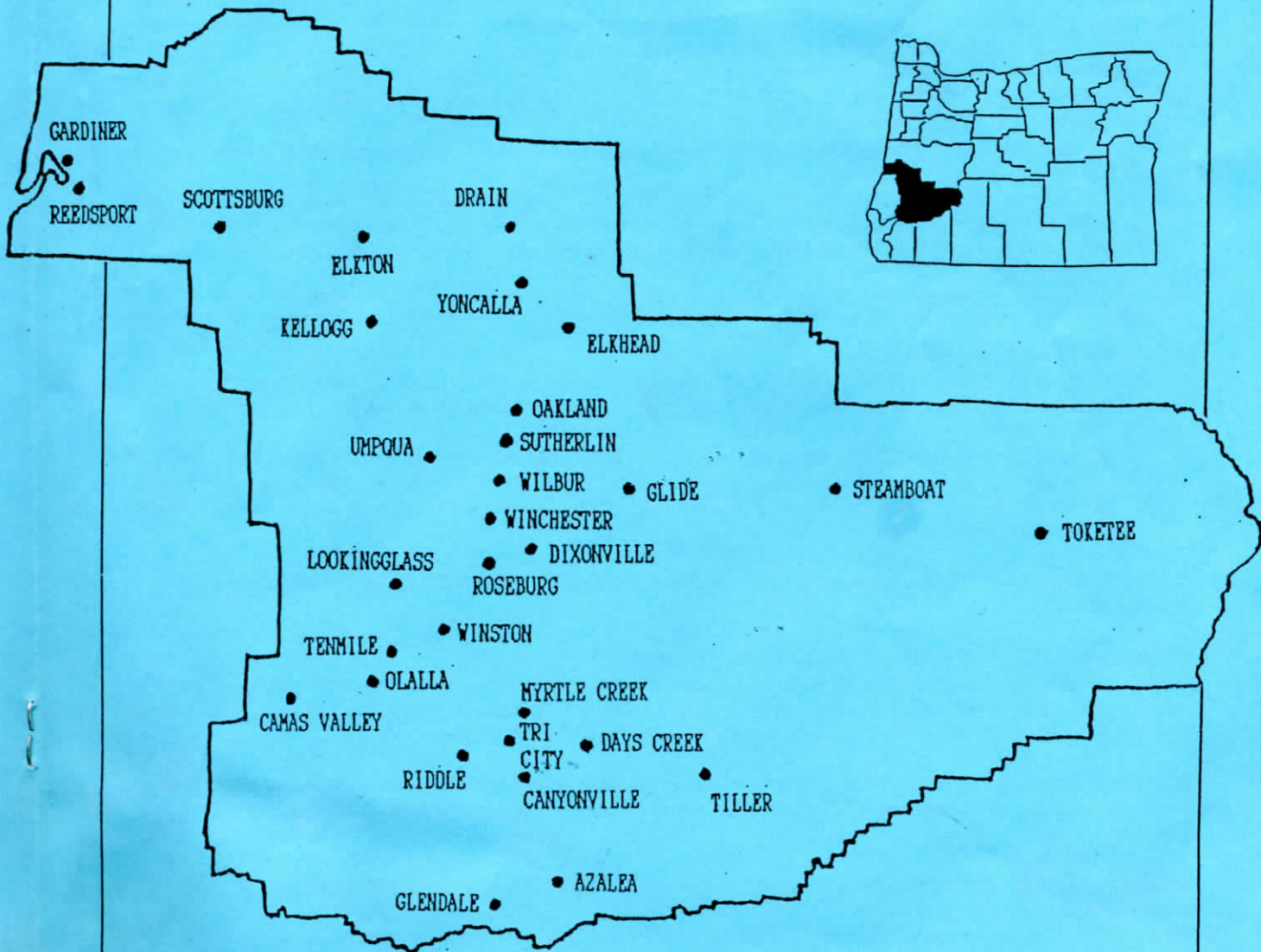


# Douglas County Pioneer

September 2014, Volume 28, Issue 3



## Genealogical Society of Douglas County, Inc.

1036 SE Douglas Avenue, Room 105B (located in the Douglas County Courthouse)  
Roseburg, OR 97470

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**Research Fees:** \$5.00 for simple requests, such as copies of obituaries or a few look-ups in our publications. Complex research requiring retrieval of actual documents and/or constructing family information is \$10.00 per hour. There may be additional copying costs; your email address would insure communication about them. Send your written requests to the address on the preceding page with "Research" noted over the address on the envelope. Please include a family group sheet with your request so we do not duplicate what information you already have. While we do answer email questions and requests telephone requests are very difficult to handle and are strongly discouraged.

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Note: This issue contains the same amount of pages, just a different numbering system.

Historically, the first issue of the year contains a list of all the publications the GSDC offers for sale. We do not publish this list in each issue.

***Douglas County Pioneer: September 2014, Volume 28, Issue 3***

Published by the Genealogical Society of Douglas County, Inc.

DCP Staff: Steve Wood, Editor; Doris Curry and the Librarians who help assemble and mail

ISSN: 0895-7444

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We have access to the Archives section of the Douglas County Clerk.

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Donations of office supplies are also tax deductible.

\*\*\*\*\*

**New Members 2014**

Rebecca Norton     P

**Pedigree Chart for  
Martha Carson**

**David 'Dave' Carson**

b: Abt. 1800 in Ireland  
m:  
d: 1854 in Willamette Valley,  
Oregon, USA

**Name:**

b:  
m:  
d:

**Name:**

b:  
m:  
d:

**Name:**

b:  
d:

**Name:**

b:  
m:  
d:

**Name:**

b:  
d:

**Name:**

b:  
m:  
d:

**Name:**

b:  
d:

**Name:**

b:  
m:  
d:

**Name:**

b:  
d:

**Martha Carson**

b: Abt. 1845 in Nebraska, USA  
m: 19 Jan 1868 in Douglas County,  
Oregon, USA  
d: 11 Jul 1911

**Name:**

b:  
m:  
d:

**Letitia 'Tisha' (Unknown)**

b: 28 Feb 1802 in Kentucky, USA  
d: 18 Feb 1888

**Name:**

b:  
d:

# Descendants of David 'Dave' Carson

---

## Generation 1

1. **DAVID 'DAVE'<sup>1</sup> CARSON** was born about 1800 in Ireland. He died in 1854 in Willamette Valley, Oregon, USA. He married **LETITIA 'TISHA' (UNKNOWN)**. She was born on 28 Feb 1802 in Kentucky, USA. She died on 18 Feb 1888.

Notes for David 'Dave' Carson:

1850 census: Benton County, Oregon, family 135

Notes for Letitia 'Tisha' (Unknown):

Douglas County, Oregon Tax Records:

1871 Myrtle Creek

1870 census: Myrtle Creek Precinct, Douglas County, Oregon, family 38

Tisha Carson and her son Jack lived with the Hardy Elliff family near Galesville, Douglas County, Oregon. They went to Levens Stockade with the Elliff family during the Rogue Indian Wars of 1855-1856.

[Pioneer Days in the South Umpqua Valley, Vol. 28, 1995, p. 21]

David Carson died in 1854 and Letitia Carson, a black woman, filed an action against Green B. Smith, administrator of David Carson's estate 'to recover the value of her services rendered in the territory to the defendant from the year 1845 to 1852. Letitia had been a slave in Missouri but came to Oregon and served her master faithfully until his death. From the evidence at hand, it would appear that David Carson was Letitia's owner, master and husband, and the father of her mulatto daughter and son. By 1855 or 1856 Letitia and her children resided in Douglas County, Oregon. It is reported that she made her home with the Hardy Elliff family near Galesville [present vicinity of Azalea] in the upper Cow Creek Valley, where she worked for the Elliff family and also served as the community midwife.

[Umpqua Trapper, Vol 18, #3, p. 67-70]

David 'Dave' Carson and Letitia 'Tisha' (Unknown) had the following children:

2.
  - i. **MARTHA<sup>2</sup> CARSON** was born about 1845 in Nebraska, USA. She died on 11 Jul 1911. She married (1) **NARCISSE LAVADOURE**, son of Joseph Herbert Lavadoure and Lizette 'Tawassaklie' Walla Walla on 19 Jan 1868 in Douglas County, Oregon, USA. He was born about 1840 in Oregon, USA. She married (2) **MR CARPENTER** after 1869.
  - ii. **ANDREW C. 'JACK' CARSON** was born on 15 Sep 1849 in Oregon, USA. He died on 14 Sep 1922 in Canyonville, Douglas, Oregon, USA.

Notes for Andrew C. 'Jack' Carson:

Given name was Andrew not Adam?

Jack farmed in the Canyonville area. He was widely known for his gentleness and ability to train and handle horses. At one time he operated a horse-powered hay baler and was rather seriously injured when his arm became entangled in the gears attached between the sweep and the tumbling rod. His death certificated was signed by L. C. Melvin, M. D., of Roseburg, Oregon on September 13, 1922. The certificate lists him as a laborer, a single male of white and Negro race; it states that he was born September 15, 1849 and was 72 years, 11 months and 29 days of age at the time of his demise; his place of birth is given as Oregon and his father listed as David Carson, a white man from the Souther state. No maiden name is entered for his mother but under 'birthplace' is written 'In the South - full blood Negro.' The cause of death was listed as senile dementia. The informant is listed as a niece,

### Generation 1 (con't)

Mrs. Alice Lavadour, of Adams, Oregon.  
[Umpqua Trapper, Vol. 18, #3, p. 68, 69]

Box 67, Vault 139, File 1786

Andrew C. Carson, age 73 of Douglas County, Oregon died 14 September 1922 in Canyonville, Douglas County, Oregon

No will

Heirs: Alice LaVadour [sic Lavadoure], niece, age 56; Agnes Marsette, niece, age 53, both of Adams, Umatilla County, Oregon

Administrator: G. O. McGilvry

Final Settlement: 9 June 1923

Notes: The deceased left an estate in Douglas County, Oregon consisting of real property located in Canyonville with a probable value of \$1,500.00 and personal property with a probable value of \$250.00. The deceased never married and the heirs were children of Martha Carpenter, the deceased sister and only sibling of Andrew's. Martha Carpenter died 11 July 1911.

[Douglas County, Oregon Probate Records, Vol. 15, p. 10]

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### Generation 2

2. **MARTHA<sup>2</sup> CARSON** (David 'Dave'<sup>1</sup>) was born about 1845 in Nebraska, USA. She died on 11 Jul 1911. She married (1) **NARCISSE LAVADOURE**, son of Joseph Herbert Lavadoure and Lizette 'Tawassaklie' Walla Walla on 19 Jan 1868 in Douglas County, Oregon, USA. He was born about 1840 in Oregon, USA. She married (2) **MR CARPENTER** after 1869.

Notes for Narcisse Lavadoure:

Douglas County, Oregon Tax Records:  
1871 Canyonville

1870 census: Canyonville Precinct, Douglas County, Oregon, family 25

1880 census: District 45 (Canyonville), Douglas County, Oregon, family 126 - farmer

Narcisse Lavadoure and Martha Carson had the following children:

- i. **MARY ALICE<sup>3</sup> LAVADOURE** was born about 1864 in Oregon, USA.
- ii. **AGNES LAVADOURE** was born in Sep 1869 in Douglas County, Oregon, USA.
- iii. **IRA LAVADOURE** was born about 1871 in Douglas County, Oregon, USA.
- iv. **ADA MARY LAVADOURE** was born about 1873 in Douglas County, Oregon, USA.
- v. **ALBERT LAVADOURE** was born about 1875 in Douglas County, Oregon, USA.
- vi. **IDY LAVADOURE** was born about 1877 in Douglas County, Oregon, USA.
- vii. **FRED LAVADOURE** was born in Nov 1879 in Douglas County, Oregon, USA.

This record came from the Douglas County File located on the GSDC computers, and maintained by Kay Livermore.

## **The Search for Letitia Carson in Douglas County**

### **Part II. Letitia Carson in Upper Cow Creek Valley, 1853-1861**

*(Douglas County Family Names: Bigham; Carson; French; Lavadour/Laverdure; McGinnis; Morrisette; Rondeau).*

This is the second of a continuing series of articles exploring the history and genealogy of Letitia Carson, a Douglas County resident from the 1850s until her death, in 1888.

Part I of this series detailed my personal background and interest in Letitia and also gave a brief summary of her amazing – and amazingly obscure -- life. It also announced the imminent publication of Jane Kirkpatrick's 21st historical novel (and 26<sup>th</sup> book), *A Light in the Wilderness*, based on Letitia's story. Since that was written, Jane's novel was released on September 2, 2014 to great reviews; on September 11 an estimated 200 people attended a reading she gave at the Douglas County Library; and on September 12 she was hosted by Umpqua Community College to give the keynote address at the annual "Extraordinary Living" conference in which 250 people were registered.

Letitia Carson is becoming better known by the day!

Kirkpatrick's novel ends in Benton County, however, where Letitia lived her first seven years in Oregon. That is where she had raised her children, Martha and Adam ("Jack"), until the death of their father, David "Uncle Davey" Carson, in September 1852. At some point, possibly in March 1853, Letitia and her two children moved to Douglas County, where they were to remain for more than 30 years. In 1886, Martha and her five children and grandchild moved with her husband, Narcisse Lavadour, to the Umatilla Indian Reservation to claim land under the Dawes Act. Letitia died a few years later, in 1888, and Jack remained a Douglas County resident until his death in 1922.

When David Carson died in 1852, a wealthy white neighboring landowner named Greenberry Smith became executor of his estate; in part because there was no will. At that time, the years leading up to the Civil War, slavery was a major legal and political issue in both Oregon and in the United States. In Oregon, black immigrants were not allowed to own land, file suit, or even reside within the Territory's boundaries for more than six months, according to exclusionary laws in effect at that time. Yet Letitia sued David's estate twice in a Benton County court in an effort to recover an equitable portion of their property for herself and her children -- and prevailed both times!

As executor, Smith's position had been that Letitia and her children were the property of David Carson and had no rights as heirs to his estate. In fact, in Missouri -- where Smith and the Carsons had both lived prior to emigrating to Oregon in 1845 -- Letitia and her children would have been considered valued property of the estate and routinely sold or distributed accordingly. Letitia's position was that slavery was illegal in Oregon, therefore -- at the least --



she was owed back wages; also, the cattle were hers, not David's, and Smith had no right to sell them in a public auction at an estate sale.

During the time the legal suits were being filed, Letitia and the children had left their home of seven years and moved to the upper Cow Creek Valley in Douglas County. It is thought that she may have traveled south with the Nidey family, pioneers of 1852 who wintered in Santiam City (present-day Jefferson) and traveled south to Cow Creek Valley in late March and early April 1853. The distance from Letitia's home on Soap Creek to the Hardy Elliff cabin (Johns Ranch in present day Azalea), where the Nidey's first camped, is about 160 miles, or about one week's travel at that time. The route taken was the main road from Sacramento Valley to the Columbia River and has been known at various times in its history as the California Trail, the South Road of the Oregon Trail, the Scott-Applegate Trail, and Territorial Road. Now it is mostly I-5 and 99-W.

Jane Kirkpatrick is the first person to write extensively about Letitia's experiences crossing the Oregon Trail in 1845 and regarding her two successful lawsuits against Greenberry Smith in Benton County, but George Abdill is the only person to specifically write about her time in Douglas County; and he did so more than 30 years ago, in the *Umpqua Trapper*:

"From the evidence at hand, it would appear that David Carson was both Letitia's owner, master and husband, and the father of her mulatto daughter and son. The trail then fades in the antiquity of time until "Aunt Tish" Carson and her children appear in Douglas County. For many years she reportedly made her home with the Hardy Elliff family near Galesville (present vicinity of Azalea) in the upper Cow Creek Valley, where she worked for the Elliff family and also served as the community midwife."

In 1853 the Umpqua Valley was hit with a plague of locusts, making it difficult and expensive to provide feed for livestock, and thereby obtain cheap meat, milk, and transportation. The problem was exacerbated by the heavy traffic on the road that year caused by the gold mining boom in southern Oregon and northern California; the military units contending with the August and September events of the Table Rocks Indian War; and the influx of Oregon Trail pioneers traveling northward in the fall.

A story from that time is that Letitia was staying with the Nidey family women and girls at a time when all of the men were away from camp (or away from the Elliff cabin, depending on the version). At some point the girls – including Nidey niece Melvina Baker -- were playing outside their tent when they were accosted by a group of Indian men on horseback, acting in a hostile manner. Letitia is said to have emerged from the tent, a "large coal-black woman with a deep voice," brandishing a carving knife or a cleaver and frightened the men away, thereby saving the girls. The Indians were said to be shocked by the appearance of a big, loud, threatening person with black skin and a weapon and reacted as if seeing a ghost or evil spirit.

This is a story that has survived for more than 160 years and likely has a basis in fact. It is difficult to determine how "large" or "deep-voiced" Letitia actually was, though; partly because stories often become exaggerated over time, and partly because the Baker girls were so tiny – Melvina was less than five-feet tall as an adult, and her younger sister – an original source of this story – was only four-foot six inches fully grown. Local Indian families were typically not much larger than the Bakers at that time, so Letitia would not have had to be very large at all to dwarf everyone – especially with an axe or a cleaver in hand! Another version has Melvina driving the men away due to her knowledge of Chinook wawa. All known versions have Letitia as a principal character.

Due in part to all of the military and commercial traffic in 1853, \$20,000 was appropriated to Maj. Benjamin Alvord and surveyor Jesse Applegate to improve the section of road from Galesville to Canyonville, considered the most difficult and dangerous portion of the entire route between the Sacramento Valley and the Columbia River. This sum created significant local employment during the year, in addition to all of the commercial traffic related to military actions, gold mining, and immigration.

On November 15, 1853, 18-year-old Melvina Baker married 28-year-old Hardy Elliff. The following month, on December 16, Hardy and Melvina filed a 320-acre Donation Land Claim along the Territorial Road -- including the Nidey's original campsite and Elliff's cabin. According to the Elliff's granddaughter, Bess Clough, in 1961, their first child was born nine months later, in August:

"Her first child, Alice, was born in the fall of 1854 in the Elliff cabin with the help of Mrs. Fanny Levens, a mid-wife, and Letitia "Aunt Tish" Carson, a Negress who lived with the Elliffs."

On May 12, 1855, a jury of Letitia Carson's former Benton County peers (all white males) determined that Letitia was due \$300 for her services to David Carson and another \$229.50 to cover court costs and legal fees. Sixteen months later, on October 25, 1856, a federal judge and local jury awarded her an additional \$1399.75, including \$199.75 for costs and fees, for the unlawful sale of her cattle.

During the August and September 1853 Indian War, Hardy Elliff had served as a Captain in the Oregon Militia and had commanded forces under Gen. Joseph Lane at Table Rocks. In early October 1855, racial warfare between Indians and whites in southern Oregon abruptly resumed, resulting in the murder and mutilation of several families (both Indian and white), widespread looting of cattle, and the burning of most of the barns, haystacks, and outbuildings in Cow Creek Valley, among other locations in the Rogue and Applegate valleys. The open warfare culminated in the deadly "Battle of Hungry Hill" on October 31 and November 1, less than 20 miles from the Elliff home.

The winter of 1855-1856 was particularly harsh, with deep snows and heavy freezes. Gov. Curry had called for a militia to fight the Indians, resulting in two battalions of mounted volunteers. The Elliff home became "Fort Elliff" to local families who stayed there during the

initial hostilities, but according to Bess Clough, Hardy took Melvina, baby Alice, "Aunt Tish Carson and small son Jack, freed Negro slaves" (no mention of Martha), to "the Galesville Stockade where they spent nine months fortified up from the Indians." During this time Capt. Laban Buoy and Co. B, Lane County, were stationed at "Camp Elliff" for the winter. Their assigned duty was to keep the Territorial Road open to military and commercial traffic from Galesville to Canyonville. By springtime warfare had all but ended and most of the remaining Indians in southwest Oregon were sent north to reservations along the Oregon Coast and in Yamhill County. The ethnic cleansing of southwest Oregon was complete, having been accomplished in five years.

In 1856 the Elliff's second child, Florence, was born. Letitia was almost certainly the midwife and was apparently living with the Elliffs and 7-year-old Jack at that time, although it seems possible that 11-year-old Martha may have been staying elsewhere.

On March 6, 1857 the US Supreme Court ruled in Dred Scott vs. Sandford that African Americans, whether free or enslaved, could not become American citizens or bring suit in a federal court. On November 9, 1857, Oregon adopted its State Constitution by popular vote, making it illegal for black people to become permanent residents of Oregon, to own property or engage in business here, or file a suit in a court of law. Also, slavery was illegal. The Oregon State Constitution is the only one in US history written before acquiring statehood, or that included racial exclusionary laws among its statutes.

In 1858 the US Army employed Col. Joseph Hooker to improve the military road system of southern Oregon. Hardy Elliff and his brother Tom were given a contract for \$8,000 to build 13 miles of road from Jacksonville to Cow Creek. Letitia may have still been living with the Elliffs at that time, and by then had gained a reputation as a midwife for the upper Cow Creek community.

On February 14, 1859, Oregon actually became a State and formally adopted its 1857 Constitution. Letitia and her children – possibly by design -- are not found in Mrs. Harry Hiday's 1974 transcription of the 1860 Douglas County US Census records, although they most likely continued living in Douglas County during that time. The following year, on April 12, 1861, Confederate forces fired upon Fort Sumter in South Carolina and the Civil War had officially begun.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Next: Part III. Letitia Carson and the Homestead Act, 1862-1868.**

\*\*\*\*\*

The author, Bob Zybach, has a PhD from Oregon State University in Environmental Sciences. He has been Program Manager for Oregon Websites and Watersheds Project, Inc. ([www.ORWW.org](http://www.ORWW.org)), a nonprofit 501 c(3) based in Philomath, Oregon, since 1996.

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### 3 More Questions for Genealogical Society members and interested readers:

(Part I of this series asked: 1) Do any of Letitia's apple trees still exist from her 1887 orchard on South Myrtle Creek? 2) Mary Alice Bigham used her father's surname until her death – did he ever actually marry her mother? 3) Are there any photographs of the Lavadour family that were taken in Douglas County before 1888?)

4. Capt. Laban Buoy was stationed at "Camp Elliff" (or "Fort Elliff") during the winter of 1855-1856. Do any daily records or official reports of this occupation exist?

5. Col. Joseph Hooker was put in charge of military road building in 1858. Do any records of this enterprise exist: surveys, expenditures, diaries, or correspondence?

6. We find reference to "Andrew Carson" in Cow Creek precinct for the 1860 census, but nothing on Letitia, Martha or Jack. Were they hiding, or do other records exist?

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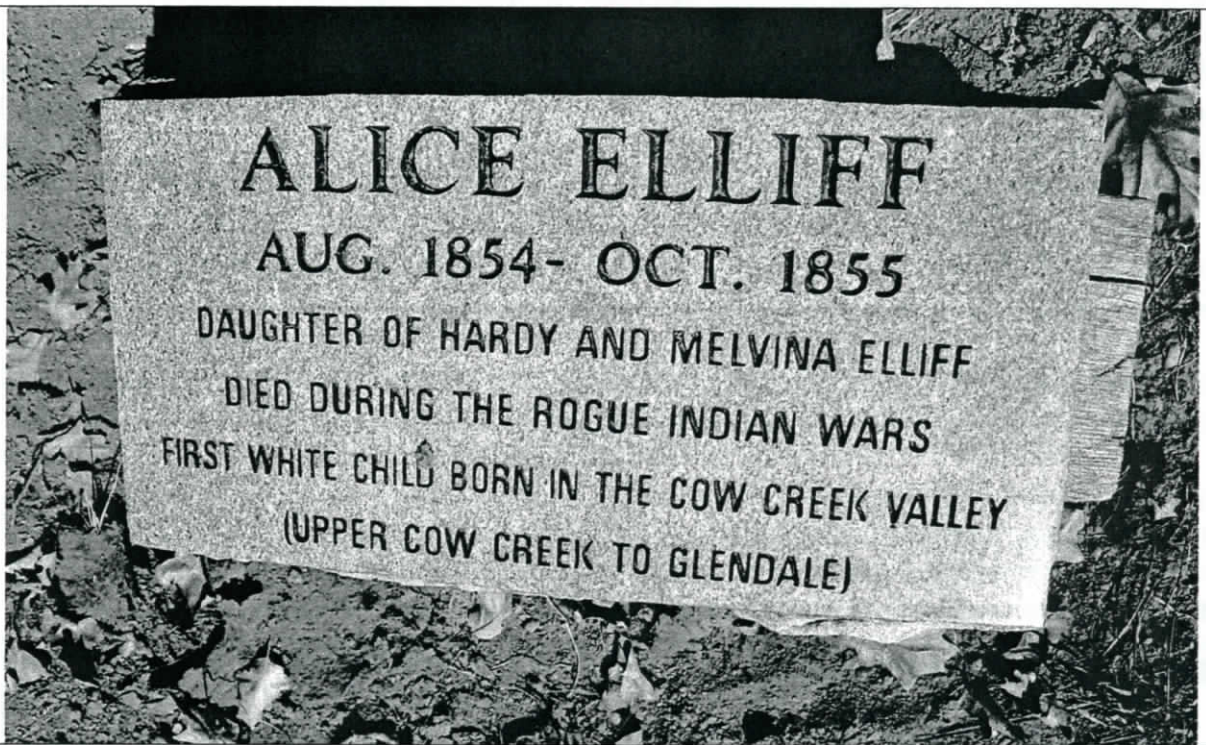


**This is the draft cover of the biography of Letitia Carson that I am coauthoring with research associate, Janet Meranda. The woodcut is copyrighted by Alison Saar and used by permission of L.A. Louver, Venice, California.**

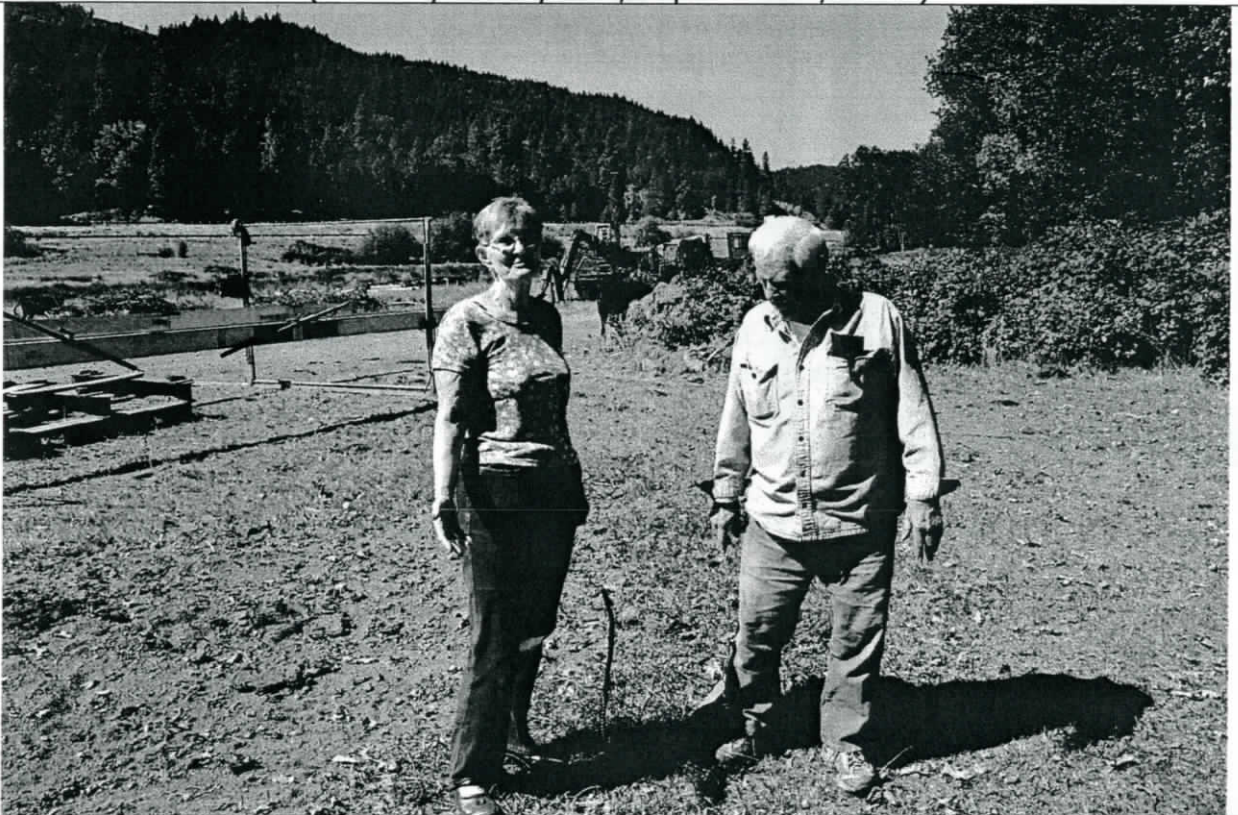
**In September 2014, popular author Jane Kirkpatrick released her 21<sup>st</sup> historical novel, *A Light in the Wilderness*, which is based on Letitia Carson's life.**

**Here is where to learn more about Letitia:**

[http://www.orww.org/History/Letitia\\_Carson/](http://www.orww.org/History/Letitia_Carson/)



Memorial marker of Alice Elliff, on property of Dale and Jennene Johns in Azalea.  
(Photo by Bob Zybach, September 7, 2013.)



Author Jane Kirkpatrick and landowner Dale Johns at marked corner of Elliff Cabin. (Photo by Bob Zybach, September 7, 2013.)

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