

Pasto Museum Features 6,000 Years Of Small Grains

ROCKSPRING (Centre Co.) — "Six Thousand Years of Small Grains" will be the featured theme at the Pasto Agricultural Museum during Penn State's Ag Progress Days, Aug. 14-16.

Visitors can see historic grain production items used for soil preparation, sowing, harvesting/handling, threshing, power, cleaning, and grain handling.

The collection begins with a 6,000-year-old clay sickle and concludes with a horse-drawn binder and photographs of horse-drawn combines, according to Darwin Braund, museum curator. The latter items are representative of those that closed the human- and animal-power era in most of the U.S. by the 1940s.

"For centuries, the harvesting and threshing of small grains required more labor than growing them," said Braund. "Thus, much attention was paid to improving the harvest. It was the most important event on Earth every year."

In the earliest days, the heads of grain were hand-picked from each stalk, and then threshed by rubbing them between the hands, explains Braund. A flint stone with a sharp edge was the earliest mechanized cutter. Clay sickles were made in areas with no stones.

Sickles made of bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, followed the clay models. They in turn were replaced when the Iron Age made sharper blades possible. New designs of the tool improved efficiency in their use.

The Pasto Agricultural Museum collection includes more than 750 antique implements used for farming and rural life. Visitors can tour the museum during Ag Progress Days and by appointment. Groups of 10 or more can schedule tours from April 15 through Oct. 15 by calling (814) 863-1383, sending an e-mail to pastoag-museum@psu.edu, or registering through the World Wide Web at pasto.cas.psu.edu.

Because of concerns over the possible transmission of foot-and-mouth disease and other foreign animal diseases, visitors who have been overseas within two weeks of attending Ag Progress Days are asked not to visit the event's live-animal exhibit areas.

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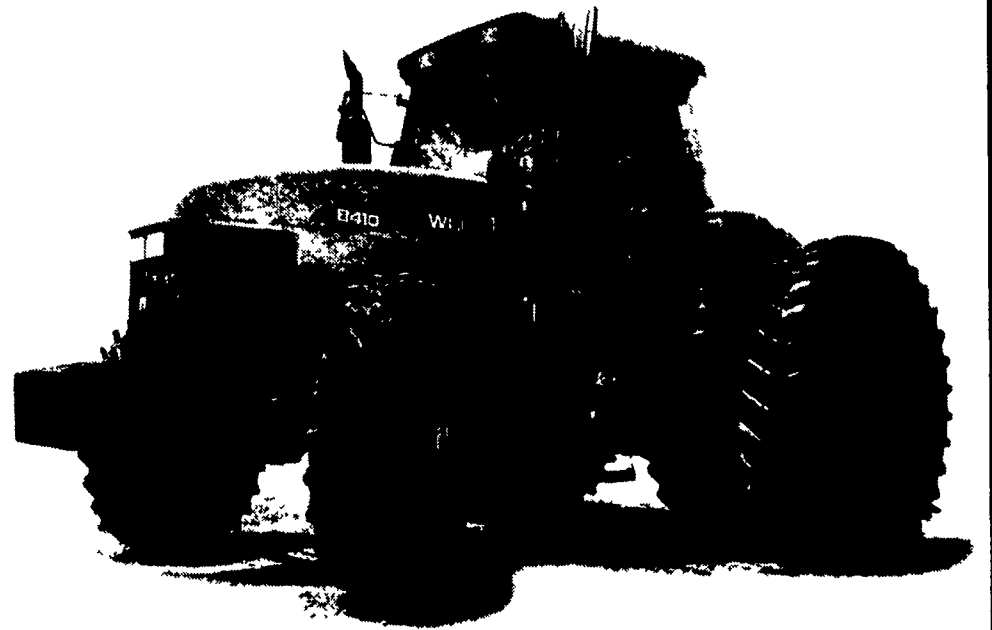
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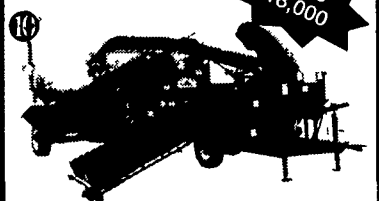
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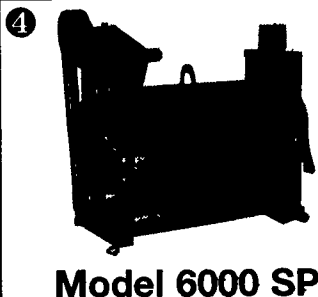
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