

San Joaquin County Historical Museum

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For Immediate Release

FRESNO SCRAPER TO BE RECOGNIZED AT SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM AS AN ASME MECHANICAL ENGINEERING LANDMARK

NEW YORK, March 16, 2011 – The horse-drawn Fresno Scraper, a ditch-digging apparatus that contributed to the expansion of farming at the turn of the century and also played a role in the massive earthmoving work for the construction of the Panama Canal, will be re-designated an ASME Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark at a special ceremony on March 26 in Lodi.

At the ceremony set for 1:30 p.m. at the San Joaquin County Historical Museum in Micke Grove Park, the New York-based American Society of Mechanical Engineers will present a bronze plaque to the museum in recognition of the mechanical attributes of the Fresno Scraper, which revolutionized earthmoving equipment and enabled agricultural irrigation in California's San Joaquin Valley.

The Fresno Scraper was developed in the 1880s. Manufacturing began in the mid-1880s by James Porteous's Fresno Agricultural Works—hence its name—with additional production by Stockton's Holt Manufacturing Company from 1902 through at least 1915.

Fresno Scrapers were sold throughout the West and when word spread of their efficiency, reliability, and ease of operation, they were shipped throughout the United States and eventually around the world. Fresno Scrapers played a vital role in the construction of the Panama Canal and early levees in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. They continued to be widely used after the advent of the tractor in the 1910s and 1920s, often with mechanical or hydraulic controls. Although motorized graders and advanced scrapers replaced them on large earthmoving jobs in the 1930s, farmers continued to use Fresno Scrapers for many years.

The ASME plaque states: "The Fresno Scraper established the basis for the modern earthmoving scraper."

The Fresno Scraper will be included in an exhibition on the history of earthmoving equipment in San Joaquin County.

The nearly 250 ASME landmarks – ranging from mills and steam engines to industrial processes and space rockets – represent progress in the evolution of mechanical engineering and significance to society in general. Through its Landmarks Program, ASME encourages the preservation of the physical remains of historically important works.

About ASME

ASME helps the global engineering community develop solutions to real world challenges. Founded in 1880 as the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, ASME is a not-for-profit professional organization that enables collaboration, knowledge sharing and skill development across all engineering disciplines, while promoting the vital role of the engineer in society. ASME codes and standards, publications, conferences, continuing education and professional development programs provide a foundation for advancing technical knowledge and a safer world. For more information visit www.asme.org.

About the San Joaquin County Historical Museum

The nonprofit San Joaquin County Historical Society operates the historical museum on behalf of the county. The 18.5-acre museum reveals the history of California's heartland, with eight exhibition buildings, four historic buildings – including the Charles Weber cottage (1847) and Calaveras School (1866) – and other facilities within Micke Grove Regional Park. For more information, visit www.SanJoaquinHistory.org.

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