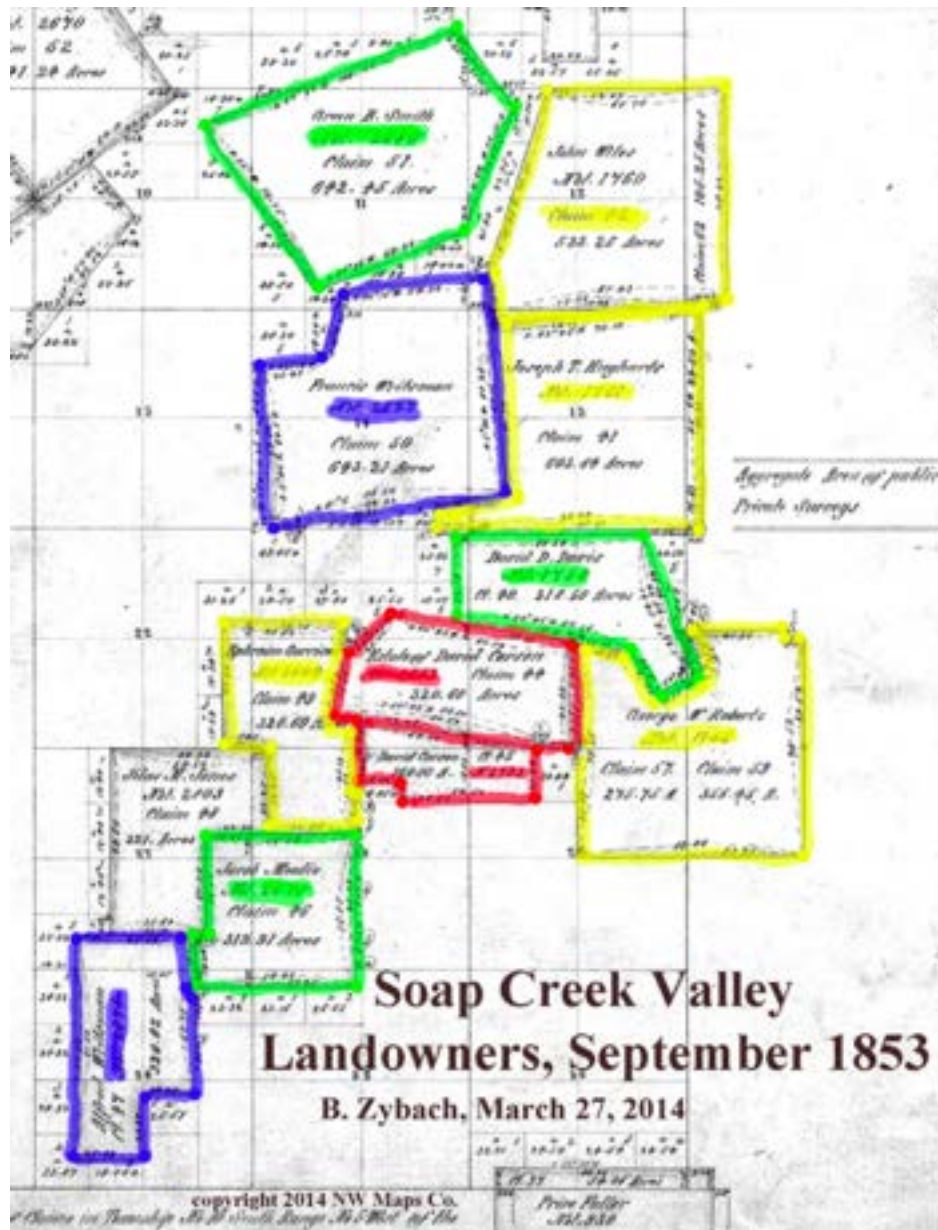


In spite of their land claim being diminished to 320 acres, the Carsons prospered together for a few years, until 1852, when David suddenly took ill and died, without ever having written a will. White neighbor (Greenberry Smith) quickly appointed himself executor of Carson's estate. He was quick to declare that Letitia had no claim to any of their property, not even the herd of cattle the couple had nurtured between them. He even went so far as to suggest that Letitia had no claim to her husband's land and that Letitia and the children should be auctioned off as David's "property."



According to historian [Bob Zybach](#), on Jan. 4, 1853, Greenberry Smith auctioned off all of Carson's property besides the land itself, including "half-acres of potatoes, David's underwear, the family's Bible, bedding, dishes and tableware, jars, farm tools and equipment, two yokes of oxen, a wagon, a velvet vest, a watch, a clock, a gun, a thermometer, 35 cattle, 26 hogs, and a 14-year-old horse," bringing in a total of \$1,538.80. \$104.87 of that money came from Letitia herself, who was somehow able to keep hold of a stash

which she had in her own name, enabling herself to buy back various household goods — including her bed.



As executor of David's estate, Smith argued that Letitia and her children were the property of David Carson and had no rights as heirs to his estate. In fact, where Smith and the Carsons had both lived prior to coming to Oregon in 1845 – Letitia and her children would have been considered valued property and routinely sold or distributed after David's death.

Excerpt adapted from: [The Corvallis Advocate](#)