

# Citrus Roots

*Preserving Citrus Heritage Foundation*



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*Our website is a reference center*  
**www.citrusroots.com**

***Our "Mission" is to elevate the awareness of California citrus heritage through publications, education and artistic work.***

*We are proud of our accomplishments as a volunteer organization, which means each donated dollar works for you at 100% [for we have no salaries, wages, rent, etc.]. All donations are deductible to the fullest extent allowed for state income tax purposes.*

**Citrus Roots – Preserving Citrus Heritage Foundation**

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The views of the writer may not be the same as this foundation.

## California Citrus Growers Enjoyed Early Love Affair with Vehicles

Richard H. Barker

The Roaring Twenties were a boom time for California citrus growers. During the decade, grower returns averaged \$2.99 per box (roughly the equivalent of \$40.42 in 2013 dollars). One acre of 20' x 20' trees contained approximately 100 trees, with each one yielding seven boxes of fruit. Therefore, returns on 10 acres would have been \$20,930, which would translate to a whopping \$282,940 today.



What to do with all of that profit? Growers invested heavily in vehicles – a truck for the grove, perhaps a tank truck for smudge oil and/or water, a tractor and one or two family cars. By the early 1930s, the 13,000 members of the Exchange each averaged 3.5 motor vehicles, which totaled 45,500 for the industry as a whole. At a time when vehicle ownership still was considered a luxury, it is very likely that California citrus growers owned more cars and trucks than any other occupational category.

Let's take a look back at some of the classic cars that might have been bought with California citrus dollars. ●





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- a perforated, spaced transmission with an extra low gear for starting heavy loads—and with a special power take-off for various types of power equipment.
- a normally long wheelbase, arranged that enables the load against the front and shock of the road, and eliminates dangerous shimmy.
- a heavy, over-size steering knuckle that accommodates large loads without need of frame alteration.

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The *Pomona Progress* wrote that for the 1924-25 season, growers received a return of 25 percent based on their invested capital in citrus. The following season, they received an 18 percent return. These were golden returns that gave growers the ability to purchase their motor vehicles and tractors.

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