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Naperville Heritage Society receives \$72,209 IMLS grant

Naperville, IL — The Naperville Heritage Society, administrator of Naper Settlement which is the only nationally accredited outdoor history museum in Illinois, is among the recipients of the Institute of Museum and Library Services 2016 Museums for America award. The museum has been awarded a \$72,209 grant, which will enable Naper Settlement's staff to engage the services of professional conservators who will clean, stabilize and conserve a 1912 threshing machine once used by area farmers.

“Our feelings are really sentimental with the thresher,” said Wilbert Hageman whose father and uncle had owned the thresher. “As a little kid I can remember that particular thresh machine and it means an awful lot to our family to have it conserved.”

The thresher will be the centerpiece of an exhibit in the museum's new Agricultural Interpretive Center which is currently under development. Additionally, Naper Settlement will hold a two-day field-study workshop for emerging museum professionals in collections care and conservation of macro artifacts. For this year's grant cycle, the IMLS received 548 applications with 206 grants being awarded.

“Conservation of this locally significant and highly historically valued agricultural artifact will meet the museum's strategic priority of providing exhibitions and interactive learning experiences that allow visitors to connect with the area's agrarian history in the context of the nation's development,” said Louise Howard, Chief Curator and Project Director for thresher conservation project and workshop.

Naper Settlement acquired the 1912 Wood Brothers grain thresher from the Wheatland Plowing Match Association, upon its disbanding after 137 years, in 2014. The thresher was collectively owned and operated by Naperville area farmers including the Hageman and Erb families during a time when agriculture dominated the landscape.

Larry Hageman, who contributed family artifacts associated with the thresher, said in regards to its historical importance, “The thresher benchmarks a certain time when the crop yield was fairly low and manual input was huge. The horse was still the major source of power and it was a great innovation in its day. But conserving the thresher will show generations how far we've come.”

Naper Settlement's Agricultural Interpretive Center will employ cutting-edge technology to relate the facets of the city's farming past using a trio of themes and the preservation of key artifacts, like the grain

thresher. Cleaning and conserving this agricultural artifact will help to share Naperville's agricultural past with students and the public, while being a great asset in STEM education.

Conservators Ralph Kennedy and Brian Howard will work on the thresher and partially disassemble the artifact due to its large size and restoration of specific parts. After the thresher is returned to its original state, a workshop geared toward the state and local preservation community will be presented through local undergraduate and graduate schools, including the local conservation training center at the International Preservation Studies Center in Mount Carroll, Illinois.

Howard stresses the importance of the educational workshop that will coincide with the conservation of the thresher. "The educational workshop for emerging museum professionals that is part of this grant will provide an opportunity for hands-on learning, centered on the threshing machine's cultural importance and conservation," said Howard.

The project's outcome will support the Naperville Heritage Society in its mission to collect, document and preserve the history of Naperville, Illinois' agricultural past. The institution uses its preserved historical buildings and collections at Naper Settlement to fulfill its mission through research, exhibitions, school and public programs.

More than 140,400 people visit Naper Settlement each year, including 33,000 schoolchildren and their teachers. Since its founding in 1969, over 3.6 million visitors have toured the 12-acre museum site and have visited its historic buildings and seen a variety of regional artifacts.

"This grant award from the Institute of Museum and Library Services signifies the quality and significance of Naper Settlement's agricultural collections," said Donna Sack, Vice President of Community Engagement and Audience. "It is important that the grain thresher be conserved and incorporated into the future Agricultural Interpretive Center, because this is our legacy--sharing the lives, work and experiences of Napervillians through the centuries."

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services [IMLS grant number MA-30-16-0383-16].

Photo caption: 1912 Wood Brothers grain thresher from the Wheatland Plowing Match Association.

About Naper Settlement and the Naperville Heritage Society

Naper Settlement is a nationally accredited, award-winning outdoor museum set on 12 magnificent acres in the heart of Naperville, where history comes to play and community comes to connect. The Naperville Heritage Society is the administrator of Naper Settlement. With a commitment to the community and a focus to the future, the mission of the Naperville Heritage Society is to collect, document, preserve and support the history of Naperville, Illinois, past and present. For more information, visit napersettlement.org or call (630) 420-6010.

About the Institute of Museum and Library Services



The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 35,000 museums. Our mission is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. Our grant making, policy development, and research help libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit www.imls.gov and follow IMLS on Facebook [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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