

People & Places

Fresno County orchard produces 150 varieties of fruit

Loewen family grows selection of stone fruit

By **JULIA HOLLISTER**
For the Capital Press

REEDLEY, Calif. — Bryce and Natalie Loewen's farm, Blossom Bluff Orchards, produces roughly 150 different varieties of organic tree fruit, including stone fruit in the summer, persimmons and pomegranates in the fall and citrus in the winter.

"Around 85 percent of the farm is focused on stone fruit. We have such a large variety count because we direct market all of our fruit to stores, bakeries, restaurants and breweries as well as maintaining a booth at five weekly farmers markets," Bryce said. "Having a constant and changing flow of different varieties is essential to our model not only because our customers want different things, but also because we strive to harvest our fruit at peak maturity when its flavor has achieved its full potential," Bryce said. Picking at peak ripeness means its storability is considerably less than the industry standard for delicate fruits.

"For this reason we're un-



CUESA

Bryce Loewen, his wife, Natalie, and their son, Archer, of Blossom Bluff Orchards in Fresno County, Calif.

der a lot of pressure to turn over inventory as quickly as possible," he said. "Out with the old, in with the new."

The Loewens' 78-acre farm has three full-time and 30 seasonal employees to keep that fruit moving. The farm was founded in 1931 by Daniel and Babette Lichti, Bryce's great-grandparents. Bryce and his wife, Natalie, run the farm with his parents, Ted and Fran, and Bryce's sister, Renata.

One of the farmers markets where they sell their fruit is at

the Ferry Plaza in San Francisco, 200 miles from the orchards.

"Ted and Fran Loewen and Bryce and Natalie of Blossom Bluff Orchards have been bringing their beautiful Damsion and Green Gage plums and other heirloom and hybrid stone fruit varieties to the Ferry Plaza markets since 1994," said Lulu Meyer, CUESA's director of market operations.

"It has been amazing to watch their children grow up at the markets and take on more of the farm's direct mar-

keting opportunities and help to develop value-added products as well.

"They are all such amazing stewards of the land they farm, and each of the Loewens is passionate about continuing their farming traditions."

"My favorite thing about farming is tied directly to the way that we choose to farm," Bryce said. "I like producing a clean, quality product that people appreciate, and if we weren't selling directly I probably wouldn't get that feedback. I also like choos-

Western Innovator

Bryce and Natalie Loewen
Owners: Blossom Bluff Orchards, with parents Ted and Fran Loewen and Bryce's sister, Renata
In business: Since 1931
Location: Fresno County, Calif.

ing to farm in a way that automation is (in many ways) not an option, so we get to employ talented people to put their hands and eyes on the fruit to maintain the level of quality that keeps our customers happy. I like farming organically for a lot of reasons, but above all else I want my kids (Archer's little brother will be joining us in December) to be free to play in the fields without having to worry about what they might be breathing in or absorbing through their skin."

It's about time: 14 historic Oregon farms honored

12 century, 2 sesquicentennial farms gain special recognition

By **DESIREE BERGSTROM**
Capital Press

Founded in 1852, seven years before Oregon became a state, a farm in Saint Paul, Ore., is continuing to build on its legacy as a family operation.

Mullen Farms is one of two sesquicentennial farms designated this year by the Oregon Century Farm and Ranch Program along with 12 century farms. The sesquicentennial award recognizes families who have continuously farmed some or all of their original family acreage for 150 years or more. Farms designated century farms have been in continuous operation 100 years.

"We are definitely a family farm," said Jerry Mullen, great-grand grandson of one of the farm's founders, Patrick Mullen.

Through the years, it has been important to every generation to keep the farm going and in the family, Mullen said. Mullen never knew his dad, who died when Mullen was two years old, but Mullen spent a lot of time with his grandfather, Charles S. Mullen Sr., who taught him about the farm.

On the property is a house where Mullen's grandfather was born and lived for 101 years.

"It was important to my granddad especially that we kept the farm together," Mullen said.

Mullen recalled growing up on the farm mentioning how they had their own pigs, dairy and granary. "I grew up with all that to self-sustain and then grow enough to make some cash," Mullen said.

Over time the farm has grown from 150 to 1,300 acres as the Mullen family has added other farms and land to the business. They now grow mainly seed crops and hazelnuts.

Keeping the farm's legacy



Desiree Bergstrom/Capital Press

Jerry Mullen still works on the farm helping with the irrigation, though his son Dan manages most of their operation. The original homestead portion of the farm is under the management of his cousin, Jim Mullen.

alive is important to Mullen. "We are doing everything we can do at this point to make sure it is a viable farm going forward," he said.

The other sesquicentennial farm honored this year is the Robinson Stillwell Taggart Farm in Dayton. It was founded in 1844 when Benjamin and Elizabeth Robinson came to the Oregon territory on a wagon train.

The farm is still in the family, though pieces of it were sold off during the Depression.

"(The farm) has been a source of pride for our family for generations," said John Taggart, current owner of the farm.

The farm is leased to a couple whom Taggart trusts.

Taggart lives in Eastern Oregon and wants to keep the farm because of its history.

Also on the list are 12 newly designated century farms:

- J.G. Kuenzi Farm, H.M.K., began in 1917 after the founder traded a smaller farm in Mt. Pleasant for the 217-acre farm near Silverton. The farm has grown different types of berries over the years, as well as grass seed, hogs and clover.
- Watts Ranch in Klamath

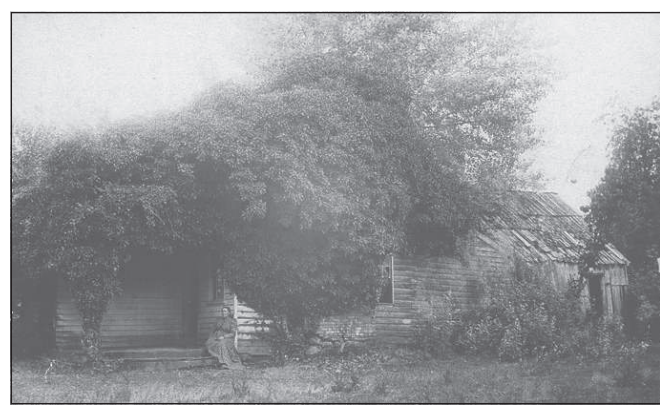
County was founded in 1910 when its founders, Jim and Jack Watts, moved to Oregon from Utah. The family runs cattle and grows hay.

- Brown Farm, in Morrow County, goes back to 1912 when Chris P. Brown, an immigrant from Denmark, purchased 350 acres to grow wheat. His grandson and his grandson's wife, Chris E. and Kathy Brown, currently run the operation.

- Wilsonview Dairy Inc. was founded in 1918 in Tillamook County by the Josi family, which immigrated from Switzerland and began a dairy in a lease-to-buy arrangement.

- Henry W. Jones Farm in Yamhill County has been operated by four generations of the Jones family. They have grown many crops including clover, wheat, oats and silage corn. Today, the farm is run by Steve Jones, the great grandson of the original founder, Henry W. Jones, who purchased the farm in 1918.

- Howard-Allstott Ranch in Umatilla County was founded by William Howard in 1884, when the homestead claim was approved. The ranch was even-



Courtesy of John Taggart

A house built on the Robinson Stillwell Taggart Farm around 1849 near Dayton, Ore.

tually passed down throughout the generations to Richard and Dorothy Howard Allstott, the great granddaughter of the founder.

- The Rockwell-Doherty farm was founded in 1906 by Seth and Sarah Rockwell in Umatilla County. The farm has seen many different uses through the years, including fruit orchards, raising horses and growing irrigated wheat, pasture grass and alfalfa. Richard Doherty now runs it for the family.

- Tilla-Bay Farms in Tillamook County began when Fred and Gottfried Josi purchased the land in 1918. In the beginning the dairy operation consisted of 24 milk cows. Today the dairy is operated by the founder's granddaughter, Terry Mizze and her husband, Bart, along with their son, Kurt Mizze.

- DeLano Farms in Clackamas County was founded by Hatsil DeLano in 1916 as a nearly 57-acre plot and today has grown to 216 acres. Over the years the farm has shifted from dairy and vegetable production in the early years to cattle and hay production and added a horse barn and arena. Karen DeLano now runs the horse barn and Renata Squier raises cattle and hay.

- Sandoz farm was founded in 1880 in Wasco County by three brothers, Alphonse, Arnold and Charles Sandoz. They grew root vegetables, fruit trees and grapes. Ted, Charles Lee and Mary Sandoz are the third generation and operate a farmstand where they sell USDA

beef and pork along with fruit, vegetables and other products.

- Beitel Farm was established in 1915 by Alois and Cecilia Beitel in Marion County. Currently the farm grows grass seed is being passed on from John J. and Debbie Beitel to the next generation, John R. Beitel. In the early days the farm was typical of many farms during the time with chickens, sheep, cows and pigs.

- Tideman Johnson Farm goes back to 1880 when Tideman and Olava Johnson settled 60 acres in Multnomah County. At one point part of the farm was donated to the city of Portland as a park. About 8 acres of the original farmland is still owned by the family. However, the family continues to farm the land in cooperation with several organizations.

The awards ceremony for the century and sesquicentennial farms will be at 11 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 25, at the Oregon State Fair picnic grove area.

The Oregon Century Farm and Ranch Program is administered by the Oregon Farm Bureau Foundation for Education. It is supported by a partnership among the Oregon Farm Bureau, the State Historic Preservation Office, OSU University Archives and by generous donations of Oregonians.

For information, contact Andréa Kuenzi, program coordinator, at 503-400-7884 or cfr@oregonfb.org.

The application deadline for 2019 is May 1.

Calendar

Thursday, Aug. 30

Meat School 2018. 5:30-9 p.m. OSU Southern Oregon Research & Extension Center, Auditorium, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point, Ore. A five-evening class series beginning Aug. 30 covers various aspects of producing and marketing grass-fed and grass-finished meat animals. Instructors include renowned authors, successful producers, OSU Extension livestock and grazing specialists, faculty from other universities and speakers from the American Grassfed Association and the Niche Meat Processors Association Network. The program covers cattle, sheep and goats. Choose all five

classes for \$175 or select individual classes for \$40 each. Details: <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/sorec/events/grass-finished-meat-school-class-1-5-part-series>.

Friday-Monday

Aug. 24-Sept. 3
Oregon State Fair. Oregon State Fair and Exposition Center, 2330 17th St. NE, Salem, Ore. <https://oregonstatefair.org/>

Friday-Saturday

Aug. 31-Sept. 8
Eastern Idaho State Fair. Eastern Idaho State Fairgrounds, 97 Park St.,

Blackfoot, Idaho. Website: <https://funatthefair.com/>

Friday-Sunday

Aug. 31-Sept. 23
Washington State Fair. 110 Ninth Ave. SW, Puyallup, Wash. www.thefair.com/

Tuesday, Thursday

Sept. 4, 6
Meat School 2018. 5:30-9 p.m. OSU Southern Oregon Research & Extension Center, Auditorium, 569 Hanley Road, Central Point, Ore. Details: <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/sorec/events/grass-finished-meat-school-class-1-5-part-series>.

edu/sorec/events/grass-finished-meat-school-class-1-5-part-series.

Friday-Saturday

Sept. 7-8
60th Annual Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association Tree Fair & Trade Show. Holiday Inn, Portland Airport, 8439 NE Columbia Blvd. Portland, Ore. The world's largest trade show in the Christmas tree industry. Members have market exposure at the Tree Fair and Trade Show, where buyers and sellers meet. It also features industry equipment and supplies on display. Cost: \$19-\$29 Website: www.pnwcta.org

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Through Sunday

Aug. 26

Western Idaho Fair. Western Idaho Fairgrounds, 5610 Glenwood St., Boise, Idaho. Website: www.idahofair.com