Letitia Carson, Her Story

Chapter 8. Cow Creek

January 4, 1853. Letitia had just paid an unethical, greedy, and adversarial neighbor $104.87 for her own cow, her bed, her washtub, and her frying pan. In public, while her long-time neighbors watched and then also bid for and purchased her remaining cattle, David's clothing, the family bible, two books, a gun, the potato patch, her cookware, dishes, and everything else the family had owned except her and her children's clothes.

Martha was seven years old and Adam was only three, and now Letitia had to leave the only home she had ever known in Oregon -- a home that she had helped build and maintain and make profitable; a wonderful place to live and to raise her children. Now this.

Greenberry Smith was going to sell her land and house, too, so now she and the children had to move. Smith had allowed them the clothes on their backs but had even taken David's cash and the family horse and wagon. Where to go, and how to get there? Letitia's life had abruptly changed in unexpected ways and now she had some important decisions to make.

It is thought that she may have traveled south in mid-March with the Niday family to their camp on the Hardy Elliff land claim in upper Cow Creek Valley -- while Greenberry was rounding up the last of the hogs and cattle occupying the former Carson ranch. The Nidays had lost several of their family to cholera along the Oregon Trail the previous year and had recuperated over the winter in Santiam City (present-day Jefferson) before heading south in search of gold.

The distance from the Carson home on Soap Creek to the Elliff land claim (Johns Ranch in present-day Azalea), where the Nidays and Letitia first stayed, is 160 miles, or about five days or a week's travel at that time by wagon and with livestock. The route taken was the main road from the Columbia River to the Sacramento Valley, which went directly south from the Carson's to Elliff's cabin and has been known at various times in its history as the California Trail, Scott-Applegate Trail, the southern route to the Oregon Trail, and Territorial Road. In 1853 it was commonly known as the Gold Mine Road. Today it is mostly I-5 and 99-W.

Another possibility is the Carsons traveled with the Vandenbosch family, and that Martha may have even continued to stay with the Vandenbosches once they reached their own Donation Land Claim in near the mouth of Cow Creek, in Douglas County.

Mary Jane Vandenbosch was the oldest daughter of Greenberry Smith's oldest brother, "Colonel" John Smith. John married Mahalla Hall in 1830, Mary Jane was born on May 13, 1831, and in 1832 the new family moved from Virginia by covered wagon to South Bend, Indiana. They were soon joined by most of the rest of the Smith family, including John's parents, George and Nancy Smith, and his youngest brothers, Greenberry and Alexander, in 1833. Greenberry was only 13 at the time, just 11 years older than his niece, Mary Jane.

According to grandson-in-law, Clement Studebaker, in a paper presented to the South Bend Historical Society in 1934, the "Colonel" had achieved his title from his rank in “the Muster, a volunteer military training organization, but saw service only fighting Indians," of which there is no actual record. The Muster was a military training arm of the Grayson County Militia, of which Smith's father-in-law, William Hall, was commander.

As noted earlier, Greenberry and Alexander had come to Oregon together in 1845, but older brother John didn't arrive until 1850, and was mostly looking for gold rather than farmland. While in Oregon -- and probably after having visited brother Greenberry -- John did take out a Donation Land Claim near the mouth of Cow Creek, where it enters the South Umpqua River, and including the present-day townsite of Riddle. He was not too happy with the generally poor gold prospects in the Cow Creek area, though, and proceeded on to California, where he also grew discouraged with his "bad luck," and soon returned to Indiana.

Once back home in South Bend, Smith convinced his daughter Mary Jane and son-in-law, James Q. C. Vandenbosch, to settle on his Cow Creek land claim and take up farming, rather than gold mining. Mary Jane had recently given birth to the couple's first child, John, named for his grandfather, so a journey by wagon over the Oregon Trail was likely considered too daunting.

Instead, the young family traveled with Greenberry's older brother Jeremiah and his son Tyra, then 14, by Vanderbilt ship from New York to Panama, crossed the Isthmus on mules by pack trail, and then boarded another Vanderbilt ship and arrived in Oregon on December 3, 1852. According to Jeremiah's great-grandson and Smith family historian, Wilmer Smith:

> Here they enjoyed the hospitality of Jeremiah's brother Greenberry Smith at his farm on the banks of Soap Creek . . . The Christmas season of 1852 was presumably spent among these pleasant surroundings while the travelers were getting their land-legs back under them.

While Smith's "presumptions" seem reasonable, his research hadn't revealed the situation that resulted from David Carson's recent death -- as Jeremiah, Tyra, and the Vandenbosches were arriving at Soap Creek, Greenberry was in the process of having his dead neighbor's land and property appraised and evicting a mother and her two children, just weeks before Christmas. Then, shortly after New Year's Day, he confiscated all the family's possessions and sold them to himself and to their neighbors at a public auction.

The "J. Smith" who purchased three heifers for $86.00 at the Carson estate sale was almost certainly Greenberry's brother Jeremiah, but there is no record of Mary Jane or James Vandenbosch being present or making any purchases. However, two weeks later, on January 20, James attested to the following statement, while accompanied by Greenberry and his handwritten listing of all sales from the estate:

> Personally appeared J. Q. C. vandenBosch Clerk of Public Sale of the Property of the Estate David Carson deceased who being duly sworn says that he is in no way interested nor of kin to any heir or devisee of said Estate, and that the above List is a true account of the Sales made by said Administrator at the date above written.

This statement was "sworn and subscribed" to Albert G. Hovey, Benton County Probate Clerk, and future Mayor of Eugene. The Vandenbosches then quickly departed Soap Creek and by January 27, 1853, had arrived at Colonel John Smith's Cow Creek land claim.

Did Letitia and the children travel with the Vandenbosches on their trip south, rather than with the Nidays or by other means? The timing is right, and Mary Jane was a new mother with baby John Walter to care for. By most accounts, James was a fastidious Dutchman apparently incapable of strenuous labor or operating a farm, and Letitia would have seemingly been a great help to the family as they were adjusting to their new home and environment.

For that matter, Martha was nearly eight years old and had undoubtedly helped with her own baby brother since he was born and must have also assisted Letitia while her father was sick and dying. The distance from the Vandenbosches' new home to Elliff's cabin, where Letitia and Jack are known to have moved, was about 15 miles further south along the same travel route; from near the mouth of Cow Creek to the northern entrance of upper Cow Creek Valley, and about two days' travel through "the Canyon" in 1853.

Mary Jane taught school to local children from her home for the many years she lived along Cow Creek and also continued to take in and care for several children during that time. James operated the local store. Could Martha have continued to stay with the Vandenbosches, and maybe learned to read and write while helping around the house and with the children? Perhaps Letitia would have felt she was safer there, with a relatively well-to-do and educated family, rather than with herself, as a single parent in an almost entirely male and potentially hostile environment in upper Cow Creek Valley.

George Abdill is the first person to specifically write about Letitia's life in Douglas County, in an article for the *Umpqua Trapper* in 1982:

> 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.

Hardy Elliff had come west from Missouri to California during the gold rush of 1849. He and his brother Tom worked the gold mines from northern Yreka to Jacksonville, before they both traveled further north to upper Cow Creek Valley and established neighboring land claims in late 1851.

Hardy purchased his claim on the south entrance to Umpqua Canyon, which included a log house used as a store for travelers and a meeting place for locals, from a well-known squatter named Joseph Knott -- who then relocated to Canyonville where he resumed his store and campground business for pack trains and other travelers on the north end of Umpqua Canyon. There, it was reported that Knott's main sales items were "tobacco, overalls, and whiskey -- mostly whiskey."

Agnes Stenstackin claimed to have made $2,500 in seven months in 1853 Canyonville, "catering to these travelers" while working in "the hotel business." Knott eventually moved to Portland and operated the Stark Street Ferry with his sons on the Willamette for many years; a stone monument now marks the local significance of that history.

Elliff's land claim, Knott's former home, was at the mouth of Clear Creek (formerly called Blue Branch) where it enters Cow Creek and included an expansive grassland watered by a year-round fish-bearing stream situated at the southern extent of Umpqua Canyon -- historically the most treacherous and difficult stretch of wagon road between the Sacramento Valley and the Columbia River -- or from the Missouri River to the southern Willamette Valley, for that matter. His homesite, which also served as a store, tavern, campground, occasional lodging, and a livery, had been strategically located on a hillside at the southernmost end of the Canyon.

In 1846, when Levi Scott first led Oregon Trail wagons into the Willamette Valley from the south, he referred to this stretch of the route as "the great Canyon in the Umpqua mountains," which was soon shortened to the "Umpqua Canyon," or the "Big Canyon," or even more generally, just "the Canyon." There is good indication that the notoriety of this section of roadway likely introduced the word "canyon" into the English language -- it wasn't until 25 years later that John Wesley Powell first christened the Grand Canyon and brought the word into wider popular use.

Scott, David Goff, two of the Applegate brothers (Jesse and Lindsay), and eleven other men -- each with a saddle horse and a pack horse with supplies -- had traveled south from the Willamette Valley in an attempt to establish a land-based route of the Oregon Trail that was shorter and also avoided hostile Indians in the Blue Mountains and the rapids of the Columbia River. Both Jesse and Lindsay had lost sons to drowning in the river when they first came to Oregon in 1843 and were deeply interested in locating a shorter, safer route for future immigrants.

The men met the 1846 emigrants at Fort Hall, in present-day Idaho, and convinced more than 200 people in more than 50 (some say nearly 100) wagons to follow them on the new route and help establish a wagon road for future pioneers. However, the Applegates and several others soon left the train, leaving it to Scott and Goff to guide and help build the new route for most of its distance.

By the time Scott and the lead wagons reached the Umpqua Canyon in late October, winter rains and snow had begun to set in early; the emigrants had already

traveled more than 2,000 difficult miles since leaving the United States; people had died and were dying; Indians had become a daily threat and killed a man, stole horses, and butchered stray cattle; most families were nearly out of food and some were starving; children were sick; and several families had left wagons, dead animals, graves, and belongings in their wake.

At that point, two men, Jack Jones and Tom Smith, arrived from Oregon City with "a few beef cattle" which they sold to the new immigrants "at a very high price." The pioneers were grateful for the food and very excited to learn what lay ahead of them and how close they might be to the settlements. Instead of good news or optimistic suggestions, Smith and Jones reported "that it would be impossible for them ever to go through the Umpqua Canyon with wagons."

This was stated in "such graphic terms," according to Scott, that after people heard this news, "A great many of them, especially of the children, were sick, and the whole company seemed to be stupefied and almost overwhelmed with despair." After much discussion, effort, and several days delay -- and the knowledge that fall rains would soon make the Canyon impassable -- Scott was able to rally a few of the men to begin the job of clearing a roadway for the wagons and livestock:

> Early the next morning I was ready to start into the canyon, but there were only four men ready to go with me. We struggled through the worst ten miles for a road I ever saw . . .
>
> We returned to camp and made our report, giving it as encouraging a turn as we truthfully could. The next day every able-bodied man that could be spared from the camp went resolutely to the task . . . that produced very satisfactory results.
>
> We worked through the canyon in four days and concluded it would **not (p. 143)** be possible for us to get the wagons through on the road we had made. There was a swift, rocky creek [Canyon Creek and Clear Creek] running through the canyon which was a serious difficulty we could neither remedy or avoid. In many places it was shut in between high, perpendicular walls of rock, where there was no other possible place for the road except in the channel of the stream, sometimes for a distance of fifty yards to a furlong [1/8 mile] in a place . . .

> There were several short bends in these narrow places which were very difficult to get through, and in some of them, large boulders blocked up the channel, where the strait was narrow and bluffs abrupt, so that a wagon could not by any means pass around them . . . In such places we were compelled to throw in logs and brush with earth and stones to fill up and bridge over the boulders . . .
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> There was not much water in the channel of the creek now, but it would take only a few hours rain to raise it to the swimming stage, when it must necessarily be impassable and wash away much of our temporary bridging and filling . . . we could see that delays were dangerous.
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> . . . When a wagon stopped, all behind it were compelled to stop, for it was impossible for one wagon to pass another. Some of the rear wagons were as much as a week in getting through to the Umpqua Valley . . .
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> A young man, the son of Alonzo Wood, died, and was buried in the canyon . . .
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> As soon as we started into the Canyon, the company, as a company, seemed to be dissolved. It just went to pieces . . .
>
> As the emigrants emerged from that terrible place, they acted like a broken army of fugitives, each one striving to find a place of refuge for himself; and they did not seem to expect either aid or sympathy from each other. So they went out in squads of three or four wagons, and frequently, one wagon traveled alone. Some had broken their wagons in the Canyon, and left them, and some had lost so much of their teams that they were compelled to abandon their wagons. Some packed their provisions and beds on a horse; some on an ox; and some, who had neither horse, mule, nor ox, packed all they had upon a cow; while a few, who had no animal left, took a pack upon their shoulders, and trudged on as best they could towards the settlements.

One story Scott relates is about John Newton, who lost his wagon and most of his team in the Canyon, became very ill, and had only a mare for his wife to ride, while he, his brother, and an orphan boy with them, packed tents, bedding, and their few provisions on the remaining oxen and walked. When they finally reached

the Umpqua Valley, Newton was murdered in his tent by two Indians with his own gun and an axe, the gun and mare stolen, and a very frightened wife, fearing the Indians would return, had to care for him through the night as he died, and alone the next day until help could arrive.

The perceived abandonment of, these original emigrant road builders by Jesse Applegate and his brother -- and the following extreme hardships every one of them and their families had endured as partial result of these actions -- immediately became a topic of bitter discussion in the Oregon City newspaper, *The Oregon Spectator;* the first and only paper published west of the Rockies at that time. Among Oregon residents and visitors, the events surrounding the creation of the southern route to the Oregon Trail remained a significant topic of controversy for many years. The moniker "Applegate Trail" was occasionally given to the entire 725-mile route from Fort Hall and was fully intended to be both derisive and a condemnation.

In April 1848, *The Spectator* published Jesse Applegate's "Waybill" for the new route from Fort Hall to the southern Willamette Valley on the front page, with information he had largely obtained from Scott. For the 12-mile stretch labeled "Through Umpqua Mountain," Scott/Applegate advised: "Send a party before you to open the road, make an early start and you will get through in a day -- you go over other mountains, this you go through."

But the road had been built, and with the discovery of gold in California it immediately began to get far greater use. Peter Burnett led a group of 150 "stout, robust, energetic. sober" and very optimistic men with "fifty heavily laden wagons" from Oregon City to Sutter's Mill to seek their fortune in September, 1848. They were soon followed by most other able-bodied men in the Willamette Valley -- one year before the so-called "'49ers." During this trip the men spent considerable time and effort improving the road through the Canyon, for themselves and for those who followed. Burnett subsequently reported in a published letter that the “worst part of the road from Oregon to California is the pass through the Umpqua mountains, called the Kanyan, on Applegate’s route.”

Burnett did poorly as a gold miner, but the following year he was elected the first Governor of the new State of California -- and his wagon road had immediately become the principal route of commerce between Sacramento mines and Willamette Valley crops. But even with these improvements and the constant new commercial traffic, early travelers through the Canyon remained well aware of its history and difficulties; an 1851 account includes the claim that "wading through

Canyon creek over a hundred times" was necessary when taking the route, and local resident Herman Reinhart noted in June, 1852:

> So we started after noon to go [north] through the canyon; we were to cross the creek 102 times in 12 or 14 miles, and it must have been a fearful drive to go through with oxen and heavy wagons. We found it hard enough with saddle horses . . . We pushed on to get to Mr. Knott's hotel and sawmill at the north of the canyon . . . at a little [present-day] town called Canyonville. We got to Knott's just before sundown . . .

According to the Nidays' niece, Rebecca Melvina Baker, when the family arrived in Canyonville in March or April 1853 -- perhaps accompanied by the Carsons -- "we were unable to get the wagon through the canyon, and my uncle hired some pack horses and managed to get part of the supplies over the canyon to Mr. Elliff's place."

Melvina, as she was called, was 17 at that time. She had been orphaned in childhood and subsequently raised by her grandparents. Aunt Caroline Niday had two daughters of her own, Nellie and Mary, and was also caring for her nephew, George Stumbo, 14, because his parents and brother -- Caroline's brother, his pregnant wife, and their son -- had all died of cholera on the Oregon Trail the previous year.

While crossing the "Big Canyon" over two days, Melvina and George walked ahead of the packhorses the entire distance. She later noted: "There was scarcely any semblance of a road although the wagons had been going over it," and, though they were on foot and could follow narrow paths and could use their hands, they still had to cross the creek "seventeen times, walking in the creek bed much of the way."

Due in part to all the immigrant, military, and commercial traffic in 1853, $20,000 was appropriated to Major Benjamin Alvord and surveyor Jesse Applegate to survey and improve the section of road from Galesville to Canyonville, considered the most difficult and costly portion, per mile, of the entire route between the Sacramento Valley and the Columbia River. This sum created significant local employment during the year, in addition to helping meet the needs of the constant, mostly seasonal, traffic. At that time the road from Elliff's to Canyonville became known locally as the "Military Road" and the Canyon as "Tenmile Canyon."

Elliff's, which Melvina first described as a "roadhouse" with a hired cook, was the last place for goods, services, or assistance for people preparing to go north into the Canyon, and it was the first such place to stay, eat, or pasture their animals for people coming out of the Canyon. The location had proven strategic for southern Oregon military actions, was well positioned commercially, and had been established by Knott as a key local and regional meeting and trade location. There would always be a need for feed, food, supplies, repairs, and other forms of aid for the many travelers heading either way in search of gold, moving livestock, seeking land claims, or engaged in military activities. The only reasonable alternative route from the Columbia to San Francisco was by ship.

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 meat, milk, and transportation. The problem was exacerbated by the heavy traffic on the road that year, yet this is where Letitia and Jack -- and perhaps Martha -- had decided to live. Mr. Niday had left his wife and children at Elliff's while he went searching for gold near Jacksonville, but perhaps Letitia saw economic opportunities, available housing, and a definite local need for her abilities in upper Cow Creek Valley.

1853 was also the year a terrible smallpox epidemic decimated the Tribes along the Columbia River and from the Puget Sound to northern California -- wherever white people, who were relatively unaffected by the disease, traveled or traded with local Indian families. There were far more Indians living along Cow Creek than Soap Creek at that time, and they had been mostly friendly with their new white visitors and neighbors, but the local bands were also seriously affected by smallpox and many of them died as a result. Among the dead was beloved Milaweta, a widely respected Cow Creek leader and a peaceful and helpful friend to the incoming white immigrants.

A well-known story first told by Melvina, that has been verbally passed down through four generations of Elliff women and interested neighbors, is that Letitia was staying with the Niday family women and children when all the men were away from camp (or away from the Elliff cabin, depending on the version). At some point they were approached by six (or less than 10) Indian men, possibly with horses. At first the men were friendly, but then they began acting in a more hostile manner. At that point Letitia is said to have emerged from the tent (or from the cabin's kitchen), a “large coal-black woman with a deep voice,” brandishing a butcher knife or a cleaver and frightened the men away, thereby saving the women and kids. 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 and immediately fled.

This is a story that has survived for more than 170 years, most recently repeated by Joann Sanstede, Melvina's great-granddaughter, who was told the story many times by her aunt, Bess Clough, who heard it directly from Grandmother Melvina, who lived nearby until Bess was in her 30s. The story almost certainly has a strong basis in fact, given the consistent details over time and the known veracity of the tellers. It is difficult to determine how “large” or “deep-voiced” Letitia actually was, though; partly because stories can become exaggerated over time, and partly because Melvina was less than five feet tall as an adult, and local Indian families were typically not much taller at that time. Letitia would not have had to be very large at all to dwarf everyone – especially with a large knife or cleaver in hand!

Another version of the story, also from Bess Clough for some reason, was posthumously published and seems far less likely. This account supposedly occurs in the fall of 1855 when active warfare was taking place in Cow Creek Valley and Indians and whites were killing each other. Melvina would have been married that year, Elliff's cabin would have been fortified, Hardy or the military would have never left the women unprotected, and no children were present, which also seems unlikely:

> Grandmother said warriors complete with war paint and feathers came in one day when she was alone with Aunt Tish. They made themselves pretty obnoxious. Grandmother, who by that time knew quite a little jargon, shamed them and made them get out of the house.

It is difficult to imagine how a tiny teenage white girl speaking a few words of trade jargon ["Chinuk Wawa"] could have been intimidating, but it is easy to see how the story might have been changed by an admiring granddaughter. Clough wrote this as a "sketch" in her 70s that was published 20 years later, and it seems to have been partly written as an historical fiction. Letitia would have certainly taken the lead in this scenario, but an unprotected Cow Creek cabin visited by Indians in war paint while men and children were absent in 1855 likely never happened.

Murders, rapes, and thefts had been generally constant between traveling whites and local Indians ("Rogues") on the Rogue River portion of the California pack trail, immediately south of upper Cow Creek Valley, since the 1830s. These tribes were a serious concern when Levi Scott and the first wagon train passed through in 1846, and problems with harassments, killings, and theft between local natives and

whites became more frequent and pronounced with the 1848 to 1850 California Gold Rush traffic.

On May 15, 1851, a pack train was attacked along Bear Creek, a major Rogue River tributary, and a man named David Dilley killed. On June 3, Dr. James McBride and 31 miners were returning to Oregon when they were attacked by an estimated 50 to 150 Indians, led by "Chief Chucklehead," who was killed in the hours-long skirmish; no whites were killed, one was wounded, but the livestock, gold dust, and other properties were stolen.

At about the same time as the McBride attack, wealthy and one-armed Mexican war hero, Major Philip Kearney, had been ordered to lead two regiments of US Army dragoons south from Fort Vancouver to the Department of the Pacific at Benicia, California. On June 11 he and his troops arrived at Joseph Knott's house, where they were met with "hundreds" of alarmed miners and settlers, of which 68 had signed a petition for Kearney.

Knott still owned the land and buildings at the southern end of the Canyon at that time and it was already a principal way station for people and pack teams moving to or from the gold mines or the Willamette Valley. He had assembled the large group of local men with the intent of attacking and killing Indians along the route to Yreka, but used Kearney's unexpected arrival to help write, sign, and present the following petition instead:

> Sir: The undersigned, citizens of the United States and residents of Oregon, beg leave respectfully to inform you that the savages in this vicinity and along the southern frontier of this territory are now in a state of actual hostility to the white inhabitants. They have recently attacked and robbed several parties, and murdered a number of citizens pursuing their peaceful avocations. Those engaged in mining operations have, by the determined hostility of the natives, been forced to embody themselves in large parties and maintain a military organization for their common safety, which draws heavily on the time of each individual, and greatly diminishes the profits of labor. Besides which, many persons who have formed settlements for agricultural and commercial purposes have been forced to abandon their homes and flee to a place of safety. All of these facts we are, if desired, able to establish by the most positive evidence.

> We will further state that if you consider the case one justifying you in attempting the fortification and safety of the southern frontier, we pledge ourselves, so long as you may be detained in the performance of this, to us, highly important service, to supply your troops with ammunition and subsistence at prices as low to the government as such articles can be obtained and transported to the seat of your operations.

The petition was signed "*Earnestly soliciting a reply, we remain, with the highest respects, Your most obedient servants,"* by Knott and 67 of his neighbors and presented to Kearney at the location Letitia and Jack -- and maybe Martha -- would call home just two years later.

On June 17, in direct response to Knott's petition, and with Scott, Applegate, and William T'Vault acting as guides, Kearny and his dragoons made an unprovoked attack on an estimated 300 Indians near Table Rocks. Captain James Stuart was killed by a poison arrow in the attack. Stuart was a close friend, and Kearny immediately called for volunteers to continue and expand the "battles" with local natives. He was soon joined by nearly 100 men, mostly miners from California, and including 30 men led by General Joe Lane, who later recalled to Kearny's biographer:

> These Indians were at that time the most warlike and formidable tribe on the Pacific coast. Never having known defeat, they were exceedingly bold in their depredations upon the miners and settlers and were the terror of all.

The Rogue River tribes, said to have been led by Chief John, had very few guns, and the skirmishes and actual battles took place over several day’s time. John had boasted his men "could keep a thousand arrows in the air continually," but the numbers, guns, and horses of the Americans proved too much over the next eight days and an estimated 50 Indian men were killed and 30 women and children taken hostage. Kearney's official report stated:

> We have taken many prisoners from among the women and children -- above thirty. They will prove useful in effecting a treaty, or holding the Indians in check. It was impossible to spare the men, as they combat with desperation to the last, meeting any advances with treachery.

Jackson County Judge Silas J. Day, "perhaps the best known of the Southern Oregon pioneers," moved to Jacksonville with the gold rush in 1851 and spent the rest of his life and career there. His recollections of Kearney's campaign against the Rogue River Indians, as an enlisted volunteer, included the systematic hunting and killing of males and the treatment of the captured women and girls:

> When we struck Major Kearny's camp he said he wanted volunteers. He wanted to give those Indians a thrashing; there was quite a number of our men, as many as 50, all mounted and well-armed, and the expedition cleaned out about all the males that were in sight. They were 2 or 3 weeks doing the job up, but it was a good job done. Those 40 dragoons took each of them a squaw upon his horse and came through Yreka in the night and went down to Strawberry Valley and struck camp there. Gen. Joseph Lane at that time was mining on a bar of Scott River, had a lot of Klickitat Indians, peaceable fellows, in his employ. Major Kearny sent a messenger with an extra horse and a guide to Gen. Lane's camp, and Gen. Lane went to Major Kearny's camp. They had a hyas close wawa ["good, important discussion"] about the propriety of taking those Indian squaws down to Benicia in California, and Gen. Lane counseled that the squaws be taken back to Rogue River, and as Gen. Lane started for his home in Douglas County with his Klickitat braves with him, he took charge of those squaws and brought them to the T'Vault ranch, known as such after the settlement of the country, just opposite where Gold Hill is now.

On July 8, just three weeks after Kearny's initial attack, Lane returned to Bear Creek Valley with the captured women and children and delivered them to Governor John Gaines, who had arrived from Oregon City with the intention of establishing peace. With the return of the women and children, Gaines then successfully negotiated a treaty with Chief Joe (Te-com-tont), Chief Sam (Toquahear), and nine other local leaders, who agreed to end hostilities, to return stolen properties, and:

> That we, the chiefs of the said tribe of Rogue River Indians, for ourselves and our nation, do agree to put ourselves under the exclusive care, guardianship and protection of the government of the United States . . .

The Oregon Donation Land Law had been in effect since September, 1850, and with this declaration of peace -- and maybe shortly before -- Indian Agent Alonzo

A. Skinner and his interpreter, Chesley Grey took up land claims in Bear Creek Valley, a major tributary of the Rogue River and significant area of occupation, travel, and trade by local and neighboring tribes. They were soon followed by whole families of whites and single men, who began arriving with herds of livestock, and each making permanent claims of hundreds of acres of prime valley land entirely for their own personal uses and occupation.

These claims were being made on traditional fishing and village sites, oak woodlands, and camas prairies, and the native foods in these locations were being grazed, plowed under, or rooted by hogs. No treaties had been written regarding these lands that were still owned and mostly occupied by local Indian bands, but the new arrivals seemed confident in their belief that the U.S. government would eventually honor their claims under the new Donation Land Law. Within months more than two dozen claims had been made, and 10,000 acres taken without compensation.

At some point around this time, Joseph Knott had sold his place to Hardy Elliff and relocated to Canyonville. According to early Jacksonville resident David Linn, on October 28, 1851, which he "distinctly remembered" because it was his birthday, Canyonville consisted of "one log cabin," where they:

> . . . stopped here a short time for reinforcements, as it was considered dangerous for so small a party to travel through the Rogue River Country . . . The party went through the Canyon in a day, and camped at Hardy Elliff's. Judge Skinner and party were there on their way to Rogue River, where Mr. Skinner was to take up his residence as Indian agent.

Then, in December, James Clugage and James Poole struck gold and filed claims at Rich Gulch, in present-day Jacksonville, and word quickly traveled to California. Hundreds of people immediately began arriving, looking for gold. These newcomers were almost entirely comprised of young white and Mexican men and hardly any women, children, or elderly; but lots of guns, horses, liquor, and diseases. Also, new languages, new religions, and new laws.

In the spring of 1852, John Long bought the right to trade and keep a ferry on Rogue River from "Chief" (or "Old") Taylor and an Indian woman, probably his wife, for $50; William Brisbom and B. F. Dowell bought the right to mine and trade on Rogue River and Grave Creek, within the boundaries of the country claimed by Taylor and his band, for a hundred pounds of flour and ten pounds of

tobacco for the chief, and two bolts of calico for his wife and tribe. These three men "never had any trouble with the Indians," but seven miners camped near the mouth of Galice Creek, without having paid for the right to do so, were murdered by Taylor and his band in December, 1852.

At that time there were no civil courts in Jackson County or northern California except for "miner's courts," sometimes led by a local "alcade," which "adopted the U.S. common law regarding property and the Mexican law as to life and death." In mid-June, 1853, Chief Taylor and two others were captured and tried by a 12-man jury for the Galice Creek murders, were found guilty and hung the same day.

Public hangings were fairly common on the frontier at that time, and often included whites accused of crimes as well as Indians. Jacksonville residents infamously once even murdered two young Indian boys "protesting their innocence of any wrongdoing" that were publicly hung without even a trial, based on mob action and the questionable claims of one person.

"General" Joel Palmer was another "Old Oregonian" who had crossed the Oregon Trail in 1845. He captained one of the largest trains to leave Independence and likely encountered the Carsons during the journey. He was also one of the leaders in establishing the Barlow Trail, and Palmer Glacier is named in recognition of his being the first documented person to climb Mount Hood during that venture. Since his arrival in Oregon that fall, he had captained another wagon train to the Willamette Valley, helped broker peace in the Cayuse War, gone gold mining in California, platted a 500-acre town (Dayton) on his land near the mouth of the Yamhill River with his hotel and livery at its very center, and in 1853 President Franklin Pierce appointed him as Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Oregon Territory.

Palmer's first report as Superintendent, on June 23, 1853, stressed the negative impacts of white immigrants on the native population; in particular, deadly diseases and "vices," by which he primarily meant murder, theft, rape, and prostitution -- and often fueled by alcohol. His stated concern was that some Tribes could become extinct if they were not separated away from white populations into reservations and taught new survival skills:

> That these Indians cannot long remain on the reserves in the heart of the settlement . . . is too clear to admit of argument, vice, and disease, the baleful gifts of civilization, are hurrying them away, and ere long the bones of the last of many a band may whiten on the graves of his

> ancestors. If the benevolent designs of the government to preserve and elevate these remnants of the aborigines are to be carried forward to a successful issue, there appears to be one path open; – a home remote from the settlement must be selected for them; there they must be guarded from the pestiferous influences of degraded white men, and restrained by proper laws from violence and wrong among themselves. Let comfortable houses be erected for them, seeds and proper implements furnished and instruction and encouragement given them in the cultivation of the soil; let school houses be erected and teachers employed to instruct their children, and let the missionaries of the gospel of peace be encouraged to dwell among them.

Palmer's efforts to create reservations apart from white population centers likely resulted in saving many lives and preventing some families or even tribes from going extinct but may have been misguided in his vision of church, state, and farming skills being the salvation of these families. In the meantime, tensions and killings had begun to intensify again between local Indian populations and invading goldminers and settlers along the Rogue River and vigilante squads were being recruited to address the problem. The August 28, 1853 *Daily Alta California* in San Francisco, for example, reported (page 2):

> The Indians and whites have had an engagement in Rogue River Valley, near Jacksonville, and after fighting for over three hours the whites were compelled to retreat. Both parties suffered much loss.
>
> Amongst those that were taken prisoners was Asa Colburn, of Jacksonville, who was butchered in a most horrible manner, his legs being cut off, his entrails taken out, and his body shockingly mutilated.
>
> Reinforcements from all quarters have been sent to the aid of the whites. A company of some thirty left Crescent City on Sunday, the 21st inst., and the citizens are forming another to leave as soon as possible.

Thirty-five years later, in 1878, the front page of the *Ashland Tidings* posted this account for their readers:

> The 5th and 6th days of August, 1853, will long be remembered by the people of Southern Oregon as dark days in their early history. On the 4th, Edward Edwards had been murdered at his home on Stuart's Creek (Bear Creek), and on the 5th, Thomas Wills was killed. The next day, August 6th, Noland was killed in his cabin among the miners on Jackson Creek.
>
> On the 7th of August, the miners captured two Shasta Indians, one on Jackson Creek, and the other on Applegate. These Indians were both in their war paint when caught. They were brought to Jacksonville and tried by a miners jury and hanged before 2 o'clock the same day. In my opinion they were justly punished.

A majority of the volunteer militia from California and southern Oregon were out-of-work miners expecting to be paid for their service by the U.S. government, and many were. Some of these volunteers fashioned themselves as "Exterminators" and were even encouraged by local newspapers to "exterminate" the entire Indian population -- men, women, and children -- and several of these individuals attempted to do just that.

While the southern Oregon volunteer militia were mostly miners, those from the Umpqua and Willamette valleys were largely made of farmers and townspeople. Hardy Elliff volunteered for the Douglas County militia and was elected Captain. During the decisive August 14-15 "Battle of Table Rocks," in which the Indian forces were soundly defeated, he captained his volunteer dragoons in coordination with General Joseph Lane, who commanded the Army "regulars."

The *Oregon Sentinel* was founded in Jacksonville in 1855 by William T'Vault. In 1867 it reported on the 1853 hostilities:

> On the 14th of August Dr. [William R.] Rose and Mr. [John R.] Hardin were killed between the Willow Springs and Dardanelles. The houses situated between Dean's and Rogue River were set on fire by the Indians on the night after Rose and Hardin were killed, and most of them burned. The main body of the volunteers were encamped on Stuart [Bear] Creek, near where Hopwood's mill now stands. Several families were located at Dardanelles, and there is but little doubt that they would have been massacred had it not been for the gallantry of Capt. Hardy Elliff, commander of an independent company of

> volunteers, who, with his company, charged through the Indian lines, passing over the dead body of Rose, and was under the fire of the Indians for several miles; however, they passed through without receiving any serious wounds, and rendered very timely aid to the unprotected families.

According to Bess Clough, in reference to her grandfather Hardy Elliff, who lived until she was nearly six years old, "The one thing he deeply regretted all of his life was that he had accidentally shot a squaw during the war of 1855 [1853?] as she passed between him and one of the Chiefs at a campfire."

Lane was the first Governor of Oregon Territory and had recently been elected as a Territorial Congressional Representative -- and would have to leave for Washington, D.C. shortly to fulfill that obligation. He was a popular outspoken Democrat that had already given his name to Lane County in 1851 and became one of Oregon's first two elected Senators in 1859, where his pro-secession viewpoints during the subsequent Civil War pretty much ended his political career.

Following their defeat at Table Rock, Indian leaders met with General Lane to make peace on September 8, and agreed to meet on the 10th with Lane and Joel Palmer to discuss details of a formal land sale and exchange. The "Table Rock Treaty," also known as the "Rogue River Treaty," gave the U.S. government and its citizens ownership of the territorial Rogue River lands of three Tribal groups, the Takelma, Dakubetede, and Shasta.

In exchange for a series of payments including housing, clothing, and farm tools, the leaders of these people agreed they would remain on a temporary reservation on the north side of the Rogue River bounded by Table Rocks "until a suitable selection [for a permanent reservation] shall be made by the direction of the President of the United States." Fort Lane was then built on the south side of the Rogue for the military and Indian agents to maintain order within the reservation and to keep hostile white people from entering.

Matthew Deady also participated in the September 8-10 peace talks and treaty signing with Palmer, Lane, and "Indian Joseph." He had just been appointed as the first District Judge for Jacksonville and would immediately be replacing the "miner's courts" going forward. Deady was elected President of the 1857 Oregon Constitutional Convention and served as the sole Judge for the District of Oregon

for the U.S. District Court until his death in 1893. In 1888 he reflected on the 1853 treaty negotiations:

> The final execution of the instrument was postponed until the 10th because I informed Lane that I had left the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, General Palmer, at Hardy Elliff's, on Friday, and that he would certainly be up in a few days, and was authorized to make a general treaty, including cession of lands, reservations, and the like.
>
> The scene of the famous "peace talk" between Joseph Lane and Indian Joseph -- two men who had so lately met in mortal combat -- was worthy of the pen of Sir Walter Scott and the pencil of Salvator Rosa.
>
> That evening I rode up to Jacksonville through what I thought was the most picturesque valley I ever saw. The next morning I opened in due form the United States District Court for the County of Jackson -- the first court that was ever held in Oregon south of the Umpqua -- and the word of the law superseded the edge of the sword.

Important news traveled as fast as a man on a horse along the California Trail in 1853. Elliff's was a landmark stopping place and Hardy Elliff was a known and respected associate of Oregon's major politicians, military leaders, miners, and roadbuilders. And because she and Jack lived -- and undoubtedly worked -- at "Camp Elliff," Letitia must have met and maybe even known many of these individuals. Certainly, she and everyone else along the road knew what was taking place on a near-daily basis and made personal decisions accordingly.

Whether Elliff arrived along with General Palmer on September 10th, or not, is unknown. On the 19th Palmer treated with the Cow Creeks under similar terms, and Elliff most likely attended that meeting, held on Council Creek, a tributary of lower Cow Creek, about five miles upstream from the Vandenbosch home. These bands were assigned a temporary reservation on lower Cow Creek away from the main travel route; and also "until a suitable selection shall be made by the direction of the President of the United States." The treaty was signed by Palmer and "Quin-ti-oo-san, or Bighead, principal chief, and My-n-e-letta [Miwaleta], or Jackson; and Tom, son of Quin-ti-oo-san, subordinate chiefs, on the part of the Cow Creek band of Umpqua tribe of Indians."

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 Military Road -- including the Nidays' original campsite and Elliff's cabin. Their first child was born nine months later, in August. According to Bess Clough:

> Aunt Tish Carson and small son Jack, freed Negro slaves, came to be with grandmother and stayed a year or so. Grandmother's oldest girl, Alice, was born the fall of 1854 and Aunt Tish took care of her during delivery and was helped by Aunt Fanny Levens, a midwife and wife of a storekeeper.

A year after the 1853 treaties were signed it was becoming apparent that the temporary reservations were resulting in somewhat safer and more stable conditions, but in addition to deadly diseases, occasional rapes, brutal killings, and mutilations, reservation Indians began suffering from malnutrition and starvation. The fact that the whites were excluding native families from their former camas meadows, huckleberry fields, oak woodlands, and were running hogs through traditional gathering places for such foods as camas, berries, and acorns was creating another survival problem.

Samuel H. Culver was an Indian Agent based at Fort Lane and had coauthored the September Rogue River and Cow Creek treaties with Superintendent Palmer. In his July 20, 1854 report from the "Rogue River Valley Indian Agency" to Palmer at his Dayton headquarters, Culver wrote:

> The food of the Indians consists of deer, elk, and bear-meat, with fish of several kinds, principally salmon, and a great variety of roots. They cannot supply themselves by the chase for want of ammunition, as there is [an Oregon] territorial statute prohibiting the sale of it to them. And were it otherwise, it would not be prudent to give them much at this time. They take more of less salmon during five months in the year. Formerly they subsisted in the main upon roots, of which there was a great variety and quantity; each kind had its locality and time of ripening or becoming fit for use. But the whites have nearly destroyed this kind of food by ploughing the ground and crowding the Indians from localities where it could once be procured. They did not find these roots upon any one tract of country, but there would be an abundance in one locality one month, and of another variety at another place during the ensuing. The settlers interfered, by the cultivation of the soil in the valleys, with the obtaining of this species of food to

> such an extent, that while they can get plenty during certain seasons of the year, they will at other times be in a starving condition.

The treaties stipulated that people staying on the reservations would be given periodic allotments of clothing, blankets, and tools, but food purchases were considered "too expensive" and in excess of budgeted amounts. Still, the Tribal chiefs strongly urged Culver to make purchases of food rather than blankets and clothing that were being offered, because "something upon which life could be sustained ought first to be looked to," and "that it was a thing impossible to control their people with certain famine staring them in the face."

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. There is no indication of how she obtained this money, whether by traveling to Corvallis or Roseburg to meet with Attorney Thayer or by post, in what form it was delivered, or how Letitia may have spent or saved this sum. Gold coins were not very common at that time, and banks were even more uncommon. Trade and vouchers were usual forms of payment, but those methods seem unlikely ways to settle a lawsuit. The 1855 $1 gold coin featured the head of an Indian princess, while the $2.50 coin featured Lady Liberty; Letitia likely traded, at least in part, with these denominations.

Five months later, in early October, racial warfare -- based primarily on cultural differences -- between Indians and whites in southern Oregon abruptly resumed. Because they were starving, two bands of Takelma Indians had moved from the reservation to a traditional village site at the mouth of Little Butte Creek, a short distance from the reservation boundary, just across the Rogue River from Upper Table Rock.

At that time James Lupton had been recently elected to serve as Democratic territorial representative. On October 7 he called a meeting in Jacksonville to plan the extermination of all Indians not living on the reservation. He then led a militia of seven parties and more than 100 men into an early morning ambush of the defenseless Little Butte Creek camps and killed at least 23 people, mostly women, children, and elderly men. Lupton and "one other white man" were also killed. A few days after the attack, Joel Palmer condemned it as a "wholesale butchery of defenseless women and children" of "friendly bands of Indians living peacefully on the reservation."

The "Lupton Massacre" triggered the 1855 resumption of the Rogue River Indian Wars, and about a dozen Indians immediately left the reservation, traveling westward along the Rogue River and murdered at least 22 white settlers and tradesmen and their family members, killing livestock and burning homes, fields, and haystacks along the way.

According to Bess Clough: "Grandfather took grandmother, baby Alice, Aunt Tish and Jack down to the Galesville Stockade where they spent nine months forted up from the Indians." Sadly, Alice died in early November shortly after entering the stockade. Family tradition claims she had died of starvation.

Oregon Governor George Curry called for "nine companies of volunteers" to combat the Indians on October 15. Two months later, on December 15, and following Lane's lead, an Oregon county was named after him.

On October 24, Holland Bailey was murdered on the southern foothills of upper Cow Creek Valley, and four others were wounded herding a "drove of hogs and several ox teams loaded with goods" in an attack by an estimated band of 50 Indians; who then proceeded to kill the livestock and set fire to all of the fields, barns, and haystacks of the white settlers in the valley, and all of the homes but the three fortifications: Elliff's, Levens', and Smith's (or Galesville).

William J. Martin had been elected "Major" of the northern battalion of volunteers from the Umpqua and Willamette Valley settlements. Captains were elected from the various counties, and written orders to Captain Joseph Bailey on November 10 contained the infamous instructions to use his own "discretion" when dealing with the non-reservation Indians they encountered, "provided you take no prisoners." On that date Captain Laban Buoy and B Company, Second Oregon Mounted Volunteers of Lane County were to be 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:

> Capt. Buoy will move with his entire command as soon as practicable for Camp Elliff near the south end of the Canyon and there remain until further orders. You will leave a sufficient force at this place [Camas Valley's "Fort Bailey"] until relieved by Capt. Keeney.
>
> You will use your best exertions in keeping open the road from the crossing of Cow Creek to the northern end of the Canyon.

> You will furnish the families that are unprotected en route from Cow Creek to the northern end of the Canyon with a sufficient number of men to render them safe. In chastising the enemy all is left to your discretion *provided you take no prisoners* [Emphasis given in published transcript].

William H. Byars spent most of his career as a US government General Land Office surveyor, meticulously noting and measuring the forests, meadows, streams, homesites, and Indian trails of western Oregon lands in the late 1800s. From 1890 to 1894 he was Surveyor General of Oregon; prior to that time he had been a Douglas County school superintendent, a publisher of the Roseburg *Plain Dealer*, and was elected Oregon State Printer. In 1856 he was a 17-year-old "pony express" rider, delivering mail bi-monthly from Oakland, Oregon to Yreka, California, during which time he made the following observations:

> Here at the time I write was Camp Elliff -- Hardy Elliff's home, a log house in a nice opening surrounded by a palisade. These fortifications were generally constructed on the same plan and were as follows: A ditch two or three feet deep was dug on the line of fortifications. Into this ditch were placed logs 10 to 12 inches in diameter on end as close together as they could be placed. Two smaller timbers were then set one on, to break the joint, and the ground was well rammed back in place to hold the timbers solid. Port holes were then cut at proper heights and sufficiently close together to accommodate the besieged. These were usually stopped up unless in use. A bastion was constructed at each angle in order to protect the sides . . .
>
> All the places between here and Jacksonville not so protected, were burned . . . by the Indians, and many people killed. After passing several blackened home places, the next is the home of Dan Levens. This place was attacked several times, Mr. [Stephen] Mynett, a settler near by was shot through the lungs . . . poor Charley [Johnson] fell and the Indians scalped him and mangled his body in plain view of the house, Rev. J[ohn]. W. Miller being one of the witnesses [Miller was a young, "slender," well-known Methodist "circuit rider" in western Oregon during the 1850s] . . . The next place standing was the residence of Henry Smith, near a large stockade called "Camp Smith." Smith's house is full of bullet holes made by the Indian's guns, the house having been attacked several times. Smith was postmaster and the name of the post office was Galesville . . .

> . . . The same day they burned all of the houses in the valley excepting the three heretofore mentioned . . . Many white men were as barbarous as the Indians. Near this place an Indian boy, belonging to a tribe in lower California, with a pack train as bell boy (the boy to ride the bell horse) was shot off the bell horse of [a] passing train for no other reason than that of being an Indian.

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. This was the most decisive victory for the Indians in the war. Faced with an attack of an estimated 120 Army troops and volunteers, they retreated into the woods and began picking off soldiers from deep cover. After two days the troops stopped fighting, having exhausted their supplies of food and ammunition, with nine dead and 22 seriously wounded. The weather was so cold that the corpses were said to be "frozen stiff" within a few hours. Estimates of Indians killed were from seven to "less than 10."

The following day many of the defeated volunteers, including the wounded, stayed at one of the three buildings still standing in upper Cow Creek Valley -- Galesville, Levens’, or Elliff's -- before returning to their homes or recuperation in the Umpqua and Willamette Valleys. At least two more men died of their wounds.

At that point, given the open and deadly hostilities on both sides, Superintendent Palmer became concerned about the safety of treaty Indians still remaining on the reservations and decided to have them immediately removed. For this purpose he had selected 60,000 acres upstream from his home in Dayton, along the South Yamhill River headwaters in Grand Ronde Valley, and began purchasing the existing Donation Land Claims in 1855.

The "Yamhill River Reserve" may have initially been intended as a temporary reservation for Willamette Valley Kalapuyans but had since become "a suitable selection made by the direction of the President of the United States" and was ratified as the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation by President James Buchanan in 1857. This determination established Grand Ronde as the permanent home for the native people who had already been moved there, including dozens of families who had been Letitia's neighbors on Cow Creek until 1856.

With his decision to remove the Indians remaining on the Umpqua and Table Rocks Reservations as quickly as possible, Palmer immediately headed south to arrange for that transfer. His official report of the trip included these observations:

> The trip to the Umpqua Reservation was performed through one of the severest storms that I have ever experienced in Oregon. We reached that point on the evening of the 17th [December] where I found nearly three hundred Umpquas, Calapooias, Cow Creeks & Molallalas . . . The census of this camp gave 89 men, 133 women, 40 boys, and 37 girls, many of whom were suffering from sickness, probably induced by a change of diet, being confined to flour and fresh beef, and exposure. They had been hurried upon the reservation as a means of safety and deprived of their usually comfortable lodges, and variety of roots, berries, and fish, and the crops of vegetables prepared by many for winter's use, were dying off rapidly. With a few exceptions they were destitute of shoes or mockasins, and many nearly in a state of nudity.

As the Oregon volunteer militia searched fruitlessly for the warring Rogue River tribes, Palmer sent instructions to Indian Agents Robert Metcalfe and George Ambrose to immediately begin moving people from the Table Rocks and Umpqua Reservations to the Grand Ronde. Metcalfe had been the interpreter at the Council of Table Rocks, had an Indian wife and daughters, and the reservation included his original Donation Land Claim, which he sold to the Army before becoming appointed Agent. He took responsibility for moving the nearly 300 people from Cow Creek and kept a required daily journal, which contains several insights regarding weather, terrain, and the health of Tribal members:

> I arrived at the Rogue R[iver] Agency on 2nd December & found most of the houses on the road from the Cannon [Canyon] to the agency (distance about sixty miles) burned to the ground and a large number of horses cattle and hogs killed on the way by the present hostile band of Indians on that district . . .
>
> where I writ you on the 24th December and then receiving additional instruction from you for the immediate removal of the Umpqua Indians, I commenced making the necessary preparations to accomplish that object purchasing wagons & trains and providing clothing for the journey;
>
> but a snow storm which commenced falling on the 25th December covered the ground to the depth of eighteen inches and followed by intense cold weather up to the first of Jan 1856 rendered it impossible

for me to move camp until the 10th Jan at which time the weather had moderated and the snow began to disappear,

I moved camp from the reserve on the 10th Jan & brought the Indians up one and a half (1½) miles to Mr. Cadwaller's [possibly Jesse Cadwallader's claim in Coles Valley] house . . . then there were many objections urged to leaving the land of their nativity where the bodies of their forefathers rest and many of them expressed a desire to die in their own country . . .

[January 14] Lewis [Nepisank] "chief" here expressed a desire to remain in the Umpqua as he had a large amount of property which he could not take with him; and would have to sacrifice too much if he left then . . . by travelling until dark we made ten (10) miles to Mr. Wilson's through a country entirely destitute of vegetation of any description having been destroyed through the summer by the grasshoppers and I had to purchase dry wheat straw at thirty dollars per ton for our starving teams.

[January 15] During the night seven Indians deserted, and when I arrived at Mr. Linsy [Lindsay] Applegate's [present-day Yoncalla] I called to get some Calapooya Indians (15) who were encamped there; they positively refused to come. Mr. Applegate appeared to sustain them and encourage them in their determination . . .

[January 16] During the night an Indian woman died (chronic disease) after she was buried we resumed our march . . .

[January 19] There being a great many old people complained so much of having leg weary I thought it advisable – to remain in camp where an Indian has died;

[January 24] an Indian child died during the march and a woman of the Umpqua band died after we arrived in camp moved eight (8) miles

[January 26] decamped & moved to Reed's [Levi Scott's original land claim and cabin, adjacent to Soap Creek Valley and "jumped" by Thomas Read in the spring of 1846 while Scott was helping establish the southern route of the Oregon Trail] about seven (7) miles

> [probably Berry Creek] during the day we had several fights in the road caused by liquor sold them in the night by some reckless whites
>
> [January 27] remained in Camp and went back for some Indians who were drunk and did not get in until Sunday noon.
>
> [January 29] There was an Indian man missing in the morning and could not be accounted for by any person in camp; after searching some two hours we found his blood where he had been murdered and thrown into the Creek; no trace of the murderer suspicion rested upon a Klickitat Indian (Joe) Rained through the day road very bad traveled about five (5) miles.
>
> [February 2] Decamped & moved five (5) miles to the Grand Ronde Encampment discharged most of the hired hands and took charge of that Sub Agency by your order . . .

The original census of the 289 "Umpquas" that arrived at Grand Ronde included 220 members of Cow Creek bands, 30 Yoncalla Kalapuyans, and 36 Molallans. They were assigned tents and set up campgrounds along the South Yamhill River, where several families retained residences, under government control and in poverty, but relative safety, for the next several generations. On February 28th Metcalfe received orders to assist Agent Ambrose, who was in the process of moving the Rogue River Indians to the Yamhill Reservation, and met up with him at "the Cannon."

Ambrose had started north on February 23 with about 400 members of the Table Rock Reservation, principally local natives who had sheltered at Fort Lane during the fighting. Like Metcalfe, he kept a required daily journal for his report, submitted on his arrival at Grand Ronde with 395 people on March 25. The weather was much better at this time of year, but the Canyon remained a difficult obstacle:

> [March 3] the mornings still continue quite cool & frosty, our route lay almost directly North over some what better ground than for five days previous, our cattle was jaded considerable by our continuous marches, without forage or grass, neither of which could be procured, we drove a distance of seven miles & encamped just within the mouth of the canyon.

> [March 4] the weather still continues fine for the season. I took the Indians in advance & went through the canyon before night in order to obtain supplies of which we were getting quite short. In passing through I found some heavy obstructions, the high waters during the fore part of the winter had thrown in large drift logs & a slide from the mountain had filled up the channel of the creek, all of which required to be removed before wagons could pass, which was accordingly done by Lieut. Underwood who sent a detachment in advance for that purpose . . .

> [March 5] . . . the cattle very much jaded & tired as no forage could be had I secured the best pasture I could find & turned them in that. An Indian girl died. This evening we were now a distance of eleven miles from our camp of the evening of the third being occupied two days in making it . . .

Sometime in March Letitia must have encountered Greenberry Smith's attorney John Kelsay, but now in his role as "Colonel" John Kelsey, Benton County Volunteer Indian fighter, rather than *Carson v. Smith* legal adversary. She was either at the Elliff or Galesville camp, and he undoubtedly visited and/or stayed at both. Did they talk? Did he bring up the latest details of the lawsuit and gossip from Soap Creek Valley? Did she apprise him of the current situation on the battlefront? Perhaps personally introduce him to Hardy Elliff and other key locals? Or did they even make eye contact?

At that time upper Cow Creek Valley was almost entirely populated by young men, whether farmers, miners, or military. There were likely no more than five or six women total due to the recent removal of the local Indian families, and Jack was likely the oldest of just a few children -- Martha isn't mentioned, and this would have been a problematic environment for an 11-year-old girl. Letitia and very-pregnant Melvina were the two prominent pioneer women of the community, and their common bond was Hardy Elliff, its leading figure. Kelsay was a newcomer who had just arrived as the highest-ranking member of the constantly present, and locally much-needed, volunteer militia. And he and Letitia were currently engaged in a contentious lawsuit. There were likely days at a time when these people all shared a stockade and meals.

Kelsay had been elected captain of the Benton County volunteers and a month later, on March 15 or 18, about 30 men elected him as "Colonel" of the 2nd Regiment Oregon Mountain Volunteers -- a title which he preferred to use for the rest of his life and career and that appeared on his obituary, even after he had become a Judge of the Oregon Supreme Court. It is unknown how the spelling of his name became changed during his military career, but early historians use "Kelsay" for the Constitutional Convention representative and "Kelsey" as the person who led the Little Meadow Massacre that led to the naming of Battle Bar, Kelsey Creek, Kelsey Falls (Upper and Lower), and Kelsey Canyon on the Rogue River. Apparently, they were thought to be separate individuals.

"Colonel Kelsey's" first order, through April 15, was "scouring the land from Hungry Hill to Big and Little Meadows near Big Bend in Rogue River," while his subordinate, Captain Sheffield, "scoured" the land with 30 men from Hungry Hill to Big Bend in Cow Creek. Kelsay was then assigned to lead the Northern Battalion of about 100 men down the Rogue River to an encampment on Peavine Ridge.

Volunteer scouts soon discovered about 500 members of Chief John's Tribe in a winter camp three miles below Little Meadow on the south shore of the Rogue River. Beginning at midnight, April 27, Kelsay and about 150 volunteers quietly approached the camp single-file down a ridge in a deep fog from the north side of the Rogue. At dawn, as the fog lifted, he had his men line up along the riverbank, each behind a tree or protective boulder, and at his signal they opened fire on the awakening campsite on the south side of the river. A participant estimated "at least 50" men, women, and children were killed that day.

By all accounts, the Indians were taken completely by surprise, and in the confusion of moving the women and children and their belongings to a place of safety, they were unable for some time to return fire. Kelsay's men were soon joined by another 50 men, who had found the river too dangerous to cross -- which condition likely saved dozens of lives, because they had been instructed to attack the camp from the back side -- and a number of Indians had begun firing back, hidden behind trees along the south bank.

Firing was exchanged across the river throughout the remainder of the day, but the damage had been done. Two Americans were wounded, and one died on the way to the hospital in Roseburg. The event is called the "Battle of Little Meadow" in the history books.

On May 1 "Colonel Kelsey" was ordered back to Fort Leland, and on June 25, 1856, the volunteers -- including Kelsay -- were released from duty. He had been a Colonel for three months. During his absence attorney D. C. Dade had been acting on behalf of Greenberry, and on May 3 he had scheduled a May 19 deposition in Eugene with Andrew Carson. Attorney Thayer responded on behalf of Letitia "on the account of said plff's being absent from said County." On May 22, Greenberry himself asked for "continuance" because a "material witness" that had been served with a subpoena, Sarah Davis, the Soap Creek storekeeper's wife, was "absent."

On May 11 the Elliffs' second child, Florence, was born. Aunt Tish was almost certainly the midwife and was likely still living with the Elliffs and 7-year-old Jack at that time, and it remains possible that 11-year-old Martha may have been staying elsewhere.

On July 2, 1856, Chief John surrendered with 35 men and 180 women and children, and the Rogue River Indian War was over. Hundreds of people and their families, frightened and severely weakened by deaths, diseases, starvation and physical injury and abuse, were now being rounded up and transported en masse by soldiers to a foreign land to become dependent wards of the U.S. government, and taught new languages, new religions, new survival skills, and how to eat and digest new foods.

The "ethnic cleansing" of southwest Oregon was nearly complete, having been accomplished in six years. The Exterminators had prevailed, although it should be noted that native leaders at times had also made plans to exterminate their unwanted white visitors and neighbors.

On October 8, 1856 William Henry Harrison Walker gave his deposition in Roseburg regarding the *Carson v. Smith* trial, and on October 25, Judge George Williams and a Benton County jury awarded Letitia $1399.75, including $199.75 for costs and fees, for Smith's unlawful sale of her cattle. That was considered a significant amount of money at that time; it is interesting to speculate what Letitia may have done with it.

On March 6, 1857 the U.S. 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 of that year 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 in the State,

or to file a suit in a court of law. Also, slavery was illegal. The Oregon State Constitution is the only one in U.S. history written before acquiring statehood, or that included racial exclusionary laws among its statutes.

In 1858 the U.S. 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 if so, by then must have gained a deserved recognition as an "Old Oregonian," a mother, a war veteran, and a midwife for the upper Cow Creek mining, farming, and road building community. Her demonstrated skills as a housekeeper, midwife, cook, cattle rancher, and butcher were likely in high demand wherever she may have lived at that time.

Although Letitia and her children were listed in the 1850 census of Benton County, they are nowhere to be found in the 1860 census of Douglas County – despite having lived in upper Cow Creek Valley since the early 1850s and being well known at key locations along the California Trail since the mid-1840s. Reasonable speculation might be that the family did not want to be listed on the federal census due to the racial exclusionary passages written into the Oregon Constitution, which had been formally adopted the previous year when Oregon became a state on February 14, 1859.

Another Carson family member, however, who was listed on the 1860 Douglas County census was Andrew Jackson Carson; Letitia's nephew and Martha and Adam's cousin from Soap Creek Valley. Although Andrew had taken up his own Donation Land Claim in Lane County by 1855, the 1860 census found him among a long list of "miners" in the Cow Creek Precinct. There he was living in Dwelling No. 100 with two other miners, both 33 years old and both from Ohio: William Richard and Rufus Butler. The men's location was just a short distance from the Hardy Elliff home (Dwelling No. 93), where Letitia and Jack had been living in the early 1850s, and perhaps were living still in 1860.

Martha was just seven years old at the time of her father's death in 1852, and Jack – likely still called Adam – was barely three; cousin Andrew Jackson and possible stepson and half-brother David "Junior" were then only 20 and 27 years old and must have made a great impression on the children. In 1860 Andrew was 28 years old, Martha was 15, and Adam was only 11. Perhaps it was around this time that Adam or his mother changed his name to Andrew, too, and he started becoming

known as Jack. Perhaps it was also around this time that Nigger Creek, a few miles upstream from the Elliff home and the Starvout goldmines, acquired its name.

In the 1950s the creek's name was changed to "Negro Creek," and then in 2022 it became officially recognized as "Jack Carson Creek," in honor of the man first named "Adam" at birth in Benton County.

On April 12, 1861 the American Civil War began in South Carolina as Confederate soldiers fired upon Fort Sumter. Oregon, as a state, was barely two years old and took the Union side of the conflict. However, other than the establishment of a few manned forts and some heated political debates, Oregon was mostly relegated to a role of interested observer as the actual military battles took place thousands of miles to the east.

One year later, on May 20, 1862, the Homestead Act -- "An Act to Secure Homesteads for Actual Settlers on the Public Domain" -- was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln. This law had first been promoted by the northern Republican Party prior to the Civil War but had been defeated at that time by southern Democrats who favored making federal lands open to slaveowners. Now, with a Republican as President and the southern states having defected from the Union, an even more liberal law became possible to enact.

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