

Elephant Packing House

201 W. Truslow Avenue

1924

Mission Revival

**Status: Local Landmark;
Listed on the National Register**



This building is one of the last remaining packing houses in Fullerton, where at one time as many as ten such buildings lined the railroad tracts. It exemplifies the importance of the citrus industry in the growth of the city.

Constructed by the Union Pacific Railroad in 1924, the building was regarded as a very modern facility utilizing a conveyor system. It was initially leased to the Elephant Orchards of Redlands, Ca., which used the facility to pack its Valencia oranges under the Elephant Brand label. Later, in 1932, the Chapman family subleased the facility, and for over twenty years the Chapman's Old Mission Brand Valencia oranges were packed there. With the decline of the citrus industry in Orange County in the 1950s, the building ceased to be used as a packing house; starting in 1957, the building has been used by a number of businesses for warehousing and manufacturing activities.

The building is one story, elevated over a full basement, which features a total of 23,500 square feet of floor area. It is constructed of poured concrete posts and headers with hollow concrete tiles filling the spaces between spans. The exterior design of the building reflects the Mission Revival style that was so popular for non-residential buildings of that period. It consists of a parapet wall with Mission tile trim and a decorative firewall as an architectural appendage. The most detailed design feature on the exterior of the building is the main entrance located at the southeast corner of the structure. Inside, the structure's wooden post and truss construction supports a saw-tooth roof design with skylights and ventilation on the north side – the most identifying feature of the building.

The original hardwood plank flooring remains unaltered and is in good condition. The eight rectangular basement windows on the south and north sides of the building are presently boarded. An addition on the west side was built in 1971, but it blends well with the original building.

This building's past association with the packing, shipping, promotion, and selling of the Old Mission Brand Valencia orange is extensive. The Valencia orange was the prize citrus product of Orange County and particularly Fullerton; indeed, the citrus industry was instrumental in the city's development and prosperity during the first half of the 20th century.

Charles C. Chapman played a major role in the development of the citrus industry. He was called the "father of the Valencia orange industry." This building is the only remaining structure directly connected with the business that made Chapman so well known. His home, ranch and first packing house have long been destroyed.



Elephant Packing House, ca. 1925