

# Letitia Carson's Farming and Foodways

## 2nd Annual Letitia Carson Symposium, May 12, 2025

- What we know they raised and the tools they used
- Other crops they likely raised
- Hunting, fishing and gathering
- Indigenous foods
- Letitia as a direct marketer
- Letitia as a farmer in Douglas County



▶ OSU Soap Creek Beef Ranch cattle

# Platte County, Missouri (1877)

- Letitia may have had extensive agricultural experience prior to coming to Oregon
- David farmed in NC and Missouri
- Platte County, Missouri highly agricultural in mid-19th century
  - Cattle
  - Grains
  - Hay
  - Tree fruit
- Many of the same crops and livestock Letitia and David raised in Oregon



# Oregon Trail foods

- Basic foodstuffs required of all emigrants “excepting infants” on the 1845 Oregon Trail
  - 150 lbs of flour or 100 lbs of flour and 75 lbs of (corn) meal per person
  - 50 lbs of bacon per person
- No consuming “ardent spirits”
- Carsons had provisions for four people
- Supplemented by game and possibly wild fruit sourced along the trail

Chart from “The McNemmes and Tetherows with the Migration of 1845: Organization Documents of that Migration,” by Fred Lockley, *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, December 1924

## CENSUS OF THE O. EMIGRATION.

	Armed			Meal	Flour	Bacon	Powd & Lead	
	Men	Persons	Wag's.	lbs.	lbs.	lbs.	17	68
C. M. Johnson .....	5	10	3	300	1700	500	6	17
Zachariah Moreland .....	2	10	2	350	1000	400	13	18
Alford Marcum .....	3	8	2	400	1000	422	10	16
Daniel D. Bailey.....	5	12	2	300	1430	500	12	30
John Ridgeway .....	3	7	2	125	950	300	9	20
Joseph Cunningham .....	2	9	1	450	900	350	6	11
Franklin Pomeroy .....	2	4	1	200	600	300	6	11
William Kitchen .....	1	5	1	200	600	300	25	45
James Officer .....	4	12	4	400	1800	680	6	20
Christopher Cooley .....	2	9	2	400	1000	300	7	28
William Wilson .....	2	7	2	500	800	350	11	19
John Loyd .....	3	11	2	500	1700	600	25	25
Andrew Foster .....	5	7	2	300	1200	370	3	12
Jacob Wooley .....	1	6	2	1000	500	300	14	20
Lewis Thompson .....	4	4	1	200	600	150	7	12
Abraham Patterson .....	1	3	1	300	350	200	6	12
H. M. Knighton.....	4	8	2	250	1400	425	7	20
William Wilson .....	2	7	2	500	800	350	12	30
William Dawson .....	2	5	1	50	600	200	10	20
H. D. Martin .....	2	3	1	50	600	200	8	22
David Carson .....	3	4	1	100	600	600	2	4
Adam Smith .....	3	8	2	150	1000	500	5	20
Robert W. Hamilton.....	1	8	1		700	300	15	38
John Martin .....	2	7	1		900	350	12	10
James E. Hall.....	5	15	2	250	1100	350	10	10
Jesse E. Henderson.....	3	9	2	250	1200	425	13	30
Joseph Hughart .....	3	8	2	250	1200	425	6	12
Nicholas Ownbey .....	6	12	4	1250	1000	500	27	50
Woodford Holman .....	1	6	1	200	1200	300	6	12
Solomon Tetherow .....	4	13	3	300	1600	100	7	15
Joseph Henderson .....	2	5	1	125	600	180	6	20
Charles Craft .....	2	8	2	200	1000	400	4	8
William Helm .....	3	9	2		1400	450		
George Smith .....	2	8	1	150	1200	400		
David Tetherow .....	1	7	1	150	750	300		
Robert Miller .....	4	19	4	300	2900	700	25	32
	100	293	66	10450	37280	13980	354	752

# Appraisal of David Carson's estate property, Dec. 7, 1852

Appraisement of the stock, agricultural implements and household furniture belonging to the estate of David Carson, deceased

1 binded steer		\$ 45.-
1 3 year old red steer		" 50.-
1 yoke white oxen		" 80.-
1 " oxen		" 100.-
3 yearling heifers	\$15.- each	" 45.-
1 steer calves	" 12.- "	" 60.-
1 red bull		" 50.-
2 yearling steers	" 15.- "	" 30.-
3 2 year old steers	" 30.- "	" 90.-
4 2 " heifers	" 35.- "	" 140.-
12 cows & 2 calves	" 45.- "	" 540.-
26 hogs	" 3.- "	" 78.-
1 4 year old horse		" 40.-
1 wagon		" 35.-
3 leg chains	" 2.- "	" 6.-
1 gun		" 15.-
7 pieces pot metal		" 10.-
1 lot cup & hardware		" 15.-
2 trunks & bedding & books		" 20.-
1 clock		" 6.-
1 watch		" 5.-
1 pair		" 1.50
	forwarded	\$ 1446.50

bro't forward \$1446.50

1/2 doz Chairs	" 4.00
1 tool bench saw	" 6.-
4 furkins 1 cast & Bucket	" 6.-
	<u>\$ 1462.50</u>

David Carson }  
 David, D. Davis } Appraisers

Omitted to appraise and added according to the bill of sale the following articles  
 The calf taken at fifteen so years when found by the a Administrator

1 Shovel	\$ 2.00
1 harrow	18.00
1 plow	22.50
1 calf	15.-
1 in a potato patch	17.-
1 Thermometer	1.00
	<u>\$ 76.30</u>
Amount of appraisement	1462.50
	<u>1538.80</u>

Appraisement  
 Wm. Jan 12/52  
 A. S. Henry  
 Clerk

## Other crops likely raised by the Carsons

- Subsistence crops – cabbage, turnips, peas, beans
- Grains such as oats, barley, wheat, buckwheat
- Melons, pumpkins
- Seed from Hudson's Bay Co. Fort Vancouver and possibly general stores in Oregon City
- Soil types in Soap Creek limited what could be grown and where – pastures vs. riparian areas



▶ Hudson's Bay Company Fort Vancouver in 1845

# Most Soap Creek Valley settlers planted orchards

- Carsons likely planted an orchard
- Scion wood possibly from Ft. Vancouver
- Trees from Lewelling & Meek Nursery after 1847
- Trees just beginning to bear in 1852

**Fruit Trees.**

**W**E have for sale about 20,000 Apple, 2,000 Pear, 1,000 Peach and 1,000 Cherry Trees, of large size, for orchard planting, comprising about 60 varieties of the choicest fruit that could be found in the States. Also, Plum, Apricot, Nectarine and Almon trees. Also, Currant and Gooseberry shrubs, Grape vines. We have had a number of our varieties bear fruit, and we find the size and flavor of the fruit to surpass our most sanguine expectations.

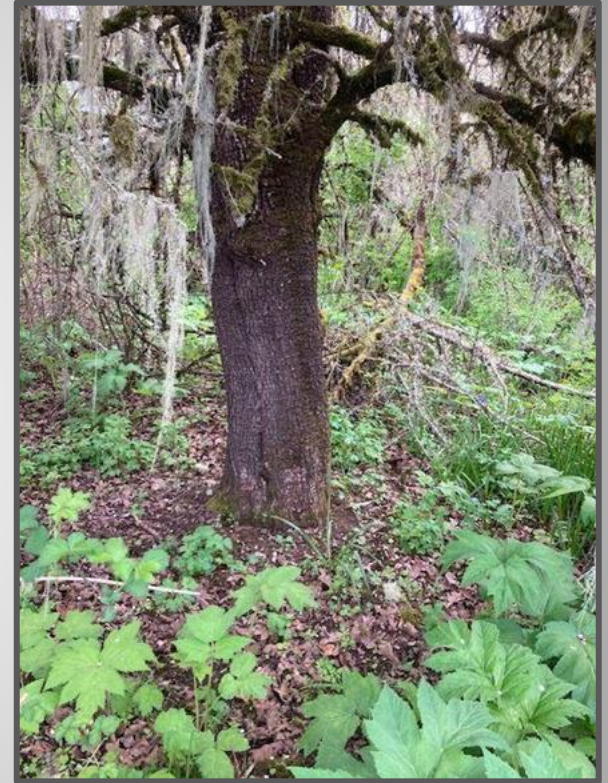
All orders for trees, accompanied with the cash, will be promptly attended to, as though the purchaser were present.

**LEWELLING & MEEK.**  
Milwaukie Nursery, Oregon. 3w25

Ad for the Lewelling & Meek Nursery, *Weekly Oregon Statesman*, Sept. 16, 1851

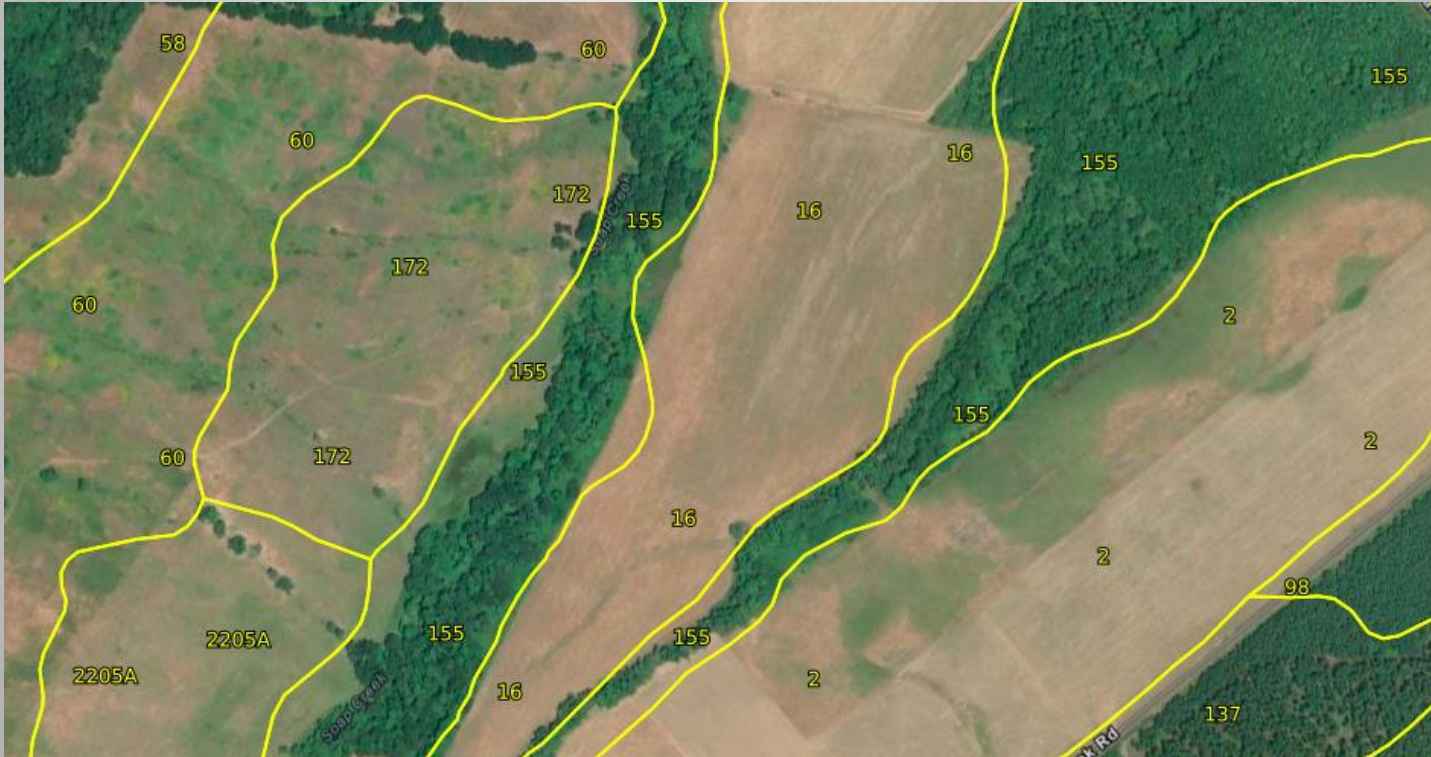
# Fruit trees on the Carson land today

- Most fruit trees on site today are likely seedlings
- These two trees could be extant from the Carson era



- ▶ Extant apple and pear trees on the Carson DLC

# Soil Types on the Carson Estate Donation Land Claim From the UC-Davis Soil Web



## Hunting, fishing and gathering



Deer, elk, geese, trout, crayfish, and wild cherries are among the foodstuffs that the Carsons may have found on their land.

# Indigenous Foods

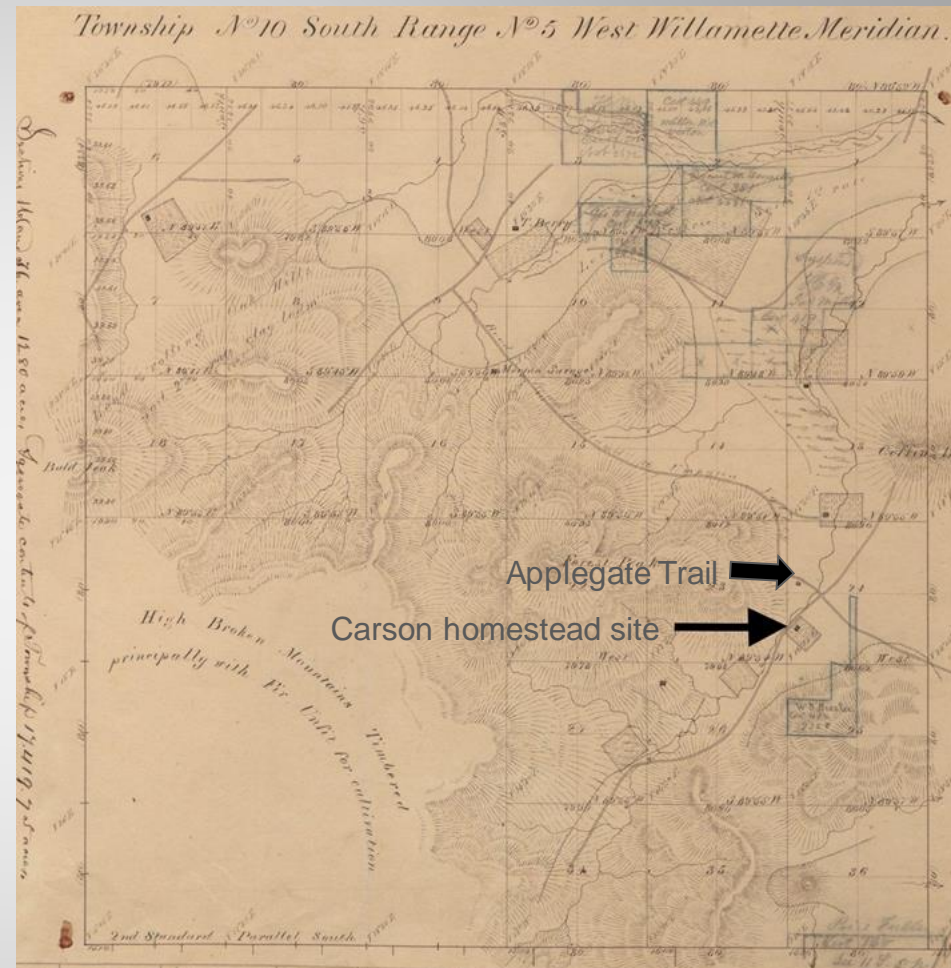
- Foods like wild cherries likely utilized by new emigrants
- Some historians indicate that emigrants did not adopt the use of many Indigenous foods such as Camas



# Letitia as a direct marketer

Given the quantity of livestock the Carsons were raising (hogs and cattle), it is likely they were selling surplus foodstuffs

- Selling to and/or bartering with neighbors
- Selling to nearby stores (Marysville/Corvallis)
- Selling to travelers on the nearby Applegate Trail – California gold rush starting in 1849



# Letitia's Douglas County Farmstead

- Homestead Act claim in 1863; patent in 1868
- Improvements – dwelling, outbuildings
- Remnants of an orchard today
- Likely raised cattle and other livestock
- Timber?



▶ View to the southwest of Letitia's Homestead Act land claim in June 2024