Hoop Houses attract wider attention from farmers,
by Kate Campbell.

Semi-circles of translucent plastic are popping up throughout California’s agricultural regions as more farmers try using hoop houses, also called high tunnels. The cultural practice is so new in some areas that farmers haven’t even settled on what to call these bow-framed, portable structures.

In the Pajaro Valley on the Santa Cruz County coast, an area famed for its berry production, they’re simply called hoop houses. There, it’s considered a technique with proven benefits that has been around for years, with more structures popping up all the time.

“They provide rain protection, primarily in the spring,” said Pajaro Valley berry grower John Eiskamp. “That was the initial reason for adopting them. During the spring the raspberry crop comes on heavily. If it rains, we get rot and lose about two weeks of production.” That can add up to a lot of lost revenue.

“Hoop houses also help us enjoy the benefit of an extended growing season,” said Eiskamp, who is president of the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau. “We can pick later in the fall, earlier in the spring, allowing us to add about two extra weeks on either end of our seasons.”

The 10-15 foot-high hoops help coastal berry farmers control the growing environment to some extent, he said, without making the capital investment of permanent greenhouses. The structure can be moved and set up at different locations on the berry farms, allowing for better land use, rotations and crop timing to meet various market windows.

“If we cover a portion of the crop earlier, we can bring those berries to harvest and spread out our peaks,” Eiskamp said. “We’ve also learned the hoops can help with disease control. In addition, we can improve our fruit size and quality. Hoop houses provide us multiple benefits.”
From the CEO

Volunteers from the Agricultural History Project (AHP) have been busy this spring and summer attending parades. We have attended a parade in Felton, Gilroy, Watsonville and Salinas. Each of the parades had a very large attendance, giving AHP a lot of exposure. We built a small float to take to the parades and the number of volunteers determined the number of tractors we drove. For the Watsonville parade we drove 18 tractors to town.

The Salinas Parade in my mind was the high light of the four parades. Listening to the news each evening about the violence in Salinas I thought that the crowd would be light, but it was just the opposite, the full length of the parade route was lined with people.

As we move forward with plans for construction of the Implement and Tractor Barn, a kick off Dinner and Concert is planned for the 21st of August. More on this event is in the newsletter.

The Plans for the Implement and Tractor Barn have been submitted to the Divisions of Fairs and Expositions in Sacramento to get their approval. We still need to get an environmental review and have the State Fire Marshall give his approval. When this is completed we will know the cost for construction. Our goal is to build this building during the spring and summer of 2011.

I want to thank Stan Nielsen for taking over the lead on this project from Norm Perryman, working with the building manufacturer and engineers to get the final plans drawn. Thanks Stan.

On another subject, we are still in need of volunteer docents for the times that we are open to the public. We only ask for a commitment of four hours a month to welcome our visitors and be part of an organization that wants to educate people what life was like in the past and what it takes to put food on their table. If interested, please call the office at 831-724-5898.

John Kegebein

“Save our Tractors - Build a Barn”
Fundraiser Kickoff
Dinner & Concert in the Barn
Antsy McClain
and the Trailer Park Troubadors
Saturday, August 21
Dinner 6 p.m. Concert 7:30 p.m.
Ag History Project - S C Co Fairgrounds
Tickets - $30 at
www.brownpapertickets.com/event/120606
Call 831-254-2411 for information

Hoop Houses, continued from p. 1

Eiskamp said a climb to the hills surrounding the valley shows just how widespread the practice of growing under cover has become. He said an overview perspective shows acre and acre of gracefully curved structures.

Cost is a barrier for some farmers wanting to benefit from growing crops in hoop houses. Eiskamp estimates that initial costs for material and labor are about $10,000 an acre for the basic structure light steel poles and translucent plastic.

“Because raspberries and blackberries are high value crops, the investment can be justified,” he said. “For other crops, farmers will really have to consider the economics of the system.”

Plastic, which is the biggest single expense, is good for about three years in the berry application, he said. — Excerpted by permission from Ag Alert, published by the California Farm Bureau Federation.
Notes from Board President Rider

The Fourth of July and blue skies just go together. July 4, 2010 was perfect for a ceremony dedicating the new flagpole and flag at the entrance to the Fair Grounds. Looking from the Rodgers House you would have seen the flagpole with bleachers behind it and to either side…AHP tractors! And from the top of the bleachers looking up as the flag un-furled for the first time…a glorious clear blue sky to frame the majestic flag. Absolutely perfect!

So, why am I still writing the President’s message? Because the Board made a change in the by-laws, officers now hold an office for two years. This should allow the 1st vice-president time to learn the ins and outs of the organization and then to act on what they feel needs to be done. It should also allow the institutional knowledge to be spread out a bit more. More changes are proposed, but not yet voted on. Stay tuned…the AHP is growing just like the crops in the fields. The next thing to grow…a new tractor barn is in the works!

Laura Rider

News Release: Cultivating a Movement

On Sunday, September 12, 2010 from 2:00-4:00 pm the Watsonville Public Library will host a reading to celebrate the publication of Cultivating a Movement, an oral history which features colorful, informative stories told by dozens of pioneers in the development of organic farming and sustainable food systems in California’s Central Coast region.

The interviews, conducted by the UCSC Library’s Regional History Project, include large- and small-scale farmers, farm advisors, activists, educators, researchers, policymakers, farmers’-market managers, food distributors, and other shapers of forty years of agricultural history. This reading will highlight oral histories from the Pajaro Valley and Northern Monterey County, vital and growing parts of the organic sector.

The interviews include: Dick Peixoto from Lakeside Organics; Jim Rider from Bruce Rider & Sons; Dale Coke from Coke Farm; Andy Griffin from Mariquita Farm; Ken Kimes and Sandra Ward from New Natives Farm; Roy Fuentes (Fuentes Berry Farm) who grows for Driscoll’s; Jo Ann Baumgartner from Wild Farm Alliance; Sam Earnshaw and Reggie Knox from Community Alliance with Family Farmers; Florentino Collazo and Maria Luz Reyes of La Milpa Farm and the Agriculture and Land Based Training Association (ALBA); Maria Inés Catalán of Catalán Family Farm; JP Perez of J & P Organics; and Nancy Gammons of Four Sisters Farm and the Watsonville Farmers’ Market.

Both the Agricultural History Project and the Watsonville Public Library will soon house the entire set of ten bound, printed volumes of interview transcripts and narrator photographs. Interview transcripts, audio clips, photographs, and other resources are also available online at http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/cultiv/home.

Codiga Corner

Have you seen the July issue of Sunset magazine? If so, you must have noticed the weekend get-away section is devoted to Watsonville. We are very pleased that, finally, a few of our local gems got the notice that they deserve. We can all think of more sites and eating establishments that could have very well been included but at least we have a start. We have had several visitors at AHP during the past month who came after reading the Sunset article. Most have been amazed by the quality of our exhibits and the wealth of information that is available here. It hasn’t hurt that many of our restored tractors have been out of the barn and on display due to the 4th of July, Gilroy and Salinas parades. We look forward to the time when our final building is completed and we have adequate storage and display space for our treasured restored tractors and equipment.

We continue to search for a few volunteers who would like to assist in the archives. There are old photos that need organizing, things to scan, file, sort and catalogue. If you have some available time, please give us a call at 724-5898. We are pretty flexible on time and hours.

A big thank you needs to go out to Joellen Bruce who sorted and alphabetized over 1300 out-of-county brands. The task was interesting to her as she found many family names she was familiar with from her days of living and working in Monterey County. We still have the task of putting each of the records into protective sheets and filing them by county of origin. This will be a great resource when it becomes accessible for research and viewing. Another project that is underway is sorting and organizing boxes of records of the 1970s organization of the Watsonville Food Processor Energy and Water Conservation Association. It is interesting to learn about the plans the cannery and freezer industries developed over 30 years ago to deal with the waste water generated by their operations. Thank you to David Vyeda for tackling the organization of these boxes.

I hope from these two examples, you can get an idea of the type of activities we have to do here in the archives and with which we would appreciate your help.

The next time you come to the fairgrounds please notice the new tall flagpole complete with an eagle perched atop it. The electricians are currently working on installing the conduit so the flag can be illuminated at night. The entry to the fairgrounds is looking better and better. The new pole and lighting is an Eagle Scout project of Matt Smith. Congratulations on a well planned and completed project.

Pat Johns
Tom is one of AHP’s more recent volunteers, but he is quickly making himself very much appreciated. Tom said he had been coming to the fair and enjoying the tractors for several years when he saw an article in the paper asking people to be tractor drivers in the 4th of July parade and thought “I could do that.” He did drive in the Watsonville parade and also the Salinas parade to kick off the 100th Salinas Rodeo. Before the parade he spent many hours checking each tractor to be sure it was mechanically ready to run. Now he has taken on the routine, normal maintenance and exercise of our tractor fleet. He comes to this activity with plenty of experience. Tom began his working career as a mechanic for a Case dealer in Fresno and ended it as maintenance manager after 28 years with Santa Cruz Metro District. There he was responsible for the maintenance of 112 busses, 34 paratransit vehicles and 1000 bus stops throughout the county. He enjoys the satisfaction of the mechanical work of putting a piece of machinery back together and having it run well.

Tom is a native of Santa Cruz County and has lived most of his life here. For a time his parents had cattle ranches in northern California and Nevada along the Walker River. Tom describes them as not an economic success and with reclaimed sagebrush land that would grow good barley crops if one could get water to it.

In addition to repairing tractors, Tom enjoys riding his Honda motorcycle. This one looks new and shiny but Tom says it is his 4th one and the previous ones were ridden until they had way too many miles on them. Tom also enjoys caring for his nine fruit trees which include Satsuma plums, Fuji apples, apricots and peaches.

Tom and his wife have two stray cats who “aren’t doing their share of gopher catching” according to Tom. The next time you see a Honda motorcycle parked at the Snyder restoration shop, stop by and say hello to Tom. You will appreciate him as much as we do.

Joellen developed an early interest in ranch life and agriculture when she got her first horse at 6. Living in the mountains of Colorado, she got her first chance to live on a ranch when her Dad sold the power and light company he had developed and bought a ranch after WWII. They continued to raise commercial herefords when they sold that place and bought a ranch closer to Denver. Her first paid job was driving a 1940’s Ford tractor in the hayfield at age 11. After attending Colorado A & M she and her husband lived on his family ranch in western Colorado where they raised registered angus cattle. When that ranch was sold, their family with three children moved to Fort Collins, where he graduated from Veterinary school. He took a job at an equine practice in Salinas and Joellen continued her work as an adult education teacher. In 1987 she became director of Adult Education for PVUSD and retired in 1999. Her son currently sells lettuce in Salinas and one daughter works at a livestock auction yard in north central Nebraska. A second daughter is an acupuncturist in San Francisco. All three kids learned to ride on the mare Joellen got as a child.

This is Joellen’s second term on the board and she currently edits the newsletter.

Her hope for Ag History is that energy, leadership and interest can be sustained in the project. Historical agriculture as compared to current and future agricultural practices will become even more interesting as new technologies and practices develop.

AHP Needs
- Oil for the tractors
- Volunteers for Yesterday’s Farm
Auction Items Donation Requested
As stated elsewhere in this newsletter, AHP’s 25th annual Harvest Dinner will be held on Saturday, November 13. A fun part of the evening is always the silent and live auctions. You never know what you will find there! In the past, donated auction items have included everything from an organ to a camper shell to a set of grandma’s dishes or a special piece of Annieglass. Now is the time to look through your closets and around the garage for those gently used or new items that need to find a new home. Or, maybe you have a get-a-way cabin or condo to share for a few days or you have renowned cooking skills, a boat or a plane that could provide a special experience to a lucky bidder. Your generosity supports AHP and its year round activities. Arrangements for pick-up of items can be made by calling the AHP office at 831-724-5898. It is greatly appreciated if large items can be picked up after September 19th or the completion of the Santa Cruz County Fair.

Yesterday’s Farm - 2010

The Santa Cruz County Fair is fast approaching, September 14-19th, and with it the 22nd annual production of Yesterday’s Farm! This year’s theme “Apple Pies and Family Ties” is a perfect fit for AHP because Yesterday’s Farm showcases what life was like 50-75 years ago when families worked together on the farm to grow and process food for their tables.

There will be old favorites: Claudia’s Kitchen, Fred Silva’s draft horses, the tractor show, and the nightly tractor parade. Down at the gazebo, we will be demonstrating some of the antique farm equipment in the collection and explaining how it was used. We invite you to become a part of the action and help welcome visitors to the AHP site and activities.

AHP site cleanup will be Saturday, September 4th from 9:30 AM till 1:00 PM and setup for the Fair will be Saturday and Sunday, September 11th & 12th starting at 9:30 AM. Come out and help us get ready for the fair!

Volunteers are needed for three-hour shifts during Fair operating hours. Fair admission and parking will be provided. We hope to do some simple demonstrations during the shifts, such as rope making, making butter, simple crafts, or ice cream in a bag. AHP will provide all the supplies; we just need your help to involve interested fair goers! Wednesday and Thursday are education days this year and we need extra help with the morning shifts, so that all the students can be accommodated. Please indicate the shifts below that you would be interested in participating in and if you would like to help with a demonstration.

Lynne Grossi
2010 Memorial & Donations
Donations received 4/1810 - 7/15/10

The Ag History Project is grateful for the following memorials:

John Bencich
Nancy Goudarzi
Robert “Bobby” Camarlinghi
Bill & Cloy Codiga
Greg Clark
Anne & Ken Dobler
Elizabeth Johnson
Bill & Cloy Codiga
Luke Scurich
Bill & Cloy Codiga
Annette G. Smith
Bill & Cloy Codiga

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A special donation was given in honor of

Bill and Cloy Codiga’s 50th Anniversary

ACCESSIONS
4/18/2010 - 7/15/2010

Sleigh with single tree -
Delbert & Ehel Herschbach
Hand cranked grain separator -
Delbert & Ehel Herschbach
Grain separator with electric motor -
Delbert & Ehel Herschbach
Books, World of Rabbits, Vol. 1 -
Delbert & Ehel Herschbach
2’ x 3’ Glass doll case -
Ellen Currie

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4/1810 - 7/15/10

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Life
Tom & Anne Stickel*

Sustaining
Lois Amhrein
Bart & Joan Favero
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John & Nora Hayes
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Richard & JoAnn Petznick
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Gift Shop Spotlight
10% Off all items
“Save our tractors - Build a Barn”
Fundraiser Kickoff
Dinner & Concert in the Barn
Antsy McClain
and the Trailer Park Troubadours

Silver Anniversary
1985 25th 2010
Watsonville California

Saturday August 21
Dinner 6 P.M  Concert 7:30 P.M
Tickets $30.00

Agricultural History Project, Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds
2601 East Lake Ave, Watsonville Ca

Purchase Tickets at www.brownpapertickets.com/event/120606
For more info call 831-254-2111
**AHP MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Agricultural History Project (AHP) is to preserve and promote the history of agriculture on the Central Coast. AHP educates, preserves, exhibits, collects and builds community awareness about the economic, cultural, ethnic and historical significance of agriculture in the area.

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**JOIN AHP...enjoy members-only benefits and support ag history!**

Yes, I/We will support the Agricultural History Project in the membership classification checked below:

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