

# Naperville Newspapers

Naperville Heritage Society History Stories

Getting the “news” in Naperville in the early years was no simple task. Prior to regular mail service, most news came in the form of letters from family members, or from newspapers printed in Boston, New York or Philadelphia, which often arrived several weeks late. In 1833, two years after Joseph Naper founded Naperville, John Calhoun founded the Chicago Weekly Democrat. From a receipt dated 1835 in the Martin Family Collection, we know that the Chicago Weekly Democrat was read here in Naperville by George Martin, a Scottish immigrant, who settled in Naperville in 1833.

In 1849, the first newspaper in Naperville (and DuPage County), the DuPage County Recorder, was published by Charles J. Sellon. It is interesting to note that although DuPage County was established in 1839, it did not have its own newspaper until 1849. It is presumed that Napervillians read national papers from the East Coast, the Chicago papers, or the Aurora Beacon News, which was founded in 1846. Sellon’s first paper was non-partisan, but within a year, his paper reflected the temper and politics of Naperville. Sellon changed the name of the paper to The Democratic Plaindealer and it became an “organ of Democracy.” Around this same time in 1850, the Temperance movement was strong in Naperville and Sellon unscrupulously took subscriptions to a newspaper he called, Daughter of Temperance, then left town, abandoning his wife and children, having printed only a few issues.

As the county seat, it was expected that Naperville publish the news, so in 1851, a series of businessmen, including a doctor, formed a partnership to publish the DuPage County Observer. This paper was later purchased by the former typesetter and published under the name DuPage County Journal. During the great flood of February 1857, the building and press were washed away, along with several other businesses in the downtown area. Between 1857 and 1863, the history of newspapers in Naperville is vague. For a brief time in 1857, the Naperville Newsletter was published, and much later, around 1862 the Naperville Sentinel was published, most likely in response to people wanting to know more news about the Civil War. This paper was succeeded by the DuPage County Press, owned and operated by Dr. Robert K. Potter and Joseph Naper’s son, Robert.



WALTER GIVLER SETTING TYPE AT THE  
NAPERVILLE CLARION

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After the Civil War, Naper and Potter sold the DuPage County Press to returning Civil War veteran, David B. Givler. Givler promptly changed the name of the newspaper to the Naperville Clarion. For 37 years, he published the Clarion and then sold the paper in 1905 to his son Rollo N. Givler, who edited and printed the paper until his retirement in 1951. For 83 years, the Givler family and the Clarion were synonymous. The Clarion stopped publication around 1975.

Over the years, various newspapers have come and gone including a German language newspaper, the DuPage County Volkszeitung (1879-1880), The Ray (1884), the DuPage Semi-Weekly Press 1896), the Naperville Home News (c. 1890) and the Naperville Herald (c. 1900). Although started by future developer, Harold Moser, the Naperville Sun was purchased in 1936 by North Central College graduate Harold White. In 1937, Harold married Eva Anderson, also a North Central graduate, and the couple managed the Naperville Sun for more than 40 years, updating and improving their hometown paper. Under Harold's direction, the Naperville Sun was the first newspaper in town to use photography almost exclusively over engravings and hand drawings.

Many of the newspapers mentioned in this article are found on microfilm in the Naperville Public libraries and at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Ill. Yesteryear's news also comes alive at Naper Settlement where many of the original newspapers are carefully preserved in the Library/Archives.

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