Naperville Heritage Society
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Guide to Collection

Naper
Name of the Collection

8
Collection Number

1831--1905
Date Range

5"/1	8/61	4/26/11
Linear Feet/Boxes	***Number of Folders/Items***	***Processed by/Date***

Description

Joseph Naper, founder of Naperville, the oldest town in DuPage County, was a man for all seasons, participating in every facet of the town's beginnings and early growth, a visionary who could see what was needed and accomplished so much. Joseph's father Robert came to America from Edinburgh, Scotland and then Ireland, eventually settling in Shaftesbury, Vermont, where Joseph Naper was born in 1798. The family moved to Ashtabula, Ohio where Joseph became a sea captain on the Great Lakes. He built his own schooner, the Telegraph, in 1828 on the bank of the Ashtabula River and in February 1831 scouted out the land now known as Naperville. The families of Joseph and John Naper, his brother, and several other families arrived in the area in July of 1831. In the next two years Joseph Naper established a sawmill so houses could be built, a grist mill and trading post, while building a log cabin for his family on the southeast corner of Mill Street and Jefferson Avenue. By September, 1831, he hired a teacher for the twenty-two children of the settlement and supervised the building of a 14 square foot log cabin school on the corner of Jefferson Avenue and Ewing Street. He was one of the three school trustees and in 1851 he incorporated its successor, Naperville Academy. Joseph Naper served as a captain in the 1832 Black Hawk War, helping to defend the 180 people in his town. In 1840 he replaced the grist mill with a flour mill and in 1842 he surveyed the town and laid out a street system. He was instrumental in carving out DuPage County from Cook County during his terms in the state legislature from 1836 to 1838, and returned as a state representative in 1852. He served as the first President of Naperville when it was incorporated as a village in 1857. Ever the patriot, Joseph Naper fought in the Mexican War at the Battle of Buena Vista in 1847. He and his wife Almeda are buried in Naperville Cemetery. Joseph Naper died August 17, 1862, age 61; Almeda Landon Naper died February 6, 1885, age 85. Joseph's mother Sarah is buried with them, having died October 6, 1843, age 76. When Joseph Naper died, the whole town came to his funeral, recognizing him as the town founder in every sense of the word.

Among Joseph and Almeda Naper's children were sons Robert, 1825--1873, William, 1832--1890, Thomas, 1835--1864, and Mark, 1837--1869. Robert was a leading figure in Naperville, elected President of the village in 1863 and a village trustee in 1867. He opened a large retail store in 1866 and ran the Naper Mill after his father's death. He married Amelia Morse of

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Naperville, December 1, 1852, and they had two sons, Joseph, 1858--1921, and Ralph, 1863--1930. Thomas and his wife Julia had two sons, Charles, 1857--1916, and Burt.

The Naper collection shows evidence of Joseph Naper's interest in education with a teacher's contract soon after his arrival and his selling of stock for Naperville Academy in 1851. Joseph Naper was active in land development as seen by his sale of land to George Martin and Loren G. Butler. His role as shopkeeper, mill operator and postmaster is shown by George Martin's receipt for lumber, groceries and postage. Joseph Naper's influence in state government becomes visible with his letters of introduction for George Martin to a state senator and state treasurer regarding legislation concerning Naperville. Acknowledgement by the community of Joseph Naper's leadership is secured by his election as the first president of the incorporated village in 1857.
Joseph Naper's son Robert carries on the mercantile heritage with George Martin's business letter to him from Chicago. Another son, William, fills out a money order, and Thomas Martin and his widow Julia pay taxes on a home built by Joseph Naper at 49 South Mill Street. Real estate tax receipts start in 1861 at $4.74 and end in 1905 at $16.85. Thomas constructed a two-story addition in 1864. With the death of Joseph Naper in 1862, his wife Almeda moved from their original homestead to this house where she lived until her death in 1885.

Naper Settlement has carried out archeological digs on Joseph Naper's homestead and there will be an interpretive park on the site in 2011.

Inventory

*Contract for employment of a teacher, Lester Peet, to teach the children of the first settlers of Naperville, signed by Joseph Naper and eleven other subscribers, September 14, 1831
*Joseph Naper's agreement to make over his right and title to the land he claimed on the south side of the DuPage River; George Martin agrees to Naper's conditions for the sale, August 7, 1833
*Receipt signed by Joseph Naper for lumber, postage, and groceries purchased by George Martin, November 13, 1833
*Receipt signed by Joseph Naper for purchase of land on the south side of the DuPage River from George Martin, January 24, 1842
*Warranty deed between Joseph Naper and Almeda Naper and Loren G. Butler for Lot 1 in Block 13 of the town of Naperville, August 11, 1845
*Receipt signed by Joseph Naper for R. N. Murray for his ten dollars in stock to Naperville Academy, October 11, 1851
*Partial envelope addressed to R. Naper, Monroe, Wisconsin, January 28, 1852
*Letter written by George Martin to "Friend Naper" (R. Naper) from the City Hotel, Chicago, describing his purchasing activities on behalf of Naper, January 27, 1852
*Letter of introduction carried by George Martin, addressed to Honorable Uri Osgood, Senator in Springfield, Illinois, signed by Joseph Naper, asking for his assistance with legislation of benefit to Naperville, January 27, 1855

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*Letter of introduction carried by George Martin, addressed to Honorable John Moor, State Treasurer, Springfield, Illinois, signed by Joseph Naper, asking for his assistance in making Martin acquainted with the members of the Legislature, January 27, 1855
*Two copies of Corporation Ticket for Regular Nomination of Trustees, Joseph Naper, President, 1857
*Corporation Ticket for Regular Nomination of Trustees, Joseph Naper, President, 1857, with election totals for each candidate
*Money order paid to William Naper from William H. Ladd & Co., Bankers, Domniehille, California, January 23, 1861
*Receipt for Thomas Naper from D. C. Butler, Naperville for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, January 6, 1861
*Recipt for Mr. Webster for goods purchased from Robert Naper, proprietor of the DuPage Valley Mills, 1863
*Receipt for Thomas Naper from A. Rickert for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, January 26, 1864
*Receipt for Thomas Naper from S. E. Shimp for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, September 20, 1864
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from J. S. Roush for real estate taxes paid on Napers Addition, Lot 8, Block 24, February 16, 1870
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from George Strubler for corporation taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 4, 1871
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from D. M. Meiley for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 3, 1872
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from George Strubler, for corporation taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 3, 1872
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from George Strubler, for corporation taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, January 31, 1873
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 5, 1875
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 27, 1875
*Certificate of membership of the Naperville Fire Department for William Naper, January 7, 1876
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from M. J. Bursh for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, March 4, 1876
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from L. C. Stover for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, April 7, 1880
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from Joseph Lauer for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, March 2, 1881
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from Joseph Lauer for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, March 6, 1882
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from Joseph Lauer for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, March 8, 1883
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from Joseph Weigand for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, March 2, 1885

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*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from Joseph Weigand for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, March 4, 1884
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from George Wunder for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, March 4, 1886
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from George Wunder for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, January 25, 1887
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from Henry Mickenbecker for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 8, 1888
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from Henry Mickenbecker for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 16, 1889
*Blank receipt on stationery of M. A. Naper, DuPage Valley Mills, 18--
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from John Ehrhardt for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, January 10, 1890
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from Norman Lent for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, March 6, 1891
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from Levi Gerberich for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, January 16, 1892
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from Levi Gerberich for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, March 2, 1893
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from John Ehrhardt for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, March 8, 1894
*Receipt for B. Naper from W. H. Hillegas, May 1, 1894
*Receipt for Naper Bros. from W. H. Hillegas, June 2, 1894
*Receipt for Naper Bros. from W. H. Hillegas, August 22, 1894
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from John Ehrhardt for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 2, 1895
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from Benjamin F. Bender for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 5, 1896
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from B. F. Bender for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 19, 1897
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from John Hirtzel for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, January 26, 1898
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from George Wunder for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, January 27, 1899
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from John Rosenwinkel for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, January 29, 1900
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from John Rosenwinkel for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 1, 1901
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from Jacob Zentmyer for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 22, 1902
*Receipt for Julia Naper from Jacob Zentmyer for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 7, 1903
*Receipt for Julia A. Naper from William H. Rowe for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 27, 1904

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Receipt for Julia A. Naper from Jacob Zentmyer for real estate taxes paid on Lot 8, Block 24, February 15, 1905