

## AUCTION SALE OF FRUIT.

SUCCESSFUL BEGINNING OF A NEW KANSAS CITY ENTERPRISE.

Business Began at the Warehouse of the Fruit Auction and Cold Storage Company—A Fair Attendance at the Opening Sale—The Large Italian Fruit Firms Among the Heaviest Buyers—Arrangement of the Warehouse.

The first of a regular series of sales of fruit, vegetables and produce at auction was attended by a large crowd of buyers and met with instantaneous success at the new warehouses of the Kansas City Fruit Auction and Cold Storage company yesterday. Two carloads of California oranges and a shipment of sweet potatoes were knocked down in short order and brought good prices. About 200 people, mostly buyers, and a number of ladies were present. The buyers included all the leading fruit and commission men of Kansas City and a number from surrounding cities, among them being Whittaker Bros. of Topeka and Edward Wilson of Lawrence, who bought large orders.

This system of selling fruit and produce at auction is pursued in Chicago and other large cities with success and is similar to the manner in which tobacco and cotton are sold in the Southern States. It is new in Kansas City, but the founders of the enterprise hope and state that if it is successful it will result in making Kansas City one of the greatest fruit markets in the world.

To this end the Kansas City Fruit Auction and Cold Storage company has erected a warehouse at Second and Main streets, on the site of the old court house, at a cost of \$75,000. The whole of the first floor is used for auction purposes and for the display of goods. It is fitted up with offices, a stand for the auctioneer and clerks of the sale and a number of desks for the convenience of purchasers, so that a part of the room looks like a stock exchange or a house of representatives.

The opening sale yesterday was delayed somewhat because the printed catalogues were not ready, a part of the fruit having arrived so late that it could not be classified and the "copy" sent to the printer in time.

The oranges were arranged on the floor in lots ranging from eight to sixteen boxes, with one box open to show the character of the fruit. Each box was stamped with a number, showing that it contained from 80 to 300

oranges according to the size of the fruit. As soon as the catalogues were distributed the buyers began to hustle about among the different lots, literally "sizing them up," and marking on the catalogue the lots they wished to bid on. As there were eighty-two different lots on the floor containing in all 600 boxes of oranges, it will be seen that they had ample room for selection. In this search the Italians, of whom there were a large number present, showed themselves by far the most active searchers, the big wholesale dealers seeming content to buy in large quantities, where the prices suited, and trust to luck for what they got. The prices received ranged from 75 cents to \$1.65 per box. One car of No. 2 oranges which had been heated in transit and was in poor shape averaged 90 cents per box. As some of these boxes contained 300 oranges it will be seen that they were sold at about three for a cent—slightly below the street hawker's "ten cent de doz," or the railroad butcher's "two for a quarter."

The sale was advertised to begin at 2 o'clock, but it was 2:40 when Roland E. Bruner, manager and auctioneer, mounted the stand and announced the formal opening of the Fruit Auction warehouse. On behalf of the company he bade the commission men welcome, stated the purpose for which the house was built and said that with the hearty co-operation of the commission men they could make Kansas City the leading fruit market of the West.

He then began the sale without further parley. The first lot was knocked down to "T. J." for \$1.30 per box. He took eighteen boxes. A Mr. Duncan bid in the next lot at the same figure. Then the Italians thought they should have a voice in the meeting.

"How much for lot 32, with the privilege of lots 33 and 34?" cried the auctioneer.

"Sicca de cent," yelled an eager voice.

There was a shout of laughter, but "Sicca de cent" got there, as the lot was knocked down to Tony Vajiti at 95 cents per box.

The sale yesterday was not a large one, but Mr. Bruner said he was well satisfied with it as a starter. Some of the heaviest buyers were the large wholesale Italian fruit firms.

The cold storage department, which occupies the two upper stories of the building, will not be opened until later, but when it is a shipper can send in his goods in the summer and have them sold at Christmas if he so desires.