

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?