



Land connects us all – protecting it today, saving it for tomorrow

Solano Land Trust News—Immediate Release

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2,204 historic family farm and fruit stand preserved forever

Brazelton Ranch farm and fruit stand in the Vaca Valley has been in the Brazelton family since 1915. As the story often goes, the farm was split so that two siblings could each have their own land. Over time, rural-ranchettes sprouted up in the Valley, replacing and breaking up the historic farms and ranches. When a portion of the original Brazelton Ranch was placed on the market, the family reached out to Solano Land Trust, to “put Papa Mac’s ranch back together” and keep it in agriculture forever. The fruit stand on the farm sells peaches and other stone fruit directly to customers from June to late September, providing a true farm-to-fork experience.

Vacaville, CA, Wednesday, December 4, 2019—People throughout the Bay Area and Sacramento region who trek to Brazelton Ranch for summer peaches are likely to buy them from Jean Brazelton, the matriarch of the farm. Brazelton Ranch is a fourth-generation, family-owned ranch located north of Vacaville, CA in an area that is increasingly under pressure for rural residential development. Some of the heirs were no longer able to farm and put a significant portion of the ranch on the market. The heirs approached Solano Land Trust in order to reunite the 2,204 acres properties and protect it for agriculture forever.

John McKnight Brazelton, Sr., (known to his family as Papa Mac) and his wife Ethel acquired 640 acres in Vaca Valley in 1915 and added acreage to the ranch as it became available. Papa Mac died in 1964, and Ethel and their three sons took over management of the ranch. When Ethel died in 1983, the ranch was split between two of the three sons. One of the sons, Eugene Brazelton, and his wife, Jean (the peach lady), continued to grow and dry peaches, apricots, and prunes. When Eugene died, Jean continued the farming operation with her children.

The Vaca Valley, once famous for providing stone fruit to the entire nation, is under pressure from development. This type of rural development doesn’t help to alleviate the affordable housing crises but does result in fewer and fewer areas where local farmers and ranchers can grow food to feed our growing population.



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Nestled at the base of Gates Canyon and the Blue Ridge-Berryessa Natural Area, the ranch represents the heritage of the Vacaville and Suisun Valleys, which began supplying America with stone fruit in the 1870s. Brazelton Ranch is adjacent to another 1,930 acres of protected land to the west. Together, these 4,134 acres provide a beautiful scenic buffer between the cities of Vacaville and Fairfield, and protect important watershed land and wildlife corridors forever.

To get to the fruit stand on the home ranch, visitors wind through 50 acres of French prunes that are sold to SunSweet Cooperative, one of the last co-ops in the country. Another 100 acres of prime soils are devoted to peaches and other stone fruits, while the rest of the acreage slopes steeply up a wild ridge visible to Interstate 80 travelers. Brazelton Ranch is in the Sacramento Valley foodshed and its wild ridge is part of the I-80 viewshed.

The fruit stand, which started with an old wagon filled with lugs of fruit for women to can, now sells peaches and stone fruit that is superior in flavor to those found in grocery stores. The trees are pruned by hand, and the fruit is picked by a person on a ladder reaching into the canopy of a tree. On a visit to the fruit stand, it just may be Jean, the matriarch, who greets you.

Founded in 1986, Solano Land Trust protects land to ensure a healthy environment, keep ranching and farming families on their properties, and inspire a love of the land. We are committed to building a conservation and stewardship ethic in our community by supporting values based on common ground and engaging the future leaders and land stewards who will come after us to take care of this land.

(Please include the following statement with the article)

Funding for this project is provided in part by a grant from the California Strategic Growth Council's Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC). SALC is administered by the California Department of Conservation and is part of California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment—particularly in disadvantaged communities.

Some relevant links:

- Brazelton Ranch Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BrazeltonRanch/>
- Solano Land Trust: <https://solanolandtrust.org/>

Contacts:

- Nicole Braddock, Solano Land Trust, Executive Director, nicole@solanolandtrust.org, 707-709-9021
- Tracy Ellison, Solano Land Trust, Conservation program manager, tracy@solanolandtrust.org, 707-709-9026
- Members of the Brazelton family are available to talk to media. Their contact information will be provided upon request.