

# Museum News

Spring 2013

HEIDRICK AG HISTORY CENTER

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## You are **Invited...** Member Reception in the Courtyard!

We are breathing new life and resources into the Heidrick Ag History Center. To thank all our members and sponsors for supporting us, we are hosting a Member Reception on June 11th. Non members are also invited to become members, attend a festive evening, and enjoy the benefits of your membership. You'll have an opportunity to mix and mingle and experience the newest exhibit opening. A membership application is available online at <http://www.aghistory.org/support-us/membership/> or at the Museum.

**June 11, 2013  
6:00pm - 8:00pm**

Courtyard at the  
Heidrick Ag History Center  
1962 Hays Lane  
Woodland, CA 95776

RSVP by June 3<sup>th</sup>  
[aghistory@aghistory.org](mailto:aghistory@aghistory.org)  
530.666.9700

**Become a member anytime!**

## Member Reception Launches **New Exhibit...** at Cocktail Party on June 11

**Tomatoes, The California Story** is a new exhibit sponsored by Morning Star that will open on June 11<sup>th</sup>. It is an interpretive exhibit designed to tell the story of tomato mechanization in California. On June 11<sup>th</sup>, you'll drive up to see modern day tomato mechanization in the parking lot. It is a dynamic contrast to the photographs, vintage horse drawn transplanter, and early harvesters that you'll see in the Museum. Celebrity docents will also be on hand to share early stories and current information about tomato production in California.

**The Taste of Tomatoes!** Foods featuring tomatoes (especially tacos), Bloody Mary's poured by David Young, and desert orchestrated by the Antique Caterpillar Machinery Owners Club, local Chapter 15, will be just some of the samplings on hand. Of course we will feature local wines to complement your palate, including our friends at Berryessa Gap Vineyards, Bogle Vineyards, Putah Creek Winery, and Turkovich Family Wines.

**Renew your membership.** If you are not a current member, just fill out the membership form (near the back of the newsletter) and send it to us with your check or credit card information. You may also come into the Museum and join or renew your membership. We look forward to seeing you there! For more information, contact us at [membership@aghistory.org](mailto:membership@aghistory.org).

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with **Email**

Please share your email  
and stay informed  
about the latest activities  
at the Museum.

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Welcome New  
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Murray Rubenzhal  
Jim Schultz  
Ed & Lisa Shelly  
Casey Stone  
Christopher Torres  
Louise Wyrch

*The Director's Report*  
**Lorili Ostman** Executive Director

The Museum is becoming a hub of activity. More guests are arriving and enjoying the sights, sound, and smells the collection's offer. New exhibits that enhance the collection while telling *The California Story* are evolving at the Museum. Fresh ideas with new resources are attracting volunteers and guests. We are evolving and interpreting the history of California Agriculture by bringing mixed disciplines together from the arts, sciences, and agriculture. This new trend influences our next exhibition launch on June 11<sup>th</sup>. **Tomato Production, The California Story.** We hope to leave guests wondering what it must have been like decades ago when tomato production began to transition from hand labor to mechanization.

*Tomato Production*  
**The California Story**



The interest that California growers had in mechanized agriculture is unique in the world's history. There are a lot of firsts in California, especially entering the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tomato production is just one of *The California Stories*.

California supported a system of free enterprise. A rapidly increasing population occupied uncultivated lands, labor pools were in short supply, and transportation facilities were rapidly developing to keep up with agricultural commerce. In particular, California attracted people who wanted to be their own bosses.

Early on people laughed when engineers at UC Davis talked about harvesting tomatoes with a machine. In Indiana, during the 1950's, farmers grew tomatoes for half of what it cost California growers. They didn't have the irrigation or insect issues. Land values were lower, and so were other associated costs. But the big cost in tomato production was picking them. Indiana growers could not depend on a harvester, because they could not depend on the weather. Rain falls all summer when tomatoes are ripe. And although you could put hand pickers in the fields after a rain in the 1950's, you couldn't put a machine out there in the mud.

In California the danger of rain was minimal. The trend to mechanize and make things stronger, bigger, and to produce higher yields was already part of the entrepreneurial spirit that had developed in California. California's culture made it the perfect place to test and mechanize tomato harvesting.

*continued next page*

## Labor Shortages

The major impetus for developing a mechanical tomato harvester was the lack of harvesting labor. The earliest mechanization efforts came during World War II when there was a shortage of labor due to military and industrial demands. The US Congress established the Bracero program to allow Mexican nationals to work



in the US, and by 1962 nearly 80 percent of the tomato harvesting workforce was from Mexico. The Bracero program was ended in 1964 due to charges that the program was adversely affecting domestic agricultural workers. Growers had very strong concerns about the availability of workers to harvest the crop and strongly pushed for mechanical harvesting.

Advances in agriculture were not the result of adopting one tool or technique. Progress was, and continues to be, the adoption of “packaged technology.” Successful mechanization of tomato picking depended upon effective machines, specially bred tomatoes, careful irrigation, fertilization and particular planting techniques. Mechanical advancements are estimated to have saved fifty-two man-hours of labor per acre. At the time, many observers felt that this mechanization saved the USA’s tomato industry from outsourcing to other countries.

However, controversy overshadowed progress. *Cesar Chavez*, the leader of the United Farm Workers union, pleaded the case of thousands of laborers who had been displaced by machines. He criticized U.C. agricultural engineers and scientists for mechanization.

The development of the mechanical tomato harvester aroused political debate about the interaction between the public and private sectors. Some political activists felt that mechanization research, development and commercialization unfairly aided industry and large farmers to the detriment of farm workers and small farmers. Their complaints had a chilling effect on mechanization research within universities and the federal government laboratories for years to come.

Yet, the public investment in mechanization has had a positive outcome in maintaining the competitiveness of US agriculture. Where there has been mechanization, there is a general trend for US agriculture to meet domestic needs and to produce a surplus to feed the world. Mechanization fueled tomato production, and new agricultural businesses created increased demand for workers. Mechanization also had a positive effect in the treatment of people by reducing the backbreaking work required of laborers.

## California Story

*continued*

One major challenge was the tomato plant itself. Tomatoes did not ripen uniformly, so it was necessary to send crews into the field for multiple hand pickings. By the time the third picking was complete, the plants were lying on the ground. A harvester would not change that.

One of the first steps for success was to develop a different tomato plant that ripened over a short period of time. A plant breeder could change the form, shape and characteristic of a crop to make it adaptable for mechanical harvesting. Jack Hanna, a plant geneticist, chose to breed the Tom Thumb tomato variety because it was a determinant plant, growing to a fixed mature size, and the fruit ripened in a short amount of time. In eleven years, Hanna produced about fifty tomato varieties. *Red Top* was an early tomato variety adapted to mechanical harvesting. Besides the development of new equipment and new varieties, higher planting densities and changes in irrigation and fertilization were necessary to get uniform maturity and good economic results.

## What is this **Artifact?**

Most every week someone arrives at the museum to donate an agricultural artifact or antique tractor and truck that has been in their family for years. Sometimes the use of that artifact is subject to question. Can you tell us about this truck? What is it: name, make, model, and other trivia that makes it relative to the Museum's collection? Phone 530.666.9700 or email us at [membership@aghistory.org](mailto:membership@aghistory.org).



This truck will be featured in the new exhibition launch on June 11<sup>th</sup>. We'll see you then!

## Tomato Mechanization

As with most inventions, the advancement of the tomato harvester had many contributors and many twists and turns in the development process. There were several designs being built by 1962. The UC-Blackwelder, Button, FMC, Gill Massey-Ferguson, Hume, Peto Ayala, Ries Stout Chisholm-Ryder, Rocky Mountain Steel and Ziegenmeyer are identified.

These groups represented a mix of public sector and private sector firms, and help explain why "secrecy" became an industry practice. In many cases, harvesters were developed behind closed doors, transported in secret and demonstrated to a selected audience. Even the tomato seed breeding developed by Jack Hanna took place in Mexico.



The UC-Blackwelder group was most successful in commercializing the harvester during the early years. Under the prompting of Roy Bainer, chairman of Agricultural Engineering at the University of California-Davis, Coby Lorenzen, later joined by Steve Sluka, worked on mechanical harvesting of tomatoes. After ten years of testing various components the first prototype was built in 1959.

Lester Heringer, asked to see the prototype demonstrated on his farm. The machine so impressed Heringer that he approached Ernest Blackwelder of Blackwelder Manufacturing Company, and convinced him to purchase an exclusive license from the University of California to commercialize the design.

Blackwelder continued to work on the prototype through 1961 and built twenty-five experimental machines. All the harvesters had problems and had to be rebuilt after testing. Significant engineering improvements had to be made for commercial success.

The #104 Blackwelder at the Heidrick Ag History Center is believed to be the fourth harvester built during the prototype phase and was donated to the Heidrick Ag History Center in 1993 by UC Davis. The first Button tomato harvester just arrived at the Heidrick Ag History Center. The Button was built and designed by Robert Button in 1961, and it was recently donated to the Museum by the Button family.

*Thank you to many scholars who have researched and documented some of the tomato story in California. The writings from Schmitze and Seckler [1970], Memoir's of Ray Bainer, ideas from Schueller [<http://www.clubofbologna.org/ew/documents/transfer-ideas-Schueller.doc>], and the research of Historical Consultant Lorry Dunning provided the background for this article.*

# The Growth of Second Saturdays

Programming at the Heidrick Ag History Center has really taken off! With the introduction of the Second Saturday Educational Series in October 2012, visitors have been experiencing and enjoying a range of activities each month. The most recent Second Saturday program on March 9th, the Art and Science of Babbitting, drew a crowd of more than 100 machinery enthusiasts. In conjunction with the Sacramento Capitol A's Model-A Ford Club and Dude Green, the event was a big success. Partnering with local organizations, the museum has been able to increase our events and offer educational experiences for a variety of audiences.

Previous Second Saturdays have included the demonstration of the early 1900s Monitor rice separator, tractor and truck photos with Santa, horses from the Therapeutic Riding and Off Track Rehabilitation Center and the ushering in of the Best 110 horsepower steam engine into the museum. Upcoming Second Saturdays will feature collectable toy trucks and model tractors, and a garden themed Second Saturday with a demonstration of small garden tractors. Second Saturdays highlight unique aspects of our collection and the region's agricultural history. They are a fun way to engage with friends, family and the community. Please check the Heidrick Ag History Center's website at [www.aghistory.org](http://www.aghistory.org) for the most up to date information on upcoming events.



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Gift

*Place us in your  
Will or Trust!*

*Donate Stocks, or  
Barns, Artifacts and  
Real Estate!*

Consider making an investment in safeguarding the genius of our forefathers who invented agricultural and transportation vehicles. Name the Heidrick Ag History Center as a beneficiary in your Will or Trust. We are preserving our history and telling *The California Story*.

**Our budget is supplemented by people like you.** The Museum is a 501 c 3 organization supported by growers and museum enthusiasts in the state.

This collection is not just a part of Woodland or Yolo County. It is an historical representation of the California agricultural experience.

Contact Lorili Ostman,  
Executive Director,  
for more information on how  
to plan a major gift to support  
the Ag History Center.

530.666.9700

[Lorili@aghistory.org](mailto:Lorili@aghistory.org)

## Rent the Museum

The Heidrick Ag History Center is the place for all your special event needs. We have three unique event spaces, including our Event Hall, Museum and Courtyard, and a number of packages to suit your needs. Please call Rachael Ryen at (530) 666-9700 or email [events@aghistory.org](mailto:events@aghistory.org) for more details.

## 2013 Events in Bloom

The Heidrick Ag History Center is blooming with Spring Weddings! Our courtyard is beginning to blossom with roses and lavender just in time for our brides to walk down the aisle, and the weather has been perfect for those having their event in the hall to throw open the doors and let the sounds of music drift across the parking lot. The winter months are typically slow in the event industry as people recover from the holiday rush and plan out their new year. However, it is usually a busy booking time as many couples get engaged at Christmas or New Years, then immediately look for their venue.



We only have eleven Saturday booking available during wedding season, and I look forward to booking those last few days. But where the HAHC really sees its biggest boost is from local businesses and clubs that support us by renting our hall for their conferences. With the new contracts introduced in 2012 we have become a highly competitive venue, but ask our members to think of us if they have a group looking for space to host a meeting or party.

In order to further our Quinceanera business and recognition in the Hispanic community we will be hosting our first ever Quinceanera Fashion Show on June 22 at 6pm! The show will be put on by a collection of local vendors who are supplying the decorations, appetizers, music, and dresses in order to showcase their own businesses while the Heidrick Museum shows off the hall. It will be a very exciting event and I invite all of you to come, bring your daughters or granddaughters

and make a fun girls night of it! Along the topic of increasing business, I am still on the lookout for 350 folding event chairs, or a \$7,000 donation to cover the cost of replacing our outdated and worn down chairs. We are willing to trade event space for such a donation, so if any of our members have connections to local businesses, this might be an attractive way to give (and receive).

Follow us on **Pinterest:**

[http://pinterest.com/  
heidrickmuseum/](http://pinterest.com/heidrickmuseum/)



## Getting it Done in a Day

Volunteers, board members, community leaders and supporters are moving mountains. One of the newest projects at the museum is the outdoor exhibition area that showcases tractors, trucks and implements. Energetic community members support these projects with their personal skills and resources. Volunteers help us with our day to day operations and make it possible to create new and exciting visitor experiences. Currently, we are restoring the Blackwelder Tomato Harvester. The museum's Tuesday crew has been instrumental in the launch of our newest exhibit, *Tomatoes, the California story*. The Road Roller and Bridge House are lining up for the next infusion of community support. With the help of organizations like John Deere and Holt of California we have been able to restore and display new pieces for the public. As the museum springs forward, our volunteers are the heavy lifters and we are so thankful for their efforts.

## Volunteer Today

The Heidrick Ag History Center provides on-going volunteer positions which provide the opportunity to stay engaged with the community. Meet visitors from all over the world and feel the satisfaction of providing a great visitor experience as a museum attendant, support the museum through maintenance and grounds care, have fun as a special events volunteer. Interested? Please call Rocio Rodriguez at (530) 666-9700 or email [aghistory@aghistory.org](mailto:aghistory@aghistory.org).



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 EIN 95.4504986  
 Established in 1995

Meet our staff  
 and board at  
[www.aghistory.org](http://www.aghistory.org).

*We're working  
 to keep the  
 culture of  
 Agriculture alive.*

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