



Land Stewardship at Letitia Carson's Myrtle Creek Homestead

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Up ahead...

- Acknowledgments and introductions!
- The Carson homestead in context
- Our land stewardship priorities
- What we're up to...
- Letitia Carson as working partner for the present: a few observations.
- Questions?



The Carson Homestead in Context

- Currently known as “Twelve Mile Ranch”.
- 300 acres which include the eastern portion of Letitia Carson’s original 160 acre homestead.
- 12 miles east of Myrtle Creek in the South Myrtle Creek valley. Approximately 40 miles due west of Crater Lake.
- 1000 ft elevation at valley floor, 1500 ft. atop the hills to the north and south.
- Lots of wildlife: bear, elk, mountain lions, deer, bobcat, etc. South Myrtle Creek has recently had runs of steelhead and salmon.
- Not quite “end of the road” today, but close.



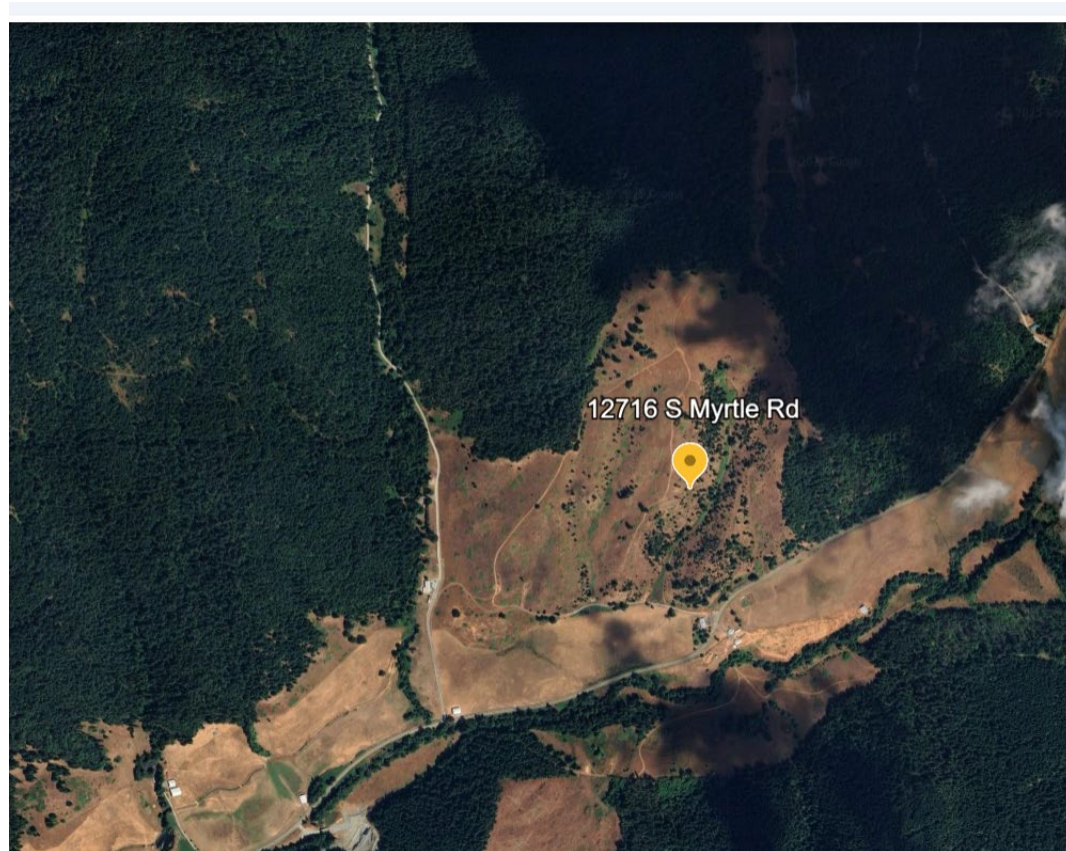
It's a Long Way from Corvallis!

Letitia Carson's 1855 trek from Corvallis to the Cow Creek Valley (and then to the South Myrtle Creek Valley) was no mean feat!

You can see on this map which roughly covers Oregon which how far she travelled...almost a third of the north-south expanse of the state.



Twelve Mile Ranch and the Carson Homestead



View to the East

This is the view from the farm looking up into the Cascades to the east.

The county road turns to gravel approximately five miles beyond the farm.

About a fourth of the farm's area consists of bottom land along South Myrtle Creek.



View to the West

This is the view from the farm looking west toward the town of Myrtle Creek.

The original Carson homestead begins about halfway down the pasture in this photo.

Letitia Creek – which roughly bisects the original Carson homestead – runs just behind the tree line in the background the picture.



The Carson Homestead: Now and Then

NOW

- Paved county road to the west.
- Most amenities available in the town of Myrtle Creek.
- Bridge across the South Umpqua to access I-5.
- Neighbors to east and west. BLM and private timberland, north,
- Electricity, Internet, and propane.
- Essential farming kit: Too much to list!

THEN

- Horse trail to the west.
- No Myrtle Creek as a town until 1865.
- No bridge across the South Umpqua...low water ford or ferry access only.
- One neighbor to the west. No known neighbors to the east.
- No services.
- Essential farming kit: axe, mule, rifle, plow, bedstead, pot.



Land Stewardship Priorities

Recovery and Regeneration of Land Health

We're working to increase the health of the land through practices like wild space set-asides, reforestation, invasive species control, and water management.

Cultural Access

The farm is a very special place. It has a long and storied past. We want to do what we can to share it with those who have an historical connection to the place.

Support for Local Economy

Our longer-term goal is to make the farm an active and viable part of the local economy. Our focus is on growing heirloom apples and (eventually) making cider.

Gearing for the Long Haul

We're doing our best to understand the long history of the farm as well as its current trajectory in our rapidly changing world. The choices we make on the land are guided by that understanding.



What We've Been Up to Since 2020

- Learning at lightspeed!
- We've planted about 600 new heirloom apple trees, some grafted from trees that were already on site.
- We're reforesting with a focus on native species like Sugar Pine (500), California Black Oak (100), Garry Oak (200) and Ponderosa Pine (1500).
- We're also planting non-native food trees such as chestnuts and walnuts.
- We're working to improve the water security of the farm by moving away from irrigation using South Myrtle Creek water.

Letitia Carson in the Present

In our work on the farm, we often reflect aloud about Letitia Carson's example. Among other things, it suggests to us that:

- We're not completely crazy to start farming in our late 50s!
- We can almost certainly do a lot more than we think.
- Even people with wildly different backgrounds and perspectives on life can find community together.
- Neighbors matter a great deal.
- The best days are often hard days.
- Starting over happens a lot.
- Modern sensibilities sometimes get in the way of what matters most.
- Having stuff is tricky...both helpful and burdensome. Probably more of the latter.
- Nearly all the magic of the farm today was there when Carson homesteaded.

Questions?



Thank you!