

KING FOLK

Newsletter # 26

King Family Association

Published April 2007

KING FOLK REUNION
SATURDAY, JUNE 23, 2007
9:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.

BEAZELL FOREST EDUCATION CENTER
KINGS VALLEY HIGHWAY
(OLD PLUNKETT FARM)

PLEASE NOTE NEW LOCATION!!

Beazell Forest Park is located just 3.5 miles from the Kings Valley Charter School on Kings Valley Highway. There is a sign on the road marking the turnoff. Coming from Corvallis, it is before the school.

The morning session is a workshop. Please bring King family material to share. Pictures are especially wanted. Perhaps you will discover a new relative, or be able to assist someone else with their research. A copy machine will be available to use free of charge. Coffee and donuts provided.

POTLUCK LUNCH AT NOON

Please bring a main dish and one other item of your choice (dessert, salad or munchies). Bring your own table service. Coffee, soda pop and bottled water will be provided.

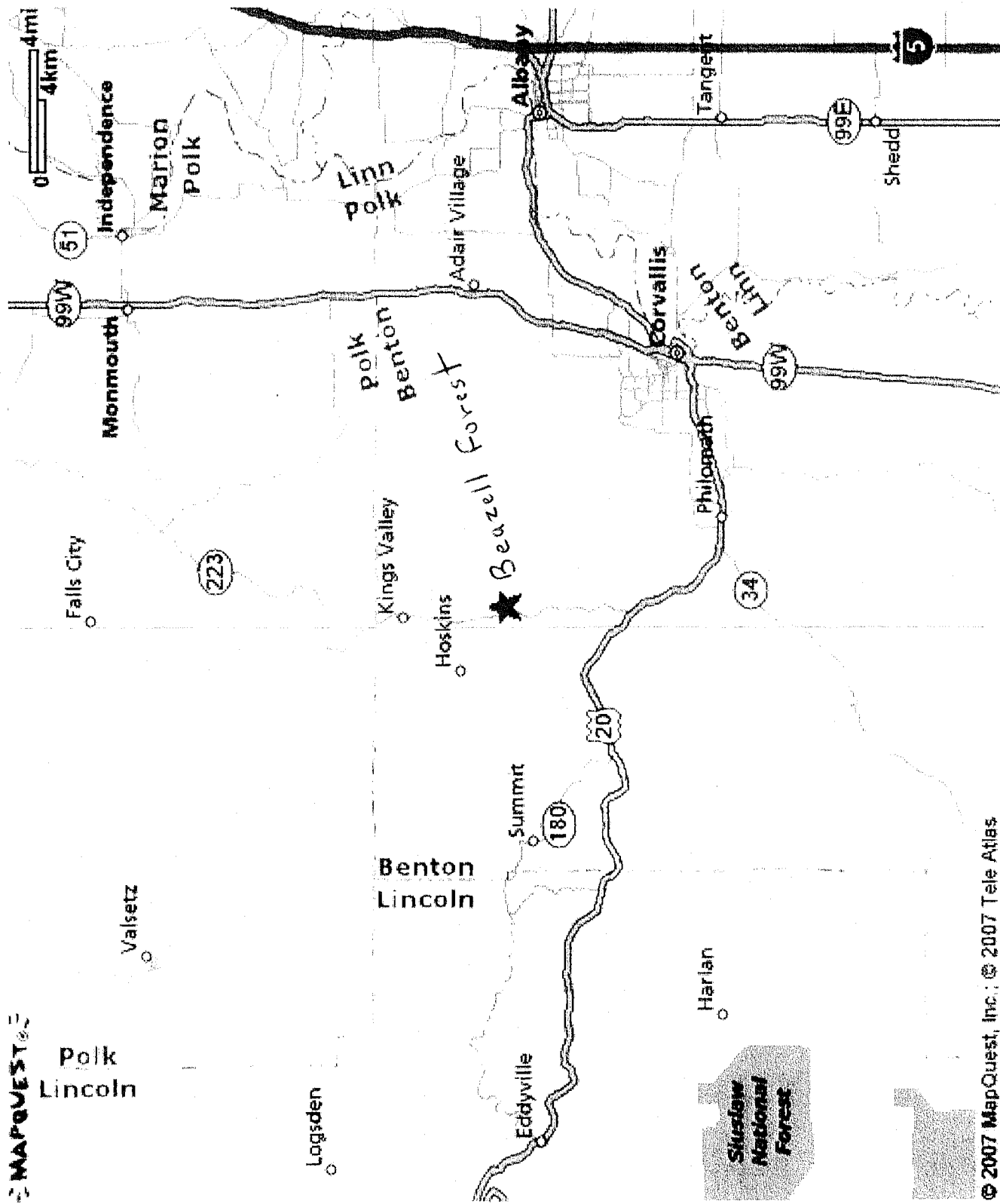
NOTE: at our new location there is a refrigerator but no oven for reheating food!

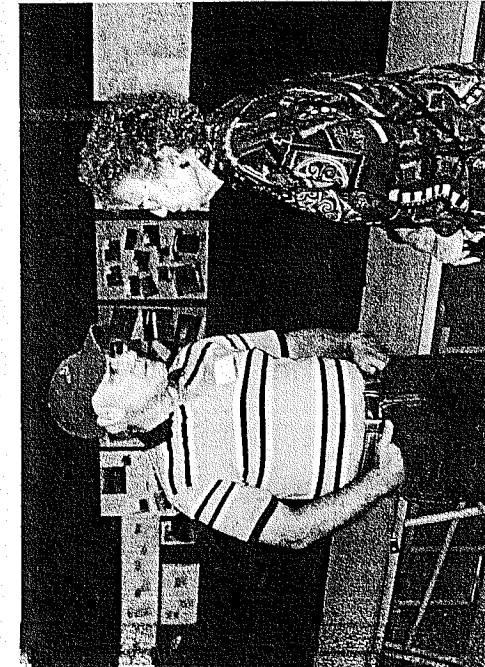
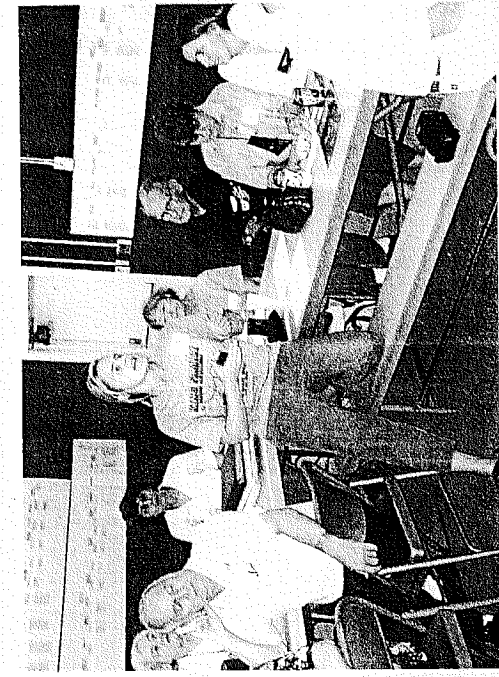
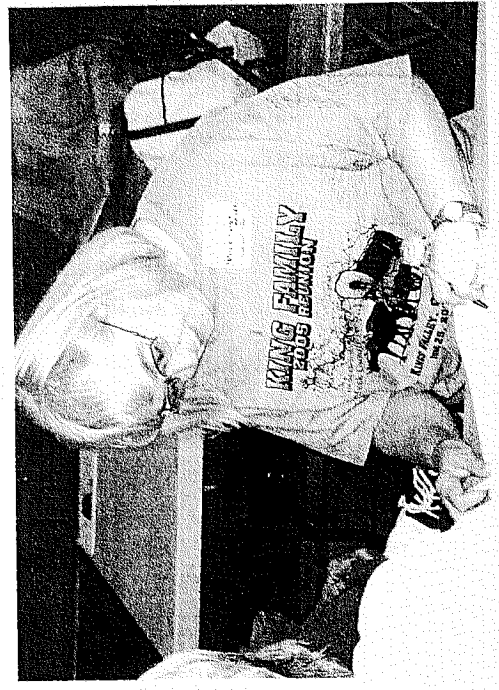
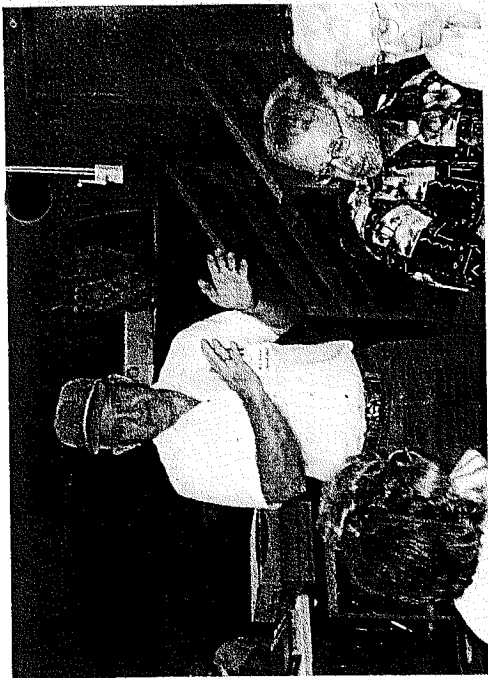
BUSINESS MEETING AT 1:30 P.M.

(Need more information? See back page to contact officers)

See next page for candid shots from 2006 reunion compliments of Nigel Parkhurst.

Polk
Lincoln





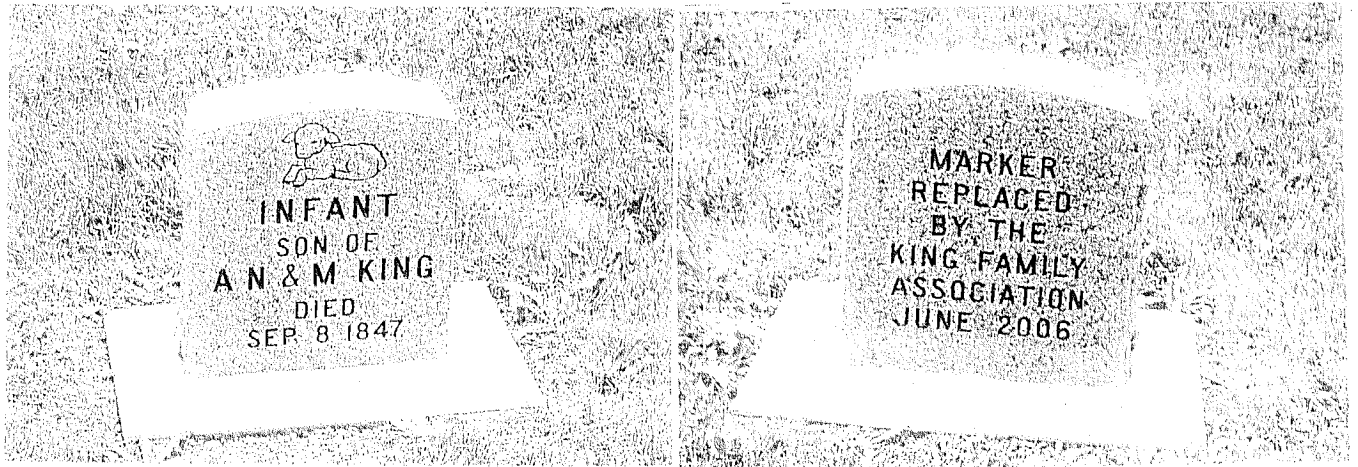
PRESIDENT'S LETTER – APRIL 2007 – Mimi Stang

Greetings once again to all “King Folk.” How proud I am to be your president and to help celebrate the wonderful legacy of Nahum and Sarepta Norton King.

There is a lot of information in this newsletter. Please, especially heed the notice about writing your checks for our dues. The bank has some new requirements so the checks must be properly written, or we cannot cash them. Frustrating, but necessary.

This year's reunion will be Saturday, June 23 at the Kings Valley Charter School. Complete information is on the front page. We've had really good attendance the past couple of years and I do hope that this year will be no different. There is so much to share with each other, old friends to enjoy and new friends to make.

As you may remember, last year, just prior to the reunion, thanks to the efforts of Earle Greig, we were able to get the replacement King infant marker installed in the Locke Cemetery in Corvallis. Historian David Trask wrote the amazing story of this marker in last year's newsletter but we did not have it in place yet, so pictures were not available by the time we went to press. This year we have included pictures of the marker – another wonderful use of our King Family dues, as I hope you will all agree.



You may have noted on the back page of this newsletter that yours truly took over as editor this year. This was at the request of Earle Greig, who has done such a magnificent job as editor the past few years. But he felt the need to step down so I am trying to fill his shoes, no easy task. Earle has been a tremendous help to me with this newsletter submitting many articles and contacting people for information and photos.

Looking forward, as always, to seeing you all at the reunion in June in Kings Valley.

KING FAMILY DIRECTORY

Thanks to the efforts of Nigel Parkhurst we now have a King Family Directory. Nigel used our mailing list and expanded it by including spouse's name and the name of each member's King child ancestor. We will have the first draft of this directory at the reunion. You will be able to take home a copy and also make revisions/corrections that will be included in future versions. Many thanks to Nigel for tackling this project for us! For those of you not able to attend the reunion, please send \$1.00 to our Treasurer, Anne Trussell, and she will have Nigel mail a copy to you after the reunion.

BITS AND PIECES (Mimi Stang, Earle Greig, Anne Trussell)

King Family Web site - www.all-oregon.com/king/kings.htm

Our webmaster, Jackie Farris, is doing a great job maintaining the web site for us. She would like information from the members that she could include. You can reach Jackie through the e-mail on the web site: jackiefarris@all-oregon.com

Dues Payment Checks – new requirements at Washington Mutual Bank where our Treasurer, Anne Trussell, maintains our King Family account: checks can only be accepted for deposit if they are written out to “King Folk.” Please use this name for any dues or donation checks. Otherwise the check will have to be sent back to you to be resubmitted. We are sorry for the inconvenience but we don't make the rules!

King Family CD – once again we will have a King family CD available to purchase at the reunion. This CD is always a work in progress. It includes King family information gathered by Earle Greig, Mimi Stang, David Trask and Anne Trussell from death certificates, obituaries, marriage records, cemetery records, census records, family group sheets and past issues of the King Folk Newsletter.

Library Donations – A Heart for Any Fate, Westward to Oregon, 1845 – as was suggested at last year's reunion, we have donated copies of Linda Crew's book, *A Heart for Any Fate, Westward to Oregon, 1845*, to the following libraries: Kings Valley Charter School, Kings Valley, Oregon; Plain City Public Library, Ohio (Plain City is closest to where the Kings lived while in Ohio); and London Public Library, Ohio (London is the Madison County, Ohio, seat). Linda graciously autographed each book and included a personal message. We encourage our members to donate copies of the book to their local libraries as well.

Photo Scanning Project - at last year's reunion, Anne Trussell and Earle Greig started a project of scanning King family photos. They have continued the project this year. Thanks to Earle Greig's arrangements, Anne and Rick, Mimi and Earle were able to visit some King and Chambers descendants in Corvallis and Albany, and copy photos they had in their possession. Check with Anne at the reunion to see what photos she has and, please, do bring some to share as well!

King Descendant Wall Chart – that fabulous King family wall chart that has been a feature at the past few reunions, does not just happen. Anne Trussell makes that wall chart from the King family database she and Mimi Stang have created. (Using information from many sources.) It takes Anne many hours to print it out and then piece it together for our reunion. Do remember to let Anne know that you appreciate her efforts!

150th Anniversary of Corvallis - The Corvallis Gazette Times this year will feature many historic articles, including those of historian Ken Munford who often wrote about the Kings. Excerpts from a recent column on Sol King are included in this newsletter. You may check the newspaper online at: www.gazettetimes.com/

Plunkett Fort Hoskins Drum – photo of Bill Dixon, playing the drum that his great grandfather, James Plunkett, played in the band at Fort Hoskins. Mary Gallagher, Curator at the Benton County Museum Philomath, Oregon, graciously got the drum out for Bill to play for a photo op. Bill said the little snare drum used to be upstairs in the old Plunkett house. Bill did remark that he did not have to wear little white gloves when he played that drum in the past!



Phil Sheridan House – Earle Greig reports that this house is still in Pedee, Oregon. The house was one of three officer's homes at Fort Hoskins but somehow got moved to Pedee. The house has been donated to Fort Hoskins, providing that it be moved by July 2007. Donations to pay for this move have been a bit slow and the clock is ticking. What happens if not enough money is raised to move the house? There was a photo of this house included in last year's King Folk.

Restoration of Stone – Corvallis IOOF Cemetery – Bill Dixon and Earle Greig did a good deed last summer by restoring a monument that had toppled over in the cemetery.

Dorothy Brown, a King family member, had mentioned this problem ten years ago in a King Folk newsletter but nothing was ever done about fixing it. The grave is that of Susan Robinette. Susan's first husband was Charlie King, who was Dorothy Brown's great grandfather. They were divorced and both married a second time – the name on the gravestone is Susan Case. Earle reports that it was a really hot day but the stone looks good. Thank you, both, Earle and Bill, for all the work you have done in Kings Valley Cemetery too.

Book Note from Charlotte Murphy – in an old book of her father-in-law's, Charlotte found a reference to the Kings. *The Golden Frontier, The Recollections of Herman Francis Reinhart, 1851 – 1869*, edited by Doyge B. Nunis, 1963. (out of print) "We went over the Willamette River range of mountains to a fine little valley called King's Valley, between the coast range and the range we came over, and found that King's Valley was one of the richest valleys in Oregon. Old rich settlers had taken up large homesteads in an early day ...these farmers had plenty of fine stock and raised as fine wheat and oats as I ever saw, and onions that beat any I ever saw." Footnote mentions that Kings Valley was named for "Nathan" King, an 1845 settler.

Old King Family Portrait – a descendant of Amos & Melinda Fuller King, Linda Hahn Perrett, contacted us last summer concerning an old portrait of Amos King. It had belonged to her grandmother, Lulu Mae King Hahn, and had previously hung in the Edward Albert King home in Portland. Linda's children were not interested in keeping the portrait, so Linda wanted us to have it. Linda lives in California, not far from Anne Trussell, so Anne will pick up the portrait in May and bring it to the reunion.

84 Year Old Grant King has 20th Birthday – 1948 newspaper article has a story of Grant King's birthday celebration. Grant was born on February 29, 1864. Grant is Ulysses Grant King, son of Isaac and Almeda Van Bibber King and grandson of Nahum and Sarepta. Ulysses Grant King died at the age of 87 in 1951. He is buried in the Masonic Cemetery in Lebanon, Oregon. Are there other Leap Year babies in our King family?

Monument for Kings Valley Cemetery – at last year's reunion there was discussion and a vote to investigate placing a monument at the Kings Valley Cemetery that would document the King family who settled the valley. There will be further discussion of the idea at this year's reunion.

Benton County Museum Groundbreaking – an article in the March 22nd Corvallis Gazette Times noted that on March 31st the Benton County Museum & Historical Society was to hold a groundbreaking ceremony for its new collections care facility. This new building will be constructed next to the Benton County Historical Museum, 1101 Main Street, in Philomath. The \$2.4 million building will have 13,000 square feet and will house the museum's artifacts, as well as 60,000 items from the Horner Collection. You may remember that the Horner Museum closed many years ago and its collection has been in storage in the basement of Gill Coliseum at Oregon State University ever since. Eventually there will be a new downtown Corvallis museum to showcase Horner items. The article noted that this "could be a few years away" due to financial constraints.

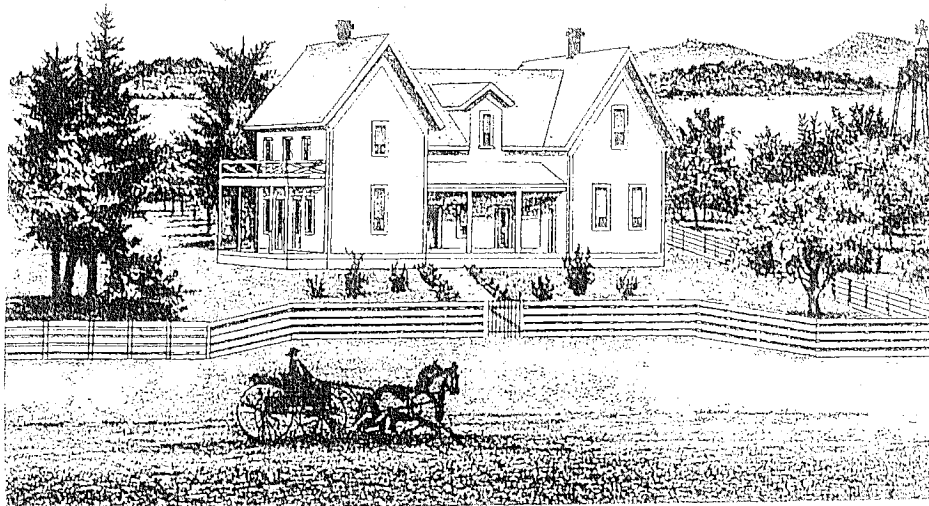
Sol King's Corvallis Legacy – by Anne Trussell and Mimi Stang

From 1980 – 1995, historian Kenneth Munford wrote history columns for the Corvallis Gazette Times newspaper. These columns often dealt with members of our King family. The Corvallis Gazette times, as part of the city's 150th anniversary, is now republishing some of these columns each week.

Our own Sol (Solomon) King, son of Nahum and Sarepta, was highlighted in a February 23, 2007, Kenneth Munford column (originally published in October 1983). Sol ran two livery stables in Corvallis. His ads proclaimed: *Owning both barns I am prepared to offer superior accommodations... **Good Teams** at low rates...first class in every respect... elegant hearse, carriages, and hack for funerals.* When fire burned his livery barn, he reimbursed everyone for their losses. "His word was as good as his bond," said Sol's grandson, Warren King of Fruitland, Idaho.

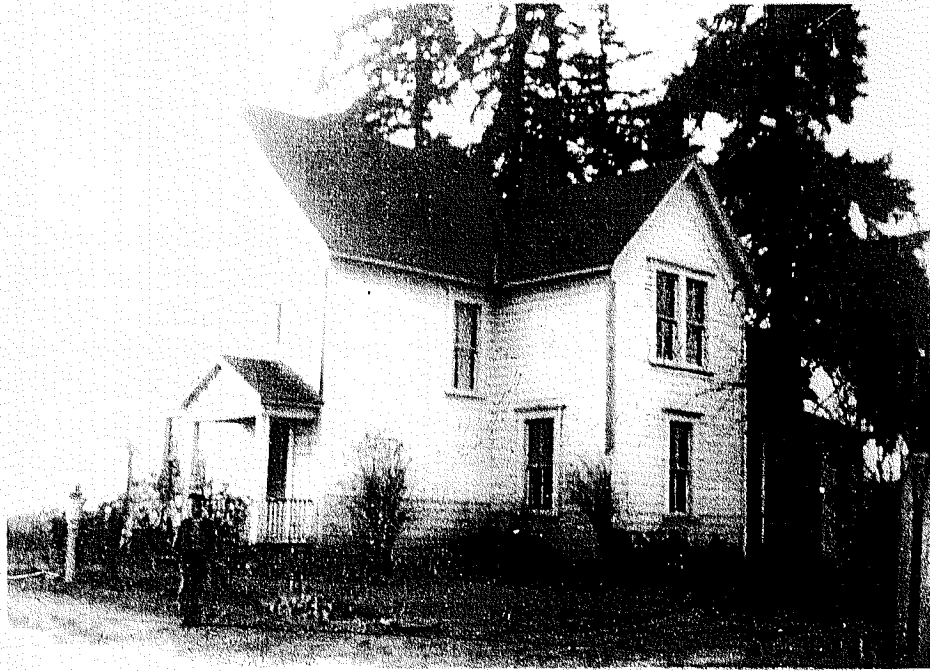
Sol was elected sheriff of Benton County five times! Warren said that Sol, at a Republican meeting in 1886 said, "Boys, I have had the job for quite a while, but if you make the nomination by acclamation, I will run again." But, the Democrats had targeted Sol for defeat and two members of that party changed their registration just so they could attend the Republican meeting and vote against him, therefore he was not nominated by acclamation and did not run again.

Kings Boulevard in Corvallis is named for Sol King. The family lived at several places in Corvallis. Highland Drive was even called *Sol King Road* at one time. (Note – this is a quote from Kenneth Mumford's article) But their final home was at what was 2050 N.W. 23rd Street in 1983. Our King Family Vice President, Earle Greig, knew Ralph and Velma Rawie who lived in that old house – but they tore it down in 1950 and built a new home there. Earle has provided us with a photo of the original Sol King house that he obtained courtesy of David Rawie. For comparison, we have included a copy of the drawing of Sol's house as depicted in David D. Fagan's *History of Benton County, Oregon*, published in 1885. Is the drawing of the same house as the later photo or of an earlier house built by Nahum that Sol lived in at one time?



A. G. Walling, Lith. Portland, Or.

RESIDENCE OF SOL. KING.
Corvallis, Benton Co., Or.



Back When in Benton County – Preparing for the Oregon Trail – Kenneth Munford
(Included in King Folk Newsletter September 15, 1995 by Char Wirfs)

The Nahum King and Arnold Fuller families, joining other emigrants looking forward to starting new lives in Oregon, gathered in the vicinity of St. Joseph, Missouri, in the spring or 1845. For mutual assistance and protection they organized themselves into a large wagon train.

In what became known as the T'Vault Train, there were 78 men over 16, 57 women over 14, 78 boys and 60 girls. (a total of 273 folks) They assembled 66 wagons, 453 oxen, 649 loose cattle, 172 horses and mules and 184 guns. Of this total the King family had five wagons to carry the equipment for their 26 members. The Fuller family included 3 men, 3 women and 4 children.

The emigrants adopted Laws and Bylaws and elected officers. William G. T'Vault, 39, became Commandant Captain. Nahum King, 62, and Arnold Fuller, 43, were members of the Committee of Safety, Amos King, 23, supervised the driving of cattle, and Rowland Chambers, 32, was elected sheriff. Within two weeks dissention arose over T'Vault's inability to enforce the regulations and he resigned. He and his wife and their three children continued as members of the migration.

With 66 wagons the train was too cumbersome to travel as a single unit. It split into three groups, the Kings and Fullers continuing in a group of about 30 wagons under the leadership of James McNary. They originally planned to leave from their camp on the west bank of the Missouri in Kansas Territory by the first of May, but Sarah Fuller, Arnold's wife, who had been ill for some time, took a turn for the worse and died on April 28. Waiting for the funeral delayed the train a bit, but at 9 o'clock on the morning of May 2, 1845, driver's whips cracked and the caravan was on its way.

Madison County, Ohio

By Anne Trussell

Nahum and Sarepta King spent at least twenty-five years in Madison County, Ohio. This was a longer period of time than they spent anywhere else during their gradual westward migration from New York to Oregon. Many of the King children were born in Madison County, grew up and married there. Three King children died there. Sarepta's parents, the Nortons, lived near the King family, as did many of her siblings. With such deep roots, it must have been difficult for them to leave a place that had been home for so many years. Is it any surprise, then, that Nahum and Sarepta may have planned to return to Madison County if things didn't work out for them elsewhere?

In October 2006, we visited Darby and Canaan Townships in Madison County, Ohio. Mostly flat farmland in the central part of the state north of I-70, the two townships are a mixture of small towns, farms, and ranchettes. Nahum and Sarepta's farm was located near the eastern side of Canaan Township on big Darby Creek, which is now recognized as a National Scenic Waterway. It's likely this is the same creek that flooded and sent Nahum and his family westward to Missouri.

Much of Nahum's land is still being farmed just as it was when the Kings left in about 1840. The Big Darby Baptist Church, built in 1810 and located on the eastern boundary of the King farm, is still active today. A few miles north of the church is the Darby Township Cemetery where Sarepta's mother, Dulaney Norton, and the three King children, Dulaney, Hannah and James, are buried. Although their graves are now unmarked, a record of their burials can be found in a 1943 survey of the cemetery.

Evidence of Nahum and Sarepta's life in Madison County is found in legal documents at the county courthouse in London, Ohio. Many exchanges of King land can be found there. The earliest is dated 17 March 1815, a purchase of eleven acres on Darby Creek for \$66 by Nahum and William King. In 1817, Nahum sold the same property to William King for \$30. A witness on the deed was Harris King. Were these Nahum's brothers?

The biggest surprise, though, was a Madison County deed dated 5 April 1852. On that day, Nahum and Sarepta King of Benton County in the territory of Oregon sold:

"The farm heretofore occupied and owned by Nahum King on Darby Creek in Canaan Township, Madison County, Ohio...commonly called the King Farm containing eleven hundred acres of lands ..."

The farm was sold to Norman Baldwin and Neidham Handart for \$12,600. In terms of today's dollars, that is the equivalent of \$295,000!

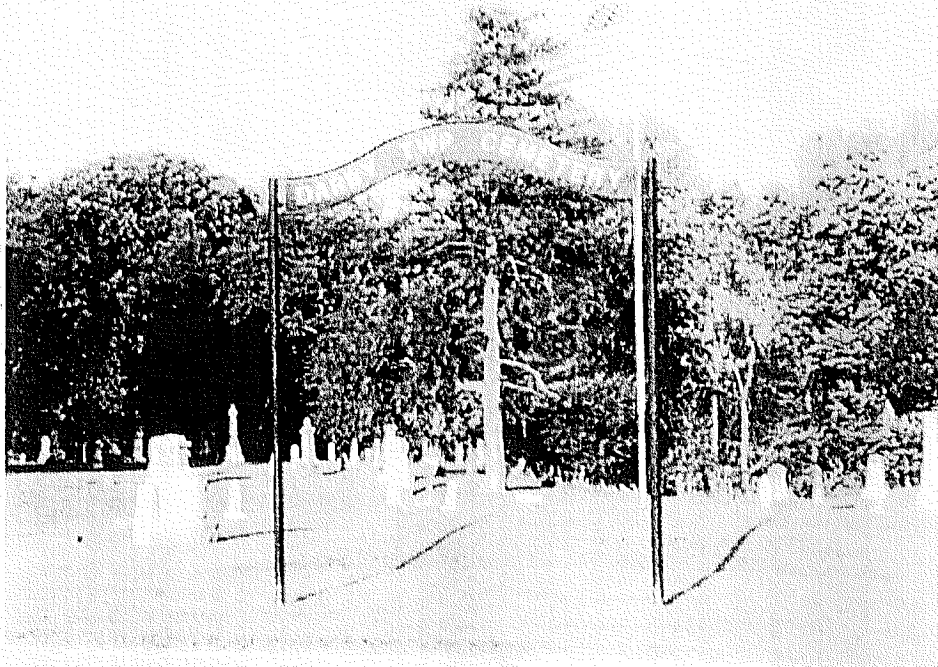
This new information leaves us with a few new mysteries. Why wasn't the land sold earlier? Did Nahum and Sarepta plan to return to Madison County? Had they given themselves and their children an "out," a refuge, someplace to return to if they needed it? What happened to the farm during the time 1840 – 1852 while the Kings were gone? Was it rented? And perhaps most importantly, what happened in 1852 to prompt the sale of their property? Is it possible that 1852 signals the time when Kings Valley became "home" to the King family?

Canaan Township, Madison County, Ohio

Photos by Anne Trussell



Nahum and Sarepta's land



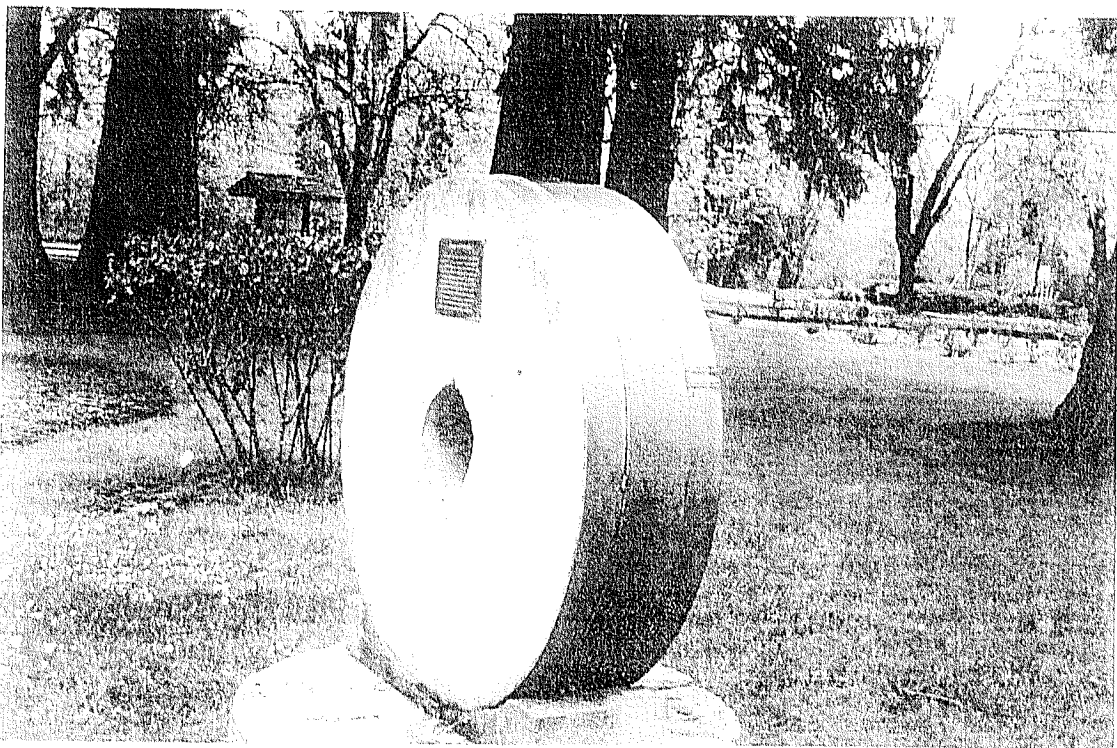
Darby Township Cemetery

Chambers Grist Mill – Kings Valley - excerpted from a Corvallis Gazette Times article dated June 26, 1957.

When the King Family came to what is now the Kings Valley area in 1846, they staked out their claims by families and by the number in each family. Rowland Chambers, Naham King's son-in-law, said, "If they gave him first choice, he would establish a grist mill. There was little objection. A grist mill was essential to any community. Chambers chose the claim which contained the four foot waterfall on the Luckiamute River."

Two big stone burrs for the grist mill were shipped around the horn from France and then hauled to Kings Valley by ox team – using the same wagon that had brought the Chambers family on the trail to Oregon. According to the article, it took Chambers six years to get the mill rolling flour! For more than 50 years those burrs and the water power from the Luckiamute continued to grind the flour from the wheat fields in Kings Valley.

These old stones were preserved and can now be seen in Avery Park in Corvallis. Plaque on the stone reads: Kings Valley Millstone. This is one of the first millstones or burrs to be used in this section of Oregon. This was originally quarried in France and shipped around the horn from New York in 1850 by sailing vessel. In 1852, was transported by oxen team from Portland to Kings Valley and set up and operated by Rowland Chambers on the banks of the Luckiamute River as one of the first three grist mills on this site. The stone was in constant use for over 60 years. Many of the children and grandchildren of the Kings Valley homesteaders still live in this area.



Report and Research Insights from King Family Historian David Trask

People have asked what the King Family Historian does. Back in the early 1980's, nearly 25 years ago, I attended my first Kings Valley reunion with my father and grandmother and great uncle, all now deceased. The emphasis then was on having a picnic and listening to some of the old-timers reminiscence about the way it really was in the good old days. It was at this meeting that I first met Nathan King, Sr., a descendant of Amos King, son of Nahum and Sarepta King. He was one of the true elders of our clan and had been the unopposed King Family Historian for many years.

When I introduced myself to Nathan and told him that my great-great-great grandfather was Isaac King, he immediately realized that I was descended from a long-lost branch of the family that he had absolutely no information about, since my great-great grandfather, Alfred King, had migrated to Southern Oregon in the 1870's. I have never seen so much joy and excitement as I saw that day in his eyes. In fact, he spent nearly the whole meeting talking to me and about my branch of the family. It was a true reunion of a long-lost branch. I befriended Nathan and we corresponded frequently afterwards sharing a lot of information with each other, consolidating and documenting facts of the King family. He took ill in the late 1980's, and passed away in 1989. He officially willed his life-long work on the King Family to me to be the court-ordered keeper of the vast records he accumulated over the years. I have added tremendously to this work over the years.

Hard to believe, but computers were in their infancy in the 1980's with regards to genealogy research, and the Internet was not yet a useful tool for quick research. Back then, research was done the old-fashioned way: copying notes from books, newspapers, and from other people's research. It was really rewarding to attend the reunions and share information with one another. It was even more exciting when we started having access to a photocopier in the late 1980's so we could go home with copies of other people's work.

Since those days, I have seen many family members pass on. I remember so many family members who were in their 80's or even 90's back then, who are now long gone. Gone with them are their stories and recollections of past events. Some of them had had personal contact with people who were in their 80's or 90's around the year 1900, and some of these people had had personal contact with such people as Nahum and Sarepta and their children. Therefore, we can only assume that some of these stories being told in the 1980's, were, in fact, true, being passed on down the generations. During the short period of time that I began attending the reunions, a new generation of Kings have been born and grown up, and have started yet another generation of Kings.

The emphasis on research has changed dramatically with the introduction of the Internet. Certainly, it is so easy to access the Internet to research one's family roots. It is accessible day and night and there is a vast amount of information available with just the click of a mouse. Although much improved and technologically advanced for all, one interested in research should never forget the old fashioned way of doing things, and that is to document stories as told by the very people who knew and witnessed past events and

people first-hand. Also, researching original documents at the court house, and newspapers for obituaries and related stories do so much to document dates, relations, etc. This takes, unfortunately, a lot of time, a precious commodity which acts as a limiting factor for us all in the era of warp-speed lifestyles. The lapse of time has unfortunately resulted in many stories to be lost forever. The years have become months, the weeks, days, the days, hours, and we all know that our birthdays come at least three times a year now!

I think this is a reason for all of us to make an effort to document our family history and centralize it, so the information can be available for all to share. The Internet is a great tool for those who want to add to their own research, but it encourages a one-way approach. It limits the efforts to share what one learns with others, who may be doing the exact same research. Many times, I have attended a reunion, excited to share what I thought was new material with a family member, just to find out that person already had researched the same material, years prior. Another reason to centralize information, especially that obtained on the Internet is that the information posted on the Internet is only as accurate as the source posting it. This is a good reason to share information and compare notes with one another so the final word can be verified by those who may know the most about our various family lines. The Internet can still be one of our best tools to accomplish this, as it is so fast to disseminate information. The trick is to use it appropriately to send out accurate information and to keep an open mind about new material until it can be verified.

The point is, we share a great family legacy and heritage. Sharing what each one of us learns in our research and centralizing the information so others can use it and confirm the accuracy of it would be a great contribution to the future Kings. Over the last seven years or so, I have seen a dramatic decrease in the flow of information to me as the Historian, despite the flow of information sent out by me to people requesting help with their work.

The role of the Historian is to be the keeper of our research, add to it as new information becomes available, and to share it with those who request it. I would like to once again ask that everyone send copies of their research and keep me informed of new and exciting finds. Such could include sending me updates on your family trees, obituaries of recently deceased family members, as well as of those who may have died years ago. Also, documentation of births, marriages, deaths, and places of these events is very useful information that is often requested by others. Furthermore, recording stories that may be told by our elders is important before they are all gone.

Time is precious to us all. But, if everyone chips in and gives something back to the family, there will be more to take. We share ties to one another, being related to each other, sometimes in more than one way. The King Family has met annually for over 125 years as we have good documentation of reunions dating back to the early 1880's. Everyone holds a unique, and equally important position, in the overall King Family picture and each of us can contribute by adding pieces of the puzzle so we can all get a better look at that picture and see who we are and where we came from. So, please help

the Historian do what a Historian should do, to keep the records of our family as complete and accurate and accessible as possible. These records are our common denominator, our common bond. Please remember to send me copies of your important finds!

(Editor's note: although long, David had so many good points and such a great discussion of how important it is that we each share what we have on the Kings, that I felt it important to include every word!)

From Linda Crew – author of *A Heart for Any Fate: Westward to Oregon 1845*

As I alerted King family members at the reunion last year, the Oregon Historical Society Press is going out of the publishing business and will not be printing any more copies of my book, *A Heart for Any Fate: Westward to Oregon 1845*. As I write, in March, the press plans to declare the book out of print and revert the publishing rights to me as of June 1, 2007. Another small press has made a verbal commitment to bring out a new version of the book. None of this has been formalized in contracts, however. Until June, the book is still available through the usual channels – Amazon, Powell's Books, or your local independent bookstore, where the staff is usually happy to special order for you if they don't have copies on the shelves. For the time being, the book is still carried through the major distributors such as Ingrams, etc.

I made contact with the new publishers when I went to Colorado last fall to accept the Willa Award for the book. This is a prize named for Willa Cather and given by a group called Women Writing the West. I have a supply of the lovely gold prize stickers, which can be affixed to the hardback copies. (The paperbacks already have the Oregon Book Award seal printed on the cover.) In my conversations with the new publisher, he spoke of "re-packaging" the book. I believe he envisions a new cover and may choose to not use all the King family photos which are currently in the back of the book. Actually, I'm not sure how many of the interior photos, if any, he may use, since most of them are from the Oregon Historical Society's archive and there would be issues of publication rights. What this means is, if you want the version most King-family friendly, this is going to be the original, first edition hardback or the first paperback printing from OHS. The production quality of these copies, as you know, is excellent.

Copies, which are autographed and personalized as you direct, will continue to be available directly from me. The hardbacks are \$25 and the paperbacks are \$14.

The King Family Reunion has been one of the highlights of the summer for me for several years now, but I'm afraid life has become too busy for me to commit to being there this year. Among other things, our oldest son is marrying a girl from Mainland China and our presence at the first of two weddings is required sometime this summer in Yangshuo, China! What an adventure!

If any of you would like to have autographed books available at the reunion, please pre-order them from me and I will see that they get to the reunion with Earle Greig or another King family member attending. My mailing address for payment is: 950 SW Wake Robin Avenue, Corvallis, Oregon 97333. If you have questions, feel free to call me at (541) 753-9836.

It has been a pleasure to meet King family descendants at various slide shows and book signings. Last fall I signed books one weekend at the Kings Valley Farmers Market and was tickled when a descendant drove all the way down from Beaverton just to stock up on signed copies of the book for Christmas gifts. Please don't be strangers! Any slide talks or signings of mine will be listed on my website and if you ever come, please do identify yourselves as Kings. I guarantee an excited response on my part! Hope to see you all at another reunion down the line sometime.

Thank you all once again for sharing your proud pioneer heritage with me. Linda Crew

Whatever Happened to Rhoda Ann? By Melissa Parkhurst

Just ten years old when her family made their long-anticipated trek to Oregon Country, Rhoda Ann was Nahum and Sarepta's 16th child, and the youngest member of the King family. We know that a few years after the family had settled in the Willamette Valley, Rhoda Ann married John Phillips in February of 1850, when she was fourteen years old. They soon had four children: Caroline, Juliann, Mary May, and Jerry Ladd. But, by 1858, Rhoda Ann had divorced John Phillips and married her second husband, Eli Summer; a decade later, they moved to Lexington, Oregon. What would cause this young woman to leave her first husband at a time when divorce was not socially advantageous for women, and then to leave the King family and the fertile Willamette Valley to start a new life in dry and isolated eastern Oregon?

These were the questions that spurred me to search for Rhoda Ann's burial site, and eventually to find her homestead, her place of livelihood, and a man who personally knew two of her sons. In the process, I received generous assistance from the Morrow County Historical Museum, other descendants of Rhoda Ann, and many good people from Heppner, Lexington and Ione, Oregon.

The Morrow County Museum's files on Rhoda Ann's family reveal her first husband, John Phillips, to have been a well-known philanderer, and she divorced him on the grounds of infidelity. She married Eli Summer in November of 1858, and they had six children, two of whom died in infancy. Those who survived were: Philo, Daniel, Minnie Ann, and Otto.

Their son Daniel suffered a series of illnesses that were expected to subside if he were taken to a drier climate, and in 1871 the entire Summer family moved to Morrow County,

settling on Willow Creek, just north of Lexington (whether or not the move was responsible, Daniel Denis Summer lived to be 82). They built a two-story frame house, held together by the square-headed nails that were in common use then. There they cultivated extensive gardens, bringing a number of trees and plants from the Willamette Valley to propagate and sell to their neighbors. For their personal use, they maintained a large orchard with many fruit trees, particularly apples, of which Rhoda Ann favored different varieties for different uses (one for pies, one for sauce, etc.).

When the railroad came through Morrow County, the workers needed a place to stay, and it was to this population that Rhoda Ann initially catered when owned and operated the Lexington Hotel for 15 years. Rhoda Ann was known for her hospitality and for being an excellent cook. She periodically hosted dances at the hotel, where she served midnight suppers to the people who came from miles around to dance until dawn. Her husband Eli, 15 years his wife's senior, continued working as a farmer, and was assisted on the family farm by their son Daniel, who remained with his parents all their lives. Interesting aspects of Eli's history include his own journey westward from Wisconsin to California by ox team, and his involvement in the Indian Wars of 1855 – 1856, where he furnished his own horse and equipment and served without pay, as did many of his comrades.

Following an unnamed "severe illness," Eli died on January 7, 1911, at the age of 91, and Rhoda Ann suffered a stroke the following year, leading to her death on January 16, 1912, at the age of 77. Eli Summer's obituary, published in the *Heppner Gazette*, closed with these words: "He was as man of sterling worth and character, a typical frontiersman and a citizen beyond reproach. Peace to his ashes." Rhoda Ann was similarly eulogized by the newspaper as "a royal friend and neighbor, who will be missed from her circle of friends in the Lexington neighborhood." Both were buried in the Penland Cemetery at Lexington, as were several of their children and grandchildren.

I am indebted to Rhoda Ann's great-granddaughter, Ruth Dinges Acklen (b. 1914) of Grants Pass, Oregon, for her care and foresight in documenting the Summer family history. Also, anyone passing through Lexington on a summer afternoon should check the post office steps for a chance to shoot the bull with Dean Hunt, Lexington's oldest citizen and a living treasure. He can take you to the Lexington Hotel and the family farm, and share stories about the grocery store, bar and card room that were operated by Rhoda Ann's sons.

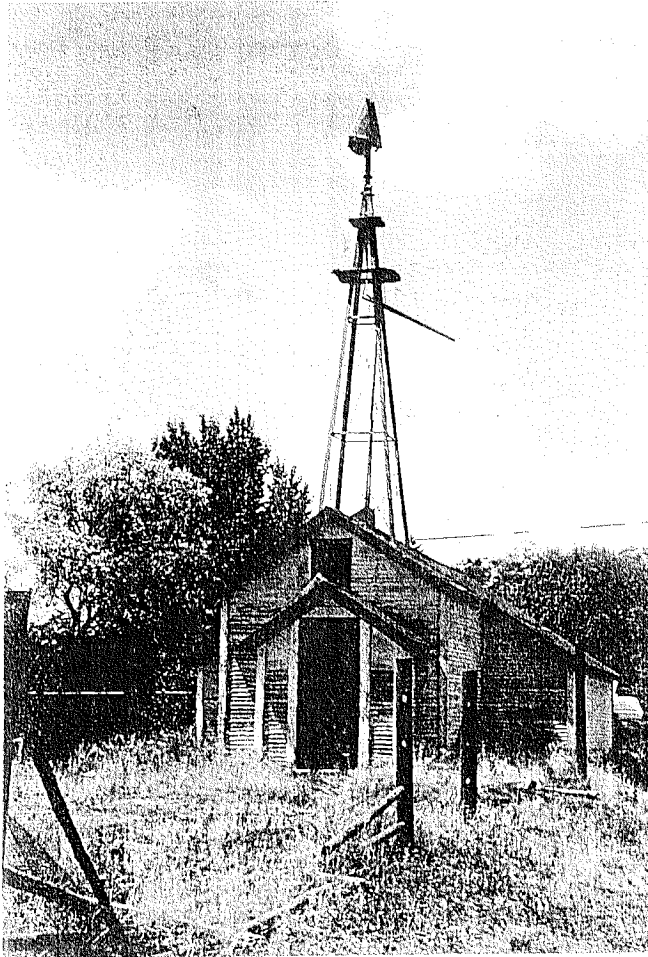


Photos by

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Summer Family Farm
And
Water Reservoir

Lexington, Oregon



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The annual King Family reunion is held in June on the first Saturday after Father's Day at the Kings Valley Charter School in Kings Valley, Oregon.

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