



A 19th Century Village

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Naperville Lyceum journal available on the Illinois Digital Archives

Naperville, Ill. — The Proceedings of the Naperville Lyceum, a journal of weekly meetings held from 1836 to 1843, acquired in 2006 by the Naperville Heritage Society, is now available on-line. The book was conserved to stabilize the fragile document and then the pages were scanned. In cooperation with the Naperville Public Library, the book is now available electronically through the Illinois Digital Archives, www.idaillinois.org.

Members of the lyceum, which met in several locations in Naperville shortly after the town was founded in 1831, gathered to debate important issues of the era and also held philosophical discussions. Included in the roster are recognizable citizens such as Naperville's founder Joseph Naper and early pioneers Stephen Scott, Lewis Ellsworth and Nelson Murray.

"I am thrilled that we are making this document accessible throughout the world via the Illinois Digital Archives," said Director of Preservation Services Debbie Grinnell. "Teachers and students will find these records important because it gives a viewpoint about the big questions people were asking in the 19th century. For genealogists, it confirms residency and participation in the Naperville community."

The minutes of Naperville's lyceum can be compared to other lyceums of the era, which evolved in the mid-1800s, throughout the East and the Midwest. A journal of meetings as complete as Naperville's lyceum is very rare. The manuscript is also important in that it embodies the thoughts and actions of a large constituent group of Napervillians in the late 1830s and early 1840s, at the time the town was being formed.

Future plans include a transcription of the manuscript, which also will be digitized, so it can be searchable by word. The full title of the manuscript on the Illinois Digital Archives in The Naperville Heritage Collection is "Proceedings of the Naperville Lyceum."

The journal was conserved and digitized through the cooperation of the Naperville Public Library and the generosity of the following donors: Brooks, Adams and Tarulis; Kuhn, Heap and Monson; Gerry Cassioppi; Ronald Nyberg; DuPage County Bar Foundation; Day & Robert, P.C.; Theodore Desch and Mark Miller. The digitalization also was made possible through the partial use of City of Naperville SECA funds.

The past comes to life at Naper Settlement, the only outdoor history museum in Illinois accredited by the American Association of Museums. This outdoor history museum and village, located in the heart of downtown Naperville, features a 12-acre site with 30 historic structures. Visit www.napersettlement.museum for details.

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