

Squeezing Out A Juicy Advertising Endeavor

By Don Thornton, Correspondent


THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

Drink an Orange

Use the Sunkist Orange Juice Extractor

10c—from Your Grocer or Fruit Dealer

Sunkist

California Seedless Navel Oranges

CALIFORNIA FRUIT GROWERS EXCHANGE

SUNKIST

The 1916 advertising message was the cat's meow, maybe even the cat's pajamas. If it happened today it would be described as going viral. The message was the headline in a full-page advertisement in the February 26, 1916 *Saturday Evening Post*: **DRINK AN ORANGE**.

The copy under the headline in America's then biggest circulation magazine read: "Orange juice – a delicious beverage – is *healthfulness itself*. California orange juice is rich in flavor and bouquet." The sponsor of the ad was the California Fruit Growers Exchange (CFGE). The brainchild of the Chicago-based advertising agency Lord & Thomas, the ad introduced a then revolutionary new way to consume oranges – by making orange juice.

At the time, drinking orange juice was unheard of -- but the people at Lord & Thomas noted that not one, but two to three oranges were needed to fill a glass – three times more than what most Americans were consuming at the time. Fresh squeezed orange juice meant more and continued sales. The campaign also had a secret weapon – the offer of a super cheap ("10c – from Your Grocer or Fruit Dealer") glass juicer, or reamer, to help the consumer actually make the juice. (More on the reamers later.) The advertising campaign proved super successful with increased sales of Sunkist oranges and paving the way for the American breakfast to be complete only with a glass of orange juice.



This is the story of the historic advertising adventure of Sunkist and the curious cast of characters who made it possible. And the gruesome end of probably the most important one of them.

The person behind the "drink" message was celebrated ad man Albert Lasker who joined Lord & Thomas as an office boy in 1898 and owned the firm by 1912 at the age of 32. What became the California Fruit Growers Exchange was founded in 1893 to help growers in harvesting and marketing their fruit (mainly oranges). The exchange eliminated the middleman who was collecting bigger profits than the individual grower. The exchange grew quickly, representing about 5,000 growers and nearly 50% of the California citrus industry by 1907

Francis Quaries Story (who preferred F. Q. Story) was an Alhambra orange grower and Los Angeles banker elected president of the exchange in 1904, a position he held until 1920 when he retired. Story was convinced the exchange had to advertise nationally to grow its markets in the East. According to one report, he asked his Board of Directors for a $10,000 advertising budget, which was granted after he managed to persuade Ernest Oliver McCormick (who preferred E. O. McCormick) of Southern Pacific Railway to match the amount. McCormick was in charge of promotion and development for Southern Pacific, the carrier for California crops to eastern markets.

Story hired Lasker and the California orange was on the move big time. First off, Lasker's people created the "Sunkist" brand name. "Sun-kissed" was first proposed but it was modified to the mnemonic perfect Sunkist and trademarked (images, next page). Thus branded, the first big advertising campaign aimed at marketing a perishable fruit was launched – in Iowa. Oranges were shipped to Iowa in special bannered Southern Pacific trains. There were prizes for buyers along with billboards shouting "Oranges for Health." The result: orange sales in the state jumped an estimated 50 per cent



Sunkist®

The next marketing move was wrapping CFGE oranges in tissue paper squares stamped Sunkist to distinguish them from other oranges. That resulted in a sales problem which was turned into yet again another marketing victory. Sunkist discovered in 1909 that merchants were selling cheaper, non-Sunkist oranges as Sunkist by just reusing old wrappers. To eliminate this problem, Sunkist offered consumers a special Sunkist spoon for saving and mailing in 12 Sunkist wrappers and 12 cents in stamps. The spoons, regular silver-plate spoons but with a handle design of oranges and orange blossoms, could be purchased only one at a time.

One newspaper advertisement read: "Insist that your dealer give you 'Sunkist' oranges and lemons in 'Sunkist' wrappers (images, right). Oranges and lemons without 'Sunkist' wrappers are not 'Sunkist' brand. Send us 12 'Sunkist' orange or lemon wrappers and 6 two-cent stamps to cover packing, mailing etc., and we will send you, prepaid, a handsome full standard AA Rogers orange spoon free (images, below)."



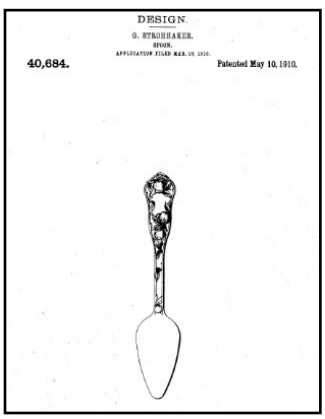


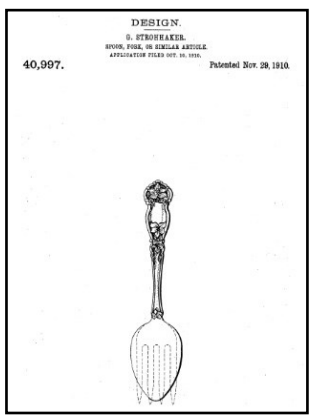


These were not cheap spoons. They were made by the International Silver Company in Meriden, Connecticut and were part of its famous William Rogers and Son line (images, left)



The company's respected flatware designer, Gustave Strohhaker, was granted two design patents that distinguished the spoons as Sunkist. Strohhaker was awarded an astounding dozen patents from 1897 to 1921 for elaborate designs for spoon handles – his most famous the two Sunkist spoons.


DESIGN.
G. STROHHAKER.
SPOON.
APPLICATION FILED MAR. 19, 1910.
40,684. Patented May 10, 1910.


DESIGN.
G. STROHHAKER.
SPOON, FORK, OR SIMILAR ARTICLE.
APPLICATION FILED OCT. 10, 1910.
40,997. Patented Nov. 29, 1910.

The first featured oranges and orange leaves on the handle and the second orange blossoms. The marketing plan was a spectacular triumph. One report said one million spoons were claimed in the promotion's first year. (Images, left)

So far this report has featured a noteworthy lineup of individuals, including two men who preferred their initials to their full first names, a famous ad man who became known as "the father of modern advertising," and a Connecticut inventor who dedicated his life to designing spoon handles. Now meet the most intriguing participant in this advertising endeavor: William M. Bristol, a pioneer orange grower in Southern California in the hamlet of Highland in San Bernardino County skirting the southern base of the San Bernardino Mountains. However, he was more than just a grower, he was a strong supporter of the CFGE, an inventor and as described by his local newspaper at his death a "poet and dreamer."

Bristol entered the picture as the next lucrative CFGE promotion, the previously mentioned "drink an orange" reamer pitch, was kicking off in 1916. The *Rialto Record*, one Bristol's local newspapers, gave him credit for the idea. "Through the clever thoughtfulness of W. M. Bristol of the Way-Up ranch, fruit consumers will hereafter be privileged to 'drink' their oranges instead of eating them in the usual way," the newspaper reported.



Bristol, the *Record* said, promoted the idea to the CFGE months earlier, that "a supply of orange extractors similar to those of the glass lemon extractors" be manufactured with the Sunkist brand and supplied to the retail trade "at practically no cost." The idea was turned over to Lord & Taylor, the *Record* said, and 200,000 clear-glass Sunkist reamers were in the works for the promotion.

That was only the beginning for Bristol. The CFGE announced in late 1924 that a new, improved reamer based on a design by Bristol would be offered as part of its continuing promotion (image, right). The *San Bernardino County Sun*, in covering the announcement, said in a news story December 28 of that year: "It was Mr. Bristol's suggestion that the exchange eight years ago put on the market the first glass extractor of a size suitable for oranges. It was designed and made by an eastern manufacturer and … reached a sale of half a million."

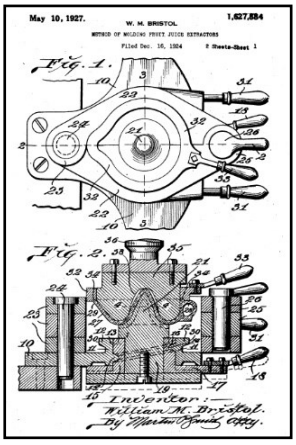
The Bristol reamer, the newspaper said, has a new "corrugated cone, which is sharper and more efficient than any before made." The article also lavished praise, saying: "The new reamer is made of acid-proof white glass, glossy, lustrous and beautiful … a work of art." (It later came in several colors, including green.)

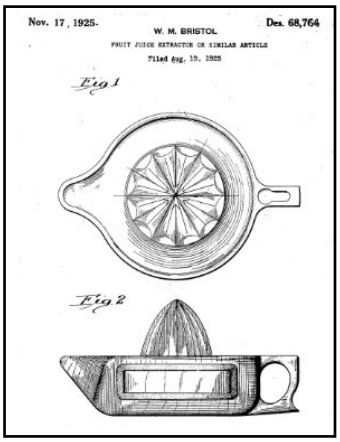






Bristol applied for a patent on August 19, 1925 and Design Patent No. 68,764 was awarded on November 17, 1926 for his "fruit juice extractor" which he assigned to CFGE. He followed this with a utility patent granted in 1926. He also was awarded Patent No. 1,627,884 dated May 10, 1927 for the "method of molding fruit juice extractors" and assigned it to CFGE. In 1927 the mail-in price was 50 cents (sometimes 39 cents on sale) for the heavy-duty reamer (17 oz.) and it was an overwhelming success with estimates of sales in the millions. The book *Reamers 200 Years*, 1980, the bible guide to collecting juicers, stated the Bristol model "eventually became the most produced reamer in the United States."





Over the next 15 years, Bristol continued his support of CFGE with oranges from his orchards, was well known for his participation in civic activities, including development of a county park, and wrote poetry (at least once about oranges) which was published in local newspapers.

On June 8, 1941 his obituary made the front page of the *San Bernardino Daily Sun*:

William M. Bristol, pioneer San Bernardino County Orange grower, "poet and dreamer," last night stepped into a rustic casket he had fashioned himself and fireda bullet into his brain. The body was found in the casket made of cedar bark. And bedded with leaves…A singular figure, with his flowing gray beard and slight limp, Mr. Bristol was 82 years old. He wrote a note before taking his life which told of his "physical distress from various ailments" which he could "endure no longer."

FOOTNOTE: In 1952, CFGE finally recognized the endearing power of the Sunkist brand name, changing its name to Sunkist Growers, Inc. Harvey A. Lynn, then president, said the name was changed "because we feel that the world-known trademark Sunkist, which has become synonymous with the finest in citrus fruits, should be part of our legal name." Lord & Thomas evolved into Foote, Cone & Belding and then just FCB. Sunkist and FCB parted ways in the early 2010s.

Some additional materials that were used to promote Sunkist over the years appear below.

