

# Draft

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Ben Gefvert Ranch Historic District  
other names/site number Charles D. Smith, aka C.D. Smith and Sons

### 2. Location

street & number 4770 W. Whites Bridge Road N/A  not for publication  
city or town Fresno  vicinity  
state CA code CA county Fresno code 019 zip code 93706

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ local

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
\_\_\_ entered in the National Register \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

### Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

### Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	1	buildings
		district
2		site
1		structure
		object
5	1	<b>Total</b>

### Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURAL: agricultural field,  
 horticultural facility  
 Agricultural outbuilding  
 Irrigation facility  
 DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURAL: agricultural field,  
 horticultural facility  
 Agricultural outbuilding  
 Irrigation facility  
 DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Vernacular

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Brick  
 walls: Wood, plaster  
 roof: Sheet metal, shake  
 other: Concrete

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## Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### Summary Paragraph

The 57.2-acre Ben Gefvert Ranch Historic District is located on Whites Bridge Road (SR 180) in rural Fresno County, five miles west of the Fresno County Courthouse in the central San Joaquin Valley area of California's Central Valley. The surrounding area is flat with an approximate elevation at 290 feet above sea level. The area is divided into a gridiron of parallel roads spaced at intervals one or one-half mile. Few angled or curved road break the pattern. The nominated property is surrounded by farms of 40 to 200 acres. The Schatz Canal is located on the north edge of the property. A cemetery dating to 1959 is sited diagonally across Whites Bridge Road. The ranch consists of the follow contributing resources: agricultural fields, consisting of 55 acres of raisin grapes, some of which are the oldest such plantings in Fresno County, and one acre of naval orange trees (contributing site); a farmhouse (contributing building) and a barn/tractor shed (contributing building) heritage garden (contributing site); and irrigation system (contributing structure). A detached garage with carport constructed in 1938 is a non-contributing building. Charles D. Smith, the property's first occupant, planted the original vineyard and orange trees in 1891, some of which remain and are producing. After Ben Gefvert purchased the property in 1900, he added additional grapevines until his death in 1917. Additional grapevines were added over time. The vernacular style, two-story farmhouse is surrounded by landmark and large trees that date to the construction of the house, and are documented in historic photographs dated 1897 and 1908. An heirloom rose garden was planted along with a variety of shaped shrubs by the Gefverts sometime between 1900 and 1917. The irrigation canal predates the property's development and was constructed sometime in the mid-1880s. Outbuildings removed after 1938 include the water tank house in 1938 and the horse barn between 1938 and 1956. Despite the removal of outbuildings, the property retains a high degree of integrity and continues to convey a feeling of its 19<sup>th</sup> century origins and development over time.

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## Narrative Description

The Ben Gefvert Ranch Historic District includes a farm house originally constructed in 1891. The farmhouse was constructed as a one-story vernacular style with a finished attic, a shed type dormer window and clipped gables. The property owner added a second story in 1908-09 to accommodate his growing family. The house sits on its original brick foundation and was constructed with redwood lumber throughout. The building is covered by a side-gable roof covered with flat sheet metal shingles. A cross gable is centered on the primary façade. A Wrap-around porch extends around three sides of the building. The building underwent alterations in 1968 when the original kitchen was converted into a pantry and laundry room, and the original back porch was enclosed and made into a kitchen and dining area. A new back porch was added to the east of the newly created kitchen and dining area and kept within the extended east wall of the house. Also at that time a bay window was added to the dining room, on the east side of the farmhouse. All of the 1968 changes utilized the same exterior materials as the original 1891 and 1908 constructions, and were designed and built by the Taylor-Wheeler Company, one of Fresno's most respected firms during he period .1920 to 1972.

The farmhouse includes 1,714' square feet on the first floor and 1,480 square feet on the second floor for a total of 3,194 square feet. A unique feature of the original farmhouse is the two angled corners of the front wall of the first floor. The wraparound front porch is original. The birth of-Elizabeth Gefvert, in 1908 may have been the reason for increasing the second floor space. The 1908 photograph shows the original vernacular house. The front or south facade is grand with the full width covered front porch. Both the roof-supporting posts and porch railing spindles are chamfered. The front door is original, with an inset panel surrounded by raised trim and bulls eye corner blocks. The door also has a large window with an arched top and raised trim. The hinges of ornamental brass are original as are the door knob and its backing plate. The front door has two side-lights and a solid panel above which may have also been window. The ground floor has small windows in the angled corner walls, one for a bedroom and one for the living room. The living room also has a large three-part window. The South facade of the second floor has four identical, double hung windows, with shutters. The roof ridge runs east/west with a south facing, gabled, dormer with, an attic vent of horizontal slats. The first floor exterior siding is of narrow 3 inch wide planks, while the second story is faced with 12 inch

wide planks. The corners of the lower and upper floors are trimmed with 8" wide vertical planks. The under side of the eaves are finished with 3 inch wide planks. The south facing gable also is clad with 3 inch wide planks. The wrap around porch extends 10 feet along the east and west sides of the farmhouse. The west facade is similar to front using the same materials. There are three windows on the first floor without shutters, and there are two windows, double hung, with shutters on the second floor. The West gable is clad with 3 inch wide planks and also has a rectangular, vertical attic vent with horizontal louvers. The West facade has a door from the kitchen and a small covered stoop. The North or rear facade has three windows on the first floor, added in 1968, and are divided into two vertical panels. The second floor has four, double hung, windows with shutters. The first floor area, which is the enclosed back porch is clad with the same 3 inch wide planks, the corners are trimmed with vertical 8 inch wide planks. The back porch includes a sitting area and has two entrances to the house. One, a solid wood door with two side lights, opens to the dining room and faces north. The other door, with a window, faces east and enters to the family room dining area. To the left of the later door, there is a single pane window. The east facade includes a bay with three large windows. The second floor is a mirror of the west facade with two double hung windows flanked by shutters, with a gable clad with 3 inch wide planks and vertical rectangular attic vent with horizontal louvers. Both west and east facades have gable eave returns that extend the whole width of the gable. The new porch area that faces north has a partial gable on its east facade with a short eave return. The interior of the farmhouse includes many elements of its original construction in 1891 and its 1908-09 addition. The first floor includes a living room, dining room, kitchen/family room, bedroom, a bathroom, and a pantry/laundry room. The second floor contains four bedrooms and two bathrooms. The doors are original solid wood doors with original door hardware. Door and window frames, base boards, wainscoting, crown moldings, and hardwood floors are original throughout the first and second floor. The family room and kitchen cabinets and plumbing and electrical work are modernized. The farmhouse, both exterior and interior reflect the historic materials and spaces of their over one hundred years of providing shelter and life for three generations of the Ben Gefvert family.

The barn/tractor shed was built in 1891 and is visible in the 1897 photograph which was taken from the top of the tankhouse looking east. The barn is constructed with vertical board and batt and has two large doors and a small door on its south facade. There are no windows. The double pitched -roof runs east/west with simple gables at each end. The roof is made of sheet metal tiles, a common roofing material of the period and which was produced in a variety of shapes. The barn originally had a dirt floor, but now has a concrete floor. The barn also included an area for blacksmith work.

The heritage garden landscaped grounds completely surround the farm house. The front yard is in lawn and contains four very large trees, a sycamore, two silk oak, and one palm. A small orange grove is on the east and the larger, one acre orange grove is on the west side of the house. The heirloom roses are in several locations on the east and north sides of the farmhouse. There are four areas of roses in linear planters and two rows of rose bushes in each. The roses are enhanced with formally trimmed shrubbery in the fashion of a formal English garden. The plantings have been studied by a local master gardener and found to be authentic for gardens of this period. The rear yard also contains five historic, very large trees including a pine, palm, sycamore and two eucalyptus. These are remnants of the already mature trees as seen in the 1897 and 1908 photographs, and present the visual appearance of early farmsteads and the much sought after shade. On a drive through the country side today one will often see a cluster of trees in the distance, a clue that it is the present or past location of a farmhouse. The Ben Gefvert Ranch is also located in the central area of the San Joaquin Valley that almost entirely consists of a gridiron of parallel roads spaced at intervals one or one-half mile, with very few angled or curved roads.

The vineyard is planted in straight rows running east-west. They are examples of early period viticulture, with wood posts supporting wires, and closely-spaced rows. Some of the original wood posts have been replaced by steel tees. The orange trees are also planted in straight rows in a grid pattern.

The Schatz canal, originally constructed in the 1880s, is located on the north edge of the Ben Gefvert Ranch, and is eight feet wide and two feet deep. A headgate is located at the northeast corner of the vineyard. The headgate is concrete and steel, and ten feet across with three water diversion valves for transferring the water

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to the Ben Gefvert Ranch and two adjacent ranches. The headgate spillway is five feet across with a drop of 18 inches. There is a well located near the headgate and if there is a shortage of irrigation water the well water can be pumped to irrigate the vineyard. Pumping the well water is much more expensive than using the canal water.

The non-contributing garage was constructed in 1938 or 39 using some material salvaged from the removal of the tank house. The garage is of no particular style, and a roof with gables facing east and west, matching those of the house. The garage also has a storage space which includes the storage tank for the domestic water supply. The garage doors face north and the carport extends northward from the storage area side of the garage. The paved driveway is "L" shaped and has access to both Whites Bridge Road and Cornelia Avenue, and also includes two areas of paved parking North of the house.

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

### Period of Significance

1891-1968

### Significant Dates

1891 First plantings, house and barn construction

1900 Gefvert purchases property

1917 Gefvert dies – daughter manages ranch

### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

N/A

### Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance reflects the period from which the property was established as a farmstead and planted with vines for raisin production through the period the property was owned and operated by Ben Gefvert and includes the period the ranch was operated by Anna Gefvert.

### Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The Ben Gefvert Ranch Historic District is significant at the local level for its association with agricultural development in Fresno County and meets eligibility for listing in the National Register under Criterion A. More particularly, the property is significant for associations with the practice of viticulture and the beginnings of the raisin industry in Fresno County. The property represents a typical farmstead of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Fresno County. The ranch, originally developed by Charles D. Smith in 1891, was purchased by Ben Gefvert in 1900 and has continued basically unchanged since that time. The site contains a farmhouse and barn constructed in 1891 which are still in use. The ranch is now 119 years old and been owned by the Gefvert family since 1900. The ranch includes 55 acres of raisin grapes, some of which were planted in the period 1890-1917, and are some of the oldest vineyards in Fresno County. In addition there is one acre of naval orange trees and the original farmhouse landscaping which includes nine landmark trees and four plots of heirloom roses. The Ben Gefvert Ranch Historic District, a relatively small-in-acreage farmstead planted primarily in grapes for raisin production, represents, in type and function, a rare and intact remnant of the agricultural past of Fresno County.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance)

The Ben Gefvert Ranch Historic District is a remnant from the pioneer era of Fresno County agricultural development. The ranch is located on property that was originally owned by the United States Government. In the 1860's large tracts of land were sold to investors, such as a group from San Francisco who purchased 158,000 acres with each investor having 11,000 or more acres. One of the investors, William Chapman, sold a portion of his land to Henry Voorman, also of San Francisco. Voorman subsequently sold 140 acres to Charles D. Smith in 1890. Smith planted grapes, oranges and olives, and built a home, a tank house and two barns, in 1891.

Most of the early farms were family farms, and many were established by recent immigrants from many different areas of the world including Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Agriculture has therefore contributed to the huge melting pot of ethnic diversity found in Fresno. The Ben Gefvert Ranch has always been a family farm and one with origins of Swedish ancestry. The 1988 publication "Early Valley Treasures" includes the following quotation: "Hard working ranch families were the bedrock upon which the great agricultural wealth of the San Joaquin Valley was built."

Ben Gefvert was born in Sweden in 1867, as was his wife Mary Bengston. Ben immigrated through Ellis Island in 1886 and joined a Swedish colony in Minnesota. He moved to California for health reasons in 1890. Mary immigrated to the United States in 1888 and they were married in the Swedish Mission Church of Enumclaw, Washington in 1894. There had been a migration of Swedish immigrants from the Midwest to Fresno county in 1886, which may have led to Ben's choice of Fresno County as a place in which to settle. The Gefverts had four children; Albert (1895), Paul (1897), Anna (1899) and Elizabeth (1908). Anna never married, only completed the eighth grade, and took charge of the management of the ranch after Ben's death in 1917. Mary lived to be 71 years old (1938). Elizabeth married Rafael G. Tyler (R. G. Tyler) in 1938 and they resided in the family home. Albert was married and had his own ranch. Paul also died in 1938. R. G. Tyler managed the ranch from 1968 to 2002, and R. G. and Elizabeth's daughter, Madeline is married to James Sheldon, and has managed the ranch since 2002. Anna Gefvert lived all but one of her 69 years in the home. Elizabeth lived in the home all of her life and Madeline has lived there all of her life. The actual farming of the ranch has been done by contracted work, since the mid 1960's. Contracting is a common practice in Fresno County and the San Joaquin Valley for a number of reasons, such as absentee ownerships, the owner's retirement, or the owner having other full-time employment. Absentee ownership may involve property inherited or purchased for investment by individuals or corporations.

Ben Gefvert purchased 57.2 acres from Charles D. Smith in 1900, and added plantings of grape vines to those already planted by Smith. Ben Gefvert's experience with viticulture was gained from ten years of owning two forty acre parcels located nearby.

The Ben Gefvert Ranch Historic District is a relatively rare example of a family-owned ranch that has been continually operated for 119 years. Much of the surrounding land has lost its historic homes, and farm buildings, as well as changes in crops or converted to other commercial enterprises. A survey of a three mile radius of the Gefvert Ranch revealed that there are only four other pre 1900 structures existing and which are unoccupied and not maintained.

## **The Evolution of Fresno County Agriculture**

The development of Fresno County's commercial agriculture began with small areas of produce and livestock to serve the gold miners and a few small pioneer communities and trading posts in the early 1850's. Cattle, horses, sheep and other livestock production increased substantially in the period 1850 to 1870. They were mostly located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada or the Coast Range. Extensive wheat ranches were developed from 1868 to 1890. Clovis Cole, known as the "Wheat King" harvested over 40,000 acres of wheat throughout the county's east side. He had two ranch sites, four hundred horses, and bought the first mechanical, steam powered, wheat harvesting machine in the San Joaquin Valley in 1888. The period of 1870 to 1872 brought together two vital elements that allowed for rapid expansion and diversification of Fresno County's agricultural development. A.Y. Easterby, an early large scale land owner in Fresno County invited his friend Moses J. Church of Napa County to relocate to Fresno County. Church was a sheep man, but also had knowledge of the techniques of irrigation. He devised an irrigation system for Easterby's wheat field. This bright green wheat field was observed, in 1872 by the pioneer California visionary, Leland Stanford and he selected a site nearby for a station of his Central Pacific Railroad, which was connected to the East Coast by the Union Pacific Railroad. Irrigation water and the railroad added to Fresno's cropping due to the many days of constant sunshine. 1872 to 1892 were boom years as the growth of agriculture expanded in quantity and diversity. Two things disrupted the boom. First, there was a nation wide financial decline and also a railroad strike. The financial structure recovered and in 1896 the Peoples Railroad of San Francisco arrived in Fresno to compete with Central Pacific Railroad and the cost of transportation for agricultural products was lowered. Other issues that hampered agricultural interests include other labor issues, especially with Workers Of The World demonstrations in Fresno in 1910 and in the 1920's issues between growers and packers led to violence especially in 1923. In 1950 Fresno County crops produced the greatest dollar value of any county in the United States. That honor has continued every year since with the exception of one year when Tulare County was the number one county. Grapes for wine, raisins and table use have made grapes the most valuable crop in Fresno County. Fresno and neighboring counties produce 95% of all the raisins produced in the United States. In 1894 agriculture expansion was revived as irrigation expanded the potential for increased acreage. New dam projects allowed for more water storage. Agriculture generated numerous elements of the expanding economy such as blacksmiths, transportation, horticulture, packaging, processing, marketing, repair and manufacturing of machinery, intensive labor, need for tools, manufacture of ice, finance and insurance, all of which increased the demand for every other kind of urban services.

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## **Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

The Ben Gefvert Ranch is located on Whites Bridge Road, an important and historic road. It was originally named, Washington, with the current name being applied in 1918. This road was an important route for travelers going from eastern Fresno County to the western Fresno community of Whites Bridge, located on the shore of Fresno Slough, a seasonal connection between the Kings and San Joaquin Rivers. The Butterfield Stage Line connected Kansas City, Missouri with San Francisco, 1858 to 1862. James White had a hotel, trading post, and a ferry which crossed the slough. Later, White constructed a bridge over the slough which led to his location being named Whites Bridge, and later the name of the popular trail which became a roadway.

## **The Colony System of Land Development**

The development of agriculture was encouraged by land speculators, some of which used the Colony system of land sales. Promotional material was sent to the East coast and to Europe, offering a guarantee of success and wealth. Investors had acquired large tracts of land of thousands of acres, which were subdivided into



parcels often and twenty acres. The developer guaranteed surface water supply and large irrigation companies were organized which later became public agencies. Even as some land is now being urbanized other lands, previously uncultivated, have been transformed and converted to intensified crops such as fruit and nut trees, vineyards, corn, berries, lettuce, tomato, garlic and more. Fresno County now produces over 200 commercial crops worth over \$2,000,000,000 annually. There are also thousands of acres of non-colony farm land as well the colonies are scattered over an area of approximately 1,000 square miles. There are over 60 such colonies and they are not all continuous.

There is more uncolonized land interspersed and surrounding the colonies. The buying and selling of farm lands whether in or out of the colonies is much the same. Farmers could buy multiples of 20 acre parcels in the colonies, and some bought partial lots. Some farms may have 160 acres of colony developed land and an additional 50 or 100 acres of non colony land. Farmers also bought non-contiguous land. Colony developments range in size from 640 acres to 7,600 acres. The development of mechanized farming has allowed one person or one family to farm anything from 100 acres to 2,000 acres.

## **The Development of the Raisin Industry in Fresno County**

A potential disaster occurred with Francis Eisen's grape harvest in 1875. An unseasonal heat spell happened before Eisen could harvest his grapes and they dried on the vine. Eisen proceeded to stem and clean the dried grapes, labeled them as Peruvian Raisins, and they became very popular, and spawned the raisin industry. In the following years more grapes were planted for making raisins. One of the difficulties of the raisin industry was fractured organization and numerous small packers and a lack of marketing skills in trying to reach the national market and to maintain stable prices. Organization was needed for efficiency and expertise in business. M. Theo. Kearney was aware of those problems and led several attempts to build an organization for the raisin growers. The first attempt at organization began in 1888, but it was not until 1914, that a permanent organization was created, the Sun Maid Raisin Growers Association. Approximately 75% of the raisin growers joined, including Ben Gefvert. Others stayed independent and some used smaller packing houses.

Ben Gefvert was involved in the 1898 California Raisin Growers Association. Gefvert is shown in a photograph of the Association's meeting held in Fresno in June of 1898. Ben Gefvert was a member of the original Sun Maid Raisin Growers that was organized in 1914 and the Gefvert Ranch has continued its membership ever since.

The raisin grower organizational history included the following associations:

- 1888 The California Dried Fruit Association
- 1892 California State Raisin Growers Association
- 1894 California Raisin Growers and Packers
  - California Fruit Exchange
  - California Growers and Shippers
- 1898 California Raisin Growers Association
- 1914 Sun Maid Raisin Growers

## **Women Leaders in Agriculture**

The Ben Gefvert Ranch demonstrates that women can succeed as leaders in farm management and agriculture in general. When Ben Gefvert died in 1917, his daughter Anna, who was 18 years old and had not been schooled past the eighth grade, took charge of the ranch management. She successfully did so for nearly 50 years. Madeline Tyler Sheldon succeeded her father, R. G. Tyler as manager of the ranch in 2002 and has continued to do so to the present time. The family operation in its early years after Ben's death included brothers Arthur and Paul, sister Elizabeth, and her husband "R.G.", and they successfully negotiated the difficult years of the Great Depression of the 1930's, when many farms were lost to foreclosure.

## Association with Martin Theodore Kearney

Although the Gefvert Ranch was not part of a colony it was adjacent to several colonies including the largest, the 5,400 acre Fruit Vale Estate, which was established by Martin Theodore Kearney (M. Theo. Kearney). In addition to land development, Kearney was a leader in the organization of raisin growers.

The Ben Gefvert Ranch is located in an area containing many farms of diversified nature but predominantly vineyards. The Ben Gefvert Ranch is northeast of the M. Theo Kearney's 5,400 acre Fruit Vale Estate. Known as the "Raisin King of California," Kearney was acknowledged as one of the largest, most prosperous and powerful agricultural leaders in the state by the late 1890's. Among his accomplishments are establishing the colony farm system in Fresno County, the development of his 5,400 acre Fruit Vale Estate, the formation of the California Raisin Growers' Association, and, upon his death in 1906, the gift of his entire estate to the University of California."

Kearney was a frequent visitor to the Gefvert family for both social and business connections. Kearney was more interested in the social life of San Francisco or Germany than in Fresno. Some people disliked his "aristocratic airs" but he was comfortable associating socially with Ben Gefvert, and would have many discussions about farming and the raisin industry. They were neighbors and fellow businessmen.

## Fresno County Centennial Farm

The Ben Gefvert Ranch was designated as a Fresno County Centennial Farm, on March 11, 2008 by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors.

### Significant dates:

- 1890 Property purchased by Charles D. Smith.
- 1891 Vines planted by Charles D. Smith.
- 1895 Farmhouse and barns built.
- 1897 Published with photographs in book "Imperial Fresno".
- 1900 60 acres sold to Ben Gefvert.
- 1914 Gefvert joins newly formed Sun Maid Raisin Growers.
- 1917 Ben Gefvert dies, daughter Anna takes over management of the ranch.

The role of women in agriculture continues to make headlines in Fresno County. An article in the Fresno Bee, March 1, 2009 carried the headline, "The Changing Face of Agriculture in the Valley, Female Farmers." The subtitle stated that "The economic necessity and opportunity draw more women to operate farms and ranches." Anna Gefvert was one such person from 1917 to 1968. The significance of the Ben Gefvert Ranch Historic District and other similar sites has been recognized with the creation of a nationwide program to "Protect America's Historic Countryside." The program, established by the National Trust For Historic Preservation, declares the need to protect hamlets and villages, farms, and roads, fields, and waterways as tangible elements of our rural past.

Additional evidence of the impact of Fresno County's role in the general development of the nation-wide agriculture industry, with mechanical, scientific and financial innovation and creativity in the late 1800s, is the contribution of James Porteous, a Scottish immigrant. Porteous, a blacksmith and inventor opened his business, the Fresno Agricultural Works, in 1874. His 200 patents includes the Fresno scraper, a steel scoop, drawn by horse, to do excavation work such as level fields, dig canals, and build streets and "roads, as well as create excavations for buildings. He also created a machine to de-stem raisins, which, when done by hand is very labor intensive.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)

See Attached Continuation Sheets

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been Requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: Fresno County Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 57.2 acres  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The southwest one quarter of the southwest one quarter and the south one half of the northwest one quarter of the southwest one quarter of Section 2, Township 14 south, Range 19 East, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian, less rights of way for roads and canals and commonly know as: 4770 West Whites Bridge Road, Fresno, California. Assessor's parcel Number 326-080-19.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The Gefvert Ranch Historic District is located five miles west of the Fresno County Courthouse and consists of that property containing 60 acres less Rights of Way for roads and canals, (a net acreage of 57.2 acres) deeded to Ben Gefvert, on November 23, 1900, recorded on Page 48, in the book of Deeds, Number 262, and is one parcel of land containing a farmhouse, detached garage, and barn/tractor shed, and 56 acres of vines and trees.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Roger Bordeaux Taylor  
organization Taylor Heritage Services date March 2009  
street & number 4557 E. Pico Avenue telephone (559) 222-7980  
city or town Fresno state CA zip code 93726-1209  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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### Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:**

**City or Vicinity:**

**County:**

**State:**

**Photographer:**

**Date Photographed:**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

1 of \_\_\_\_.

See Continuation Sheet

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### Property Owner:

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name Madeline Tyler Sheldon, Sheldon Family Trust

street & number 4770 W. Whites Bridge Road

telephone (559) 486-2307

city or town Fresno

state CA

zip code 93706

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.