

News Release



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Railroad Museum to Debut Final Phase of Popular Fruit Crate Art When "Pick Me! A Bumper Crop from the Pacific Coast" Exhibit Opens May 1

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The California State Railroad Museum will debut the third and final phase of fruit crate art as part of a visually-powerful exhibit titled "Pick Me! A Bumper Crop from the Pacific Coast" that opens on Wednesday, May 1, 2013. After focusing exclusively on California crate labels for the first two years, the third phase of this popular exhibit includes selections from the entire U.S. Pacific Coast. For example, colorful labels showcasing Washington cherries and Oregon apples join the ranks of California oranges and asparagus that serve to entertain and amaze visitors.

Chosen from the Museum's collection and on loan from private lenders, the evocative art portrays vibrant hues and whimsical motifs that romanticized life in the West. Beginning in the 1840s, early railroads experimented with shipments of perishables cooled by ice. In the decades after 1869, when the Transcontinental Railroad connected the country, techniques for cooling insulated wooden railroad cars--using ice--were perfected. Suddenly a vast new market opened up for Pacific Coast farmers. As the primary means of transport, the railroad was instrumental in the early expansion and success of the agriculture industry on the West Coast. But along with sharing luscious fresh produce with new markets, these refrigerated "reefer" cars also inadvertently delivered something more to a wider population--the call of the "Good Life" out west.

Filled with fresh western-grown produce, wooden shipping crates were identified on their exteriors by artistically and fantastically designed labels. Dripping with color, these labels communicated the powerful allure of the West. Many labels depicted verdant fields and idyllic pastoral scenes, subtly suggesting that the West was a magical place - a place where it was always sunny and the grass was somehow greener. Visitors to the third phase of the "Pick Me!" exhibit will enjoy seeing new selections of historic labels and exploring how fruit crate art developed over time as a graphic art form, a printing technique and a means of marketing. This exhibit will also explore the mechanics of how ice was packed into the top hatch of each "reefer" car to keep it cool in this era before mechanical refrigeration.

While visiting the "Pick Me!" exhibit, Museum visitors love to look for their hometown or favorite vacation spot and this new crop has expanded the possibilities. In addition to the fruit focus, children especially enjoy searching the labels to find imagery of animals such as dogs, pigs, kittens and birds. Museum visitors will also have the hands-on opportunity to create their own labels using magnetic cut-outs of typical design elements. "Pick Me! A Bumper Crop from the Pacific Coast" will remain on display through April 10, 2014. For more information, please call (916) 445-6645 or visit www.californiastaterailroadmuseum.org

About the California State Railroad Museum

Operated by California State Parks with financial assistance from the non-profit California State Railroad Museum Foundation, the California State Railroad Museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. Widely regarded as North America's finest and most popular railroad museum, the complex of facilities includes the 100,000-square foot Railroad History Museum plus the reconstructed Central Pacific Railroad Passenger

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Station and Freight Depot, 1849 Eagle Theatre, and Big Four and Dingley Spice Mill commercial buildings in Old Sacramento. For 24-hour information, visit www.californiastaterailroadmuseum.org or call (916) 445-6645.

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