**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Media Library: Merle Clarke’s Journal Photos

**Naper Settlement Asks Community to Reflect on their Pandemic Experience for the Museum’s Archives**

NAPERVILLE, IL — Naper Settlement is asking Naperville residents to reflect on their experiences during the coronavirus pandemic for the Naperville Settlement Museum Archives. The museum, which documents Naperville’s history from the 1800s to present day, is encouraging residents to participate in a community-wide journaling project in order to capture their daily life as they adapt to the new demands and stresses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Residents will have the opportunity to donate their journals to be preserved in the museum’s collection at a later date.

“For museums like Naper Settlement, interpreting both in the moment and taking the long view is essential. Museums serve as community anchors, and history museums, especially, serve as repositories and mirrors for all,” said Donna Sack, Naper Settlement’s Vice President & Chief Program Officer. “By adding to our collections now, we can share what Napervillians are going through right now and preserve critical history for decades to come.”

A variety of educational resources on journaling and historic preservation are available on Naper Settlement’s website (NaperSettlement.org/Journals), including journaling examples, how-to guides, and a Journaling Digital Lesson Plan offered to area teachers and parents to keep their children engaged and reflective on this moment in history. Online visitors can also view the journal of Merle Clarke, a Naperville resident who shares her family’s struggle with the 1918 influenza pandemic. Merle Clarke’s journal was donated to the Naper Settlement archives in 2005 by a generous donor, and is an example of how journaling can help teach future generations what life was like during important points in history.

“Merle’s journal documents her life with just one sentence a day, but it gives us great insight into what her life was like,” said Sack. “We are encouraging the community to document both what they are witnessing and feeling. Journals can be one sentence a day like Merle’s, or more elaborate. You can determine what sources future historians will have access to by deciding what to record and preserve today.”

The journaling project is a part of a larger *Naperville 2020: Pandemic Collecting Initiative* started by the museum in March. Naper Settlement’s curatorial team has been safely documenting the pandemic through photography and by collecting materials such as signs and informational pamphlets. Naperville residents are encouraged to contribute to the museum’s
Pandemic Collecting Initiative. Artifacts like signs, photographs and door and window decals, and other things representative of our lives today will be collected at a later date, once it is safe to do so. The initiative aligns with the rapid response collecting efforts made by museums across the continent to document the global pandemic.

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**About Naper Settlement**
Naper Settlement is a nationally accredited, award-winning outdoor museum set on 13 magnificent acres in the heart of Naperville. Located 30 miles from Chicago, the museum is home to thirty-one historical structures dating back as early as the 1830s. Featuring exhibits, special events, educational programming and more, Naper Settlement is where history comes alive and the community comes to connect. For more information, visit www.napersettlement.org or call (630) 420-6010.

**About Naperville Heritage Society**
Founded in 1969, the Naperville Heritage Society is a not-for-profit organization and administrator of Naper Settlement, the City of Naperville’s museum. 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.