us very much indeed, but it was necessary to buy the entire tract of 1800 acres to secure the grove. However, the balance of the land showed all evidence of being splendidly adapted for the raising of olives and other fruits and there was an abundance of water for irrigating, so we decided to buy the entire tract, and this spring we have planted eighty acres of olives with peaches between the trees to cut down the time and expense to when the olives will come into bearing.

Now at a time of life when most women are content to peacefully spend their days at the family fireside, I not only find my business venture reaching out all over the world but now also opening up a proposition of the subdividing and selling of a large tract of land.
