

City Seals and Logo

Naperville Heritage Society History Stories

Symbolism is a powerful tool. It can be used to tell a story, warn or remind. Affixing a symbol to seal a document is an ancient custom used to legitimize or validate a document and its purpose. In 1857, Naperville was incorporated as a village with the State of Illinois. The 26-year-old community set to work immediately to elect its first officers and create a seal or stamp with which to emboss important documents. The present-day municipal code states, “The City Clerk shall seal and attest all contracts of the City, and all licenses, permits and other documents which require this formality. The Clerk shall be the custodian of the City Seal and shall affix its impression on documents whenever this is required.” (Section 1-6B-4) Although municipal seals are not required to be registered with the State, the earliest record of Naperville possessing a seal is found in the minutes of the council proceedings, July 28, 1865. Naperville attorney and then City Clerk James M. Vallette submitted a bill in the amount of \$6 for the purchase of a “Seal Press for Village.” These presses were small cast iron frames with a lever used to depress a carved lead seal into a base for the embossing of paper.



Most official seals are carved with mottoes (sometimes in Latin) and symbols depicting various patriotic, civic regional, or symbolic meanings. On the Seal of the City of Naperville, two images are prominent: a shield and an anchor. In a memorandum dated March 25, 1996, it was speculated that the anchor “reflects the love Joe Naper had for the sea [and that] his seafaring days ended and his political career began” and the shield, “the days of Joe Naper as an Army Captain.” Traditional heraldry assigns the shield as a symbol of protection and the anchor a symbol of hope – both sentiments worthy of a fledgling settlement.

The present-day logo and flag of Naperville were created by the Community Appearance Advisory Board and dedicated January 21, 1974. The board’s goal was to capture the spirit of Naperville and its amenities in a simple, easily recognized way. The large tree in the center of the logo, “symbolizes Naperville’s trees, parks and green spaces.” The object that appears to be a boat to the left of the tree actually, “represents the low profile of Naperville’s housing and industry.” The wavy lines below the tree represent water features throughout Naperville, most likely the west branch of the DuPage River. According to a February 6, 2005, article in the Naperville Sun, the steeple-like tower symbolizes the “role played by community churches.”

History Stories are developed by the Naperville Heritage Society Research Library and Archives staff at Naper Settlement. As a bountiful resource for learning about a variety of topics related to Naperville, they provide unique insights into the past. For more information, please call the Curatorial Department at 630.305.3535.

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