

A Publication for  
and about the  
town of Naper,  
Nebraska

# Naper Paper

Naper News Is Good News

## The Naper Historical Society

### Our Mission:

"The mission of the Naper Historical Society is to preserve, interpret, display, communicate, promote and honor history, original structures, special places and artifacts of the people and culture of Naper, Nebraska, and the surrounding area. The Naper Historical Society intends to accomplish this mission by operating a museum, publishing a newsletter, sponsoring events, and in other appropriate ways. The Naper Historical Society will initially focus on four themes: School Days, Life in Naper Through the Years, White Horse Ranch, and Naper 28 Plane Crash."

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Fall 2004

## Naper 28 Honored on 60th Anniversary



This monument rests at Knollcrest Cemetery in honor of the 28 brave men who lost their lives.

### Memorial Dedicated in August Ceremony

On the afternoon of August 8, 2004 a community paused to remember and honor those it did not know...fallen heroes of World War II...the men collectively known as The Naper 28.

This paper has written their story. Briefly, at 8:25pm on August 3, 1944 an Army C-47 transport airplane dropped from the sky near Naper killing 28 brave World War II servicemen, in the worst military air disaster

in Nebraska's history. The dead were Army pilots, one flight surgeon, and an aircraft crew chief. They were traveling from the Bruning, Nebraska air base to Pierre, South Dakota to complete their training before being shipped out to war. The aircraft apparently caught fire, and it may have broken up in air. The plane plummeted to the ground on the ranch of Connie Sattler 7 miles south of Naper. Many people in and around Naper saw or heard the plane struggling in the storm, and they came to the site to help. There were no survivors, and as was custom of the time, little information was offered by the Army, and there were few stories written. Even the families received precious few details.

It seemed as though these fallen heroes would be forgotten as the years passed. And they would have except for the long memories and the humanity of the people of Naper, Nebraska. The local historical society decided to create a permanent memorial of and for these men on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crash. And so, on a hot, summer Sunday afternoon, with a strong wind blowing across the plains of northern Nebraska, nearly 400 people attended a beautiful, moving ceremony in Knollcrest Cemetery. People came from near and far to pay witness and to honor The Naper 28. Relatives traveled from as far west as California, as



Loreh Sieh served as Chairman of the 60th anniversary and monument dedication

far east as Baltimore, as far south as Texas, and from many areas of the northern plains. It seems that the entire town of Naper, with a population of around 100 showed up, too, along with many people from throughout the Midwest who had been touched by the story.

The sky was a deep blue as the crowd arranged itself facing a lectern, several chairs, three flag poles, a draped monument, and twenty-eight small white crosses. Loren Sieh, chairman of the historical society's Naper 28 committee, directed the ceremony. After an invocation by Pastor Wilbur Bullock and a welcome by James Sattler, Mr. Sieh looked into the eyes of the family members seated in the front row. In a voice trembling with emotion he told them that the society and the people of Naper wished "to remember and honor these brave men, and finally after six decades give the families closure."

United States Senator E. Benjamin Nelson was

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## Country School Memories

By Velda Sieh  
Stahlecker

I went to District 44 west of Naper in 1942-43. There were four of us in the seventh grade, Marvin Green, Roy Goodman, Delores Zeitner and me. Edith Windmeyer was our teacher. She worked at teaching her students, as we didn't have many books. She was very good at improvising, her methods were unique.

She wrote our daily lessons, word for word on the blackboard. We copied them in what we called pamphlets. She brought wallpaper sample books to school and we copied everything she wrote on the blackboard to the backside of the pages.

When you were in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade you had to pass the County literature examination to enter the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. (We had twenty required readings), *The Man Without A Country*, *Evangeline*, *Hiawatha*, to name several of them. We all passed with flying colors.

She also prepared us for the next year by teaching *History*, *Mathematics*, *Geography*, *Spelling* and *Science* the same way. I learned how to read maps, identify countries by drawing them on the blackboard. To this day I love to read maps.

Mrs. Windmeyer is just one of my country teachers that is to be thanked for her diligent training. I certainly value the training I received in a Country School.

## Recollections: An Interview With John Schonebaum

By The Circuit Rider

*At sundown a mysterious rider is seen drifting along the horizon. Old timers believe he's a Sandhills Ghost or Spirit who's trying to keep the Pioneer Spirit alive. His mission: To interview favorite long-time residents of Naper, in order to help us remember our noble past. No one can actually point to specifics, but all swear, "He's out there..."*

During an era which barely had territories defined and boundaries not clearly established, a covered wagon rolled into Dakota. This rolling home was such a secure shelter to John Schonebaum's mother who was a baby at this time, that even within the confines of her bedroom she needed a sheet above her to make a roof to feel secure. Such were the times in 1891.

Years later, in 1910, near Witten, South Dakota, John was born. Baby John was lying on a blanket outside the house when an Indian came by. The Native American commented that the "The Papoose" be taken farther west where he could be given some land by the government.

The Schonebaum family moved to Winner while John's father, Paul, worked for the railroad. The family lived in a "section house" owned by the railroad. From Winner the family migrated to Bonesteel where they lived on a farm.

John began the first grade in St. Charles and graduated from the twelfth in St. Charles. Quite a metropolis at the time, St. Charles even had its own bank.

### John The Musician

A self taught musician, John plays the trumpet, the violin, and the accordion. When just

17 years old, John had the opportunity to play live on radio station WNAX, Yankton, South Dakota the area's most listened to station. Some of the well-known radio station personalities at the time were Lawrence Welk, Happy Jack O'Malley a fiddle player and a famous newscaster, Whitey Larson. All amounted to quite an experience for the "St. Charles Kid" who rode to Yankton in a Model "T" Ford. The mighty Missouri River also had to be crossed on the Old Wheeler Bridge, later to be abandoned because the Fort Randall Reservoir was built across the Missouri.

John's musical talents afforded him and the band (5 members total) to earn as much as \$5.00 per night playing for wedding dances... (A whole dollar each for a night's work.)

Over the years the sights and episodes seen from the bandstand and center stage provided John with many memories, funny stories and chuckles. Some nights the dancehalls would literally empty when someone yelled "Fight!" Many skirmishes began on the inside of the hall and were escorted outside.

One of the most vivid episodes creating a chuckle from John occurred when a most "gregarious" rotund lady doing a fast nimble "two-step" had her "drawers" fall down around her ankles. Not one to miss a "beat," she calmly kicked them to the side of the dance floor out of the way and "two-stepped" away the night.

John played with bands named FIVE STAR, THE RHYTHM RAMBLERS, and the BROTSKYS.



John Schonebaum

### John Marries Vera

It was during the 30's that a pretty young lady named Vera Zeitner showed up on the scene to captivate the young trumpet player's heart. Later to become Mrs. John Schonebaum on May 26, 1935.

John and Vera became farmers. Later an opportune time presented to the Schonebaums a chance to get off the farm. In 1946, John went to work for the Wm. Krotter Co. in Naper. About that same time John bought Jake Boucher's store which was across the street from the Krotter Bldg. One of 4 stores in town at the time, John later sold the store to "Spec" Whitley. When John bought the store he paid only \$2,700.00 for it.

Times were not always easy during the Schonebaum's early years. Dust storms blew field dirt into banks that covered fences. Lamps were lit within the homes during daylight hours to improve visibility. There were unbelievable sights such as straws driven into telephone poles by the tornadic winds. The grasshoppers literally ate holes in wooden poles. Banks went broke. John withdrew \$75.00 to buy a manure spreader farm implement and the next day, the bank closed its doors; a bit of luck for the Schonebaum family.

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## In the News

By Ol' Homesteader

Summer was as dry as my grandpappy's scalp. We had some nice rain in the Spring, and we all got our hopes up for a good summer that would lead to a successful Fall harvest. But as Spring turned into Summer, the rains stopped, the ground became hard, and the winds blew the dust so strong you had to turn on your headlights in the middle of the day. Anyway, as September arrived the rains came again. We picked up some nice water, but it was just too late to help a lot of farmers.

### Doin's Around Town

A lot of fun stuff happened here in Naper this summer, though. You can kill the crops but you can't kill this town's spirit. The big social event of the summer was the Barn Dance at **Craig and Stacy Zeisler's** farm. What a night it was! There was a huge turnout, with most everyone bringin' something for the potluck supper. The band Missouri Magic played some fancy tunes, and my goodness our town was dancing up a storm. You know, I remember when **Emil Zeisler** put on a big Barn Dance in that very same spot some 65 years ago. Ol' Homesteader did some fox trottin' with the Mrs that evenin', and I also seem to recall having an adult beverage or two. Well, Craig & Stacy decided that 65 years was long enough, and thanks to them for such a great party. Ol' Homesteader has put on his calendar another of these humdinger parties for summer of 2069...if'n the Zeislars are up for it.

We don't need a big party, though, to have fun 'round these parts. We've enjoyed our Senior Bingo games at the VFW, complete with prizes and

snacks. The United Church of Christ held its annual roast beef & fried chicken supper at town hall recently, and as always it had a country store and quilt drawing. Speaking of UCC, it hosted two bridal showers...one for **Blair Vogt**, and another for her sister **Pam**. Our town hosted several family reunions, too, this summer as we always do. Two of the bigger ones were the **Sieh Family** Reunion and the **Faatz-Esterling Family** Reunion, both at the VFW Hall in July. Finally, the VFW Auxiliary sponsored a program (with coffee & cookies!) for MIA and POW day.

### School and Kids

**Tina Schmitz** and **Kelsey Zink** represented S-N FFA at a July meeting in Aurora, Nebraska called PEAK (Pursuing Excellence, Achievement, and Knowledge).

**TyMBER Higgins** and **Jamie Zeisler** won Niobrara Valley Goodwill Fund scholarships of \$500 each.

**Marc Alford** played on the Bonesteel Teener Baseball Team that won the Region 7B Aug 3<sup>rd</sup> Tournament, qualifying them to go to state.

Recent high school grad **Kara Peppel** went to Australia as part of the International Sports Specialist program. She participated in a track and field tournament as part of a 5-States team called Midwest Striders. She competed against other teenagers from the USA, Australia and New Zealand.

### Other People In the News

**Victoria Mae Bernt** married **Jeremy Griebel** in Colorado. **Vivian Alexander**, long time Naper resident now living in Kearney, attended the Ladies

Auxiliary convention of the VFW in Cincinnati this August. This meeting started her term as Chair of the Big Ten Conference on the Cancer Aid and Research Program. **Jim & Mabel Sattler** received the prestigious Nebraska Farm Award.

### Naper Businesses

The Naper Paper is beginning a series of stories on the history of Naper businesses. The first story is about the Super Service station, and it appears in this issue. #

Naper Supply and Repair decided to close its doors after many years of service to our community. It was a tire dealer and warehouse outlet.

The Naper Grocery is doing well, and aren't we happy to have a grocery store back in our town. Ol' Homesteader has noticed, though, that business has slacked off just a bit lately, as some of us may be forgettin' how bad it was when D&L closed its doors. Let's not forget that lesson. We all need to support this grocery and all of our local merchants or they won't stay in business. Just writin' this here part makes me hungry, and since it's Tuesday I know that a shipment of great steaks will arrive at the Naper Grocery today. I'm heading over there as soon as I'm done.

### Bits and Pieces

The Jamison Methodist Church turned 103 years old this summer. Congratulations to this fine congregation.

The Naper Historical Society auctioned off a red, white, and blue afghan, a patriotic pillow and a flag bench this summer.

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## NAPER PAPER MOTTO CONTEST

Over the past few issues of the Naper Paper we've asked for your ideas and votes on a motto for your newspaper. We had a lot of great suggestions, the finalists of which were printed in the last issue. The Naper Paper is now proud to announce the winning motto...Naper News Is Good News. You'll see that we already incorporated it into the banner on the front page, and it will now be proudly displayed in each issue. Thanks to everyone for your participation.

## MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

By Alberta Boucher  
Breyer

Kids didn't know what being bored was when I was growing up. We entertained ourselves. Played games under the street light, and we got lots of exercise. We walked everywhere. I remember carrying Messenger Calls to people who didn't have phones for Dorwin Smith, and later Everett Smith and I earned 15 cents p/call. Life was simple but we enjoyed the little things, and didn't feel deprived.



## Voting Location Changed

Basin Precinct has been combined with Butte Precinct, so Naper residents will now vote at the Butte Community Center. This action was deemed necessary due to the decrease in population in Boyd County along with the increase in the costs associated with voting equipment and locales. The population in the County has declined from 2835 in 1990 to 2438 in 2000. Likewise, the number of registered voters has dropped from 2132 in 1990 to 1839 in 2000 to 1719 today.



## Volunteer Night (at the Cemetery!)

A rather unique way of making announcements in the village of Naper is to stand a barrel in the middle of Main Street. To this a message is attached that states "VOLUNTEERS NEEDED."

The photograph shows part of the group of volunteers that showed up on riding lawn mowers to mow the Knollcrest and Catholic cemeteries and roadway east of Naper. Many others with push mowers, and those who did other kinds of trimming, are not in the photo.

We're proud of the "volunteer spirit" in Naper. Thanks to former Naper high graduate, Dr. Winston Stahlecker for the photo.

## Naper 28 Honored continued

represented by staff member James Fagin, who presented the historical society with a printed copy of a speech he gave on the floor of the Senate about The Naper 28. In that speech, Senator Nelson referred not only to "the tragedy and sacrifices" but also of the "lost opportunities" of the fallen men, something that was no doubt on the minds of their widows, brothers, sisters, and other family members in attendance. Mr. Fagin also presented the historical society with a United States flag that was flown over the U.S. Capitol in honor of The Naper 28.

Major General Michael Symanski traveled to Naper, too, and he spoke of the patriotism of The Naper 28, telling us that "these men did not die in vain, but rather in a great effort of freedom-loving Americans to secure peace in the world."

The ceremony included patriotic music, a Military Drill Team, and a Firing Squad from Offutt Air Base. It concluded with three moving presentations:

- \* A newly designed Naper 28 flag was raised for the first time by Mabel Sattler and Gertie Honke.
- \* The tarp from the headstone memorial was removed by family members in attendance. The headstone was engraved with the name of each of the 28 servicemen under the words, "Lost Airmen."
- \* A wreath was laid at the monument by the widow and daughter of co-pilot Robert Bolhe...Delores Henahan and Barbara Kruse.

A dry eye could not be found among the hundreds of attendees, as they filed out of



General Symanski thanks family member for the sacrifice of their loved ones.

the cemetery to attend a reception in Naper's Hall. Those who witnessed this very special 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary ceremony will never forget it. By word and deed, this was a day not only to celebrate twenty-eight brave men, but also to celebrate the resiliency of the human spirit, the greatness of our country, and the value of life.

## A Histories of Naper Business

By popular request, the Naper Paper is a beginning a series of articles on the histories of Naper businesses, past and present. This is the first article in the series.

### NAPER SUPER SERVICE By Duke Stahlecker

Naper residents are proud of the surviving established businesses existing today. In a free-enterprise system with franchised names dominating the business world; MOM and POP operations are almost history.

The sign of the flying red horse and the white eagle identified the service station as you entered Naper from the south

that years later was to become NAPER SUPER SERVICE.

In the early 30's while gas was about 18 cents per gallon; the first operator was Charley Klein. Since then, several times, ownership has changed hands.

From Charley Klein title passed to Gust Weickum in 1943. In the beginning Gust employed his son Fritz to help him. Later, Gust took over the total operation and worked the business until the fall of 1947

At this time ownership again changed hands and Harry Bennett and Bob Fuhrer took the reins. This partnership lasted several years and until

sold to Walt Ahlers and Johnny Sieh.

In January of 1953, Walt sold his interest to Jim McLaughlin. John and Jim worked the station until 1969 when Loren Sieh bought out Jim. These two men worked the station until 1979 when Johnny retired and Loren became full owner.

Unfortunately in 1992 the station burned to the ground and had to be completely rebuilt as a new structure. Loren re-opened the same year and continued operation until 2004 when Klay Schonebaum became proprietor.

(Gas now costs about a dollar and ninety cents per gallon.)



## Café Under New Management

The Naper Café & Lounge is under new management. No, the venerable hot spot of Naper didn't sell, however Mike and Tanya Stangle are now leasing it from the village board. The new managers took over in August with a great deal of excitement.

The Naper Paper interviewed the duo shortly after they took over. We learned that this is not Mike & Tanya's first restaurant venture. In fact, they ran Oopies Café & Lounge in Isabel, South Dakota for many years. They enjoyed the experience, learned a lot, and decided to put what they

learned to work for the good people of Naper. So, why did you decide to do it, we asked? "Well, we thought about it for about a year", said Mike. "We enjoy the people in Naper, and felt it was a good opportunity." There are a few changes they feel will make the place even more enjoyable. For instance, they have added sirloin tips to the menu, using an old family recipe for the seasoning. "We were really known for our sirloin tips in Isabel", offered Tanya, and so far the people of Naper would agree that the tips are a winner. On one recent evening at the café, this reporter heard them described

as "to die for" and "the best thing I've eaten in years." Most of the other menu items remain, so everyone can still find their old favorites.



Mike and Tanya Stangle

### Support Our Local Merchants

A & M Enterprises  
832-5388  
Trenching, pump installations, backhoe work, plumbing.

Bob's Auto Body  
832-5766, Box 223  
Auto body repair.

Cline's Bar  
Beer, wine, spirits & munchies.

Curl Up & Dye Beauty Shop  
832-5573  
Haircuts, styling, coloring.

Goodman Farm & Ranch  
and Lynn's Upholstery  
832-5461  
Covering chairs, couches and other furniture.

M & L Lawn Service  
832-5422  
Mowing, trimming, fertilizing, tilling, seeding, spraying

K & S Mobile  
832-5125  
Welding & equipment repair; on-site service

Naper B & B  
832-5129  
Lodging & breakfast.

Naper Café and Lounge  
832-5272  
Breakfast, dinner, supper & bar.

Naper Store  
832-5276  
Full line grocery store

Naper Gas  
832-5381  
Propane, sand and gravel.

Naper Super Service  
832-5321  
Gas, oil, auto repair, & a few antiques

U.S. Postal Service  
832-5977

If we don't support our local merchants...who will?

Spend Here: And keep our town strong.

## Interview With John Schonebaum continued

### Naper Stories

Stories that John recalls are part of history. John was a witness to the NAPER 28 STORY involving the crash of the military transport. John vividly remembers a huge ball of fire exploding into the air. What a lasting memory that has been.

Another story captivating the South Dakota and Nebraska locals was the kidnapping and murder of a woman whose body was found at local Lake Berry just west of St. Charles. Discovery of the body was located by following odors coming from the Lake. This story made national headlines.

### Civic Activities

A civic minded volunteer, John did more than his share of city and local government work. He served as clerk for the village of Naper from 1946 to 1993. He also served on the Naper school board for 16 years from 1948-1962 and was

secretary of the board for 32 years.

Honors through plaques on his living room walls are from Naper city for 55 years and the Naper School Board for 39 years.

Activities also include John's being the "VOICE OF NAPER" as radio announcer for station KBRX Oneill, Nebraska since 1963. John's Naper News airs each Thursday at 11:05 am.

### Children & Family

John and Vera had (4) children graduate from Naper High School: Virginia, Marjo, Ronald and Dan. In addition to 4 children and their spouses, John has 12 grandchildren, 22 great grandchildren, 5 step-great grand children and one step great, great grand child.

Johnny lost his lifetime partner, Vera in 1997. Adjusting to all of this, John lives by himself in his home in the East side of Naper.

He still can be seen driving his Buick to the post office and the Naper Café.

### Circuit Rider's Interviews

To this date, the total combined years of the 4 pioneers visited for stories is in excess of 390 years--nearly 400! Stories have ranged from tales of covered wagons to a moon walk and vehicles on Mars. This Circuit Rider can only imagine the range of stories in covering the 100 years to come-----WHAT WILL ALL OF US LEAVE FOR POSTERITY TO BE DISCUSSED?????

A famous man once said, "The definition of character is the ability to carry through with a resolution, long after the mood has passed." Pioneers had character, are there any left today??

THE CIRCUIT RIDER





## Letters to the Naper Paper

### Our Town, Naper

Anonymous Author

*Naper's a town  
We all hold dear.  
Today, tomorrow,  
And through the years.*

*It's a fine place to live,  
A great place to grow.  
Where neighbors are friends,  
Neighbors you really know.*

*We have a new spirit,  
And it's growing each day.  
We're the new pioneers,  
It's the Naper way.*

*Our town is determined,  
Our people are strong.  
We sing to her praises,  
We sing her this song.*

*Naper we honor you,  
We thank you for all.  
The blessings of life,  
With you we stand tall.*



Jim & Mabel Sattler celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary July 10th. The town joined them in celebrating at Naper auditorium. Congratulations!

Naper will always be home! Whoever was the brain child for this paper is to be commended. I love it & truly enjoy reading it. Thanks to those of you near and far who want to preserve Naper's history. I am especially proud of you for the Naper 28 project. I, too, remember it well. Enclosed is a check to help with costs.

*Jan Blahkolb Broekemier, Class of 1954, Central City, NE*

Thank you for the Naper Paper. I enjoy it very much. I feel like I have a tie also to the Naper community. My mother, Lena, was born in 1896 in Naper to William & Lydia (Neiman) Schrader. My sister lived not far from the airplane crash. She remembers it well. Enclosed is a check to help publish the paper.

*Velma M. Vance, Gering, NE*

I was surprised to see a paper from a small community like Naper. I enjoy reading it. Enclosed is a check to help with expenses.

*Nola Dummer Ulmer, Winner, SD*

Thank you for the Naper Paper! I enjoy it and share it with my sisters. I remember the plane crash at the Sattler place. Enclosed is a check.

*LeRoy Erickson, Larned, Kansas*

Having served as Naper Supt of Schools for several years (1949 - 1952) it was a pleasure to live in this community and work with the Naper students. This was my first job as Supt, and I learned much along with the students. I recall several programs that, with the help of dedicated faculty, we introduced - such as School Carnival, Boxing, and other events, and the income helped purchase equipment for the school. I also recall the help

my wife Mildred did in donating time in cleaning and repairing the basketball equipment. We certainly enjoy the paper, and want to congratulate the many that help in promoting this fine project. Enclosed is a check to help with expenses.

*Dan & Mildred Duffy, Bella Vista, AR*

When I come to Naper for family events, I am reminded "you can take the boy out of the farm, but you can't take the farm out of the boy." I love Naper which has a special place in my heart. I enjoy reading the paper and seeing my young brother, Jim, in pictures. My parents and I were in Naper when the west side burned. Thanks for the memories!!  
*Connie Sattler, Jr., Minneapolis, MN*

Sixty years may have passed, but my memories of August 3 & 4, 1944 are as vivid as if they were yesterday. I am thrilled that your historical society and the people of Naper are making such an effort to honor the memory of 28 very special young men. Thank you.

*Excerpts from letter from DeLores Bohle Henehan, widow of Naper 28 co-pilot Robert Bohle*

Each year the Nebraska Chapter, 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society, tries to honor our members who died in WWII. We find the memorial at Naper to be especially poignant since it is very conceivable some of the pilots were meant to replace those who we were losing daily in 1944. Thank you for initiating this project. May God bless and keep you, the memorial, and the service people you honor.

*Patrick Almgren, President, Omaha, NE*

The Society, the community, and Mr. Sieh should be commended for a wonderful program that was presented at the cemetery. The speakers, the music (gave me lot of chills), the wooden crosses, the Naper 28 flag, and the unveiling of the monument were impressive. Everyone I met in Naper seemed so patriotic and so committed to honoring the Naper 28. You have a great community, and the cooperation and dedication you put forth is something that would take a lot more work to achieve in a larger city...and then it would not have the great "small town" touch like I experienced in Naper. I was able to...tour the museum in Naper on Sunday. It is a great museum.

*Stuart Flynn, Sioux City, IA*

I was so happy to hear of your dedication for the 28 Bruning airmen. I had dated Lt. Bill Acree that summer, and he did ask me to marry him. This was a real surprise as I hardly knew him and was soon headed to be a freshman in college. He is buried in the Fairbury cemetery, and I cover his grave every year. There is a very handsome grave stone there with some wonderful sentiment. I hope to some day see your memorial. That accident hit our town very hard.

*Anna Margaret "Kink" Saks*

Lengthy letters were received from Iris Stewert Eppenbach and Dale Westerbuhr with much information about their families. The Naper Historical Society will make them available to anyone wishing to read them. Please see Secretary Beverly Zink.



## Naper Settlers: The 1900 Census

By Bob Allpress

A couple of issues back I did a story of the trials and tribulations endured by the people living around Naper at the time the town was created. After my research, I was intrigued by the questions, "Who were these hardy souls who survived the severe drought?" Another question I asked was, "Who were the newcomers who filled the void created by those who died or moved on?" I located a resource to identify who they were and whence they came. With Naper's creation in 1891, the first document to provide answers was the 1900 Federal census.

This survey encompasses three areas. Turtle Precinct was the area between the rivers from "The Point" westward to the Rock county line. Basin Precinct is defined by the area starting on the Keya Paha river side of The Point, straight north to the South Dakota border, then west to Keya Paha county, back south to the Keya Paha, then along the river to the starting point. The third area was the Village of Naper itself. (A census copy is

available for further research at the Heritage Hall.) In 1900, 1113 pioneers lived in this area. There were a total of 478 adults and 635 children.

Naper itself started off the 20th century with 95 residents. The "townies" were comprised of 52 adults and 43 children. There was one each; doctor, minister, postmaster, editor, teacher, butcher, real estate agent, lumberman, loan-agent, liveryman, confectioner and hardware merchant. There were another 7 general merchants plus 2 blacksmiths, 3 carpenters and 6 laborers.

Growing up in Naper during the 50's and 60's, I often heard the term "Little Russia." I was never sure if it was used in reference to the town, or the town and surrounding area. Out of the first 52 adults, 20 were born in Russia or Germany and 2 were from Norway. That's almost half the town! The rest of the town occupant's histories tell the story of the westward movement. Most of the settler's parents were born in the New England or

MidAtlantic states. Places frequently listed are Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania or New York. These are industrial states and may be a factor influencing those choosing to live in town. The children of this previous generation and now the town's residents were more often born in such states as Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Sixty-three percent of the children living in Naper in 1900 had been born in Nebraska. Most residents tended to be young and just starting their families.

Even in 1900, the area between the rivers was pretty sparsely settled. Turtle Precinct recorded 47 adults and 39 children living there. Here is where I was surprised. One out of every 3 adults had been born in Iowa! The parents of these adults came from everywhere, with only Pennsylvania and Ohio having any dominance over any place else. Again, the settlers were

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## A Love Letter To Naper From "Naper 28"

### Families

To all concerned with the Naper Historical Society,

*My husband and I attended the Naper 28 dedication on August 8. My brother, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Jack E. Lytle, was one of the pilots who were killed. We want to thank you for all the work you did and all the time you spent preparing for this dedication. When we decided to attend we thought it would be nice to see the monument, the crash site, the country, etc. It was greater than we could ever have anticipated!!*

*When we went to the museum the first book I picked up had a letter from my mother to Mrs. Sattler. It is hard to describe the feelings I had, but everything just got better and better after that. Everyone was so friendly. The ceremony was so touching and meaningful. When the Naper 28 flag was raised and the green plane was flying in the breeze, I had such a wonderful feeling and felt closer to Jack than I had in years. The lunch was really special, and we would like to thank everyone for all the work you did to feed us.*

*The crash site was different than I had envisioned for sixty years. I felt better after seeing it — it was so quiet and peaceful, a beautiful place. We thank the Sattlers for letting us go there.*

*We loved your town, the museum, and the people we met. We live in a small town, and we felt at home. We want to thank you again for inviting us — it is truly something we will never forget. God Bless All!*

Verna & Donal Brown,  
Morton, Texas

## Ol' Homesteader continued

It also received another \$1,500 grant from the Niobrara Valley Electric Goodwill Fund, with this money to go toward an exhibit called "Naper Life Through the Years."

### Friends Who Have Left Us

Ol' Homesteader is saddened by the passing of four friends... people from Naper or former residents of our town. Rest in peace, old friends.

**Don Schmitz** died in July just after he turned 76.

**Donald Putnam**, most recently of O'Neill, died recently. He was born in Naper in 1926.

**Mary Arp** passed away. She most recently lived in Hooper, and lived in Naper in the 40's.

**Margaret Vogt**, 87 years old, died in August.

Well, that will do it for Ol' Homesteader for another season. Summer is behind us, Fall is upon us, and come this winter I'll be back to tell you all about October through December. (Well, I might leave out Nebraska football season!)

Ol' Homesteader



**A PUBLICATION FOR  
AND ABOUT THE  
TOWN OF NAPER,  
NEBRASKA**

The Naper Paper  
PO Box 72  
Napier, Nebraska 68755

## Naper Settlers continued

young and 27 of the 39 children had been born in Nebraska. Most probably right there between the rivers.

As a direct opposite to Turtle, Basin Precinct was a happening area. There were 932 people living around Naper. Three hundred and seventy nine adults lived and farmed in Basin Precinct. Semi-professionals enumerated included an engineer, 1 mail carrier, 1 stock raiser, 1 hotelkeeper, 3 schoolteachers, 1 butcher, 1 druggist, 1 minister and a physician. 46 percent of these settlers were born in Russia or Germany. The westward movement across the United States again shows strongly, as

the second largest number of adults was born in the Midwest. Like Turtle Precinct, this contingent was born in Iowa with significant numbers from Illinois, Wisconsin or Ohio.

The 553 children of these Basin precinct settlers tell the great story of settlement in our area. They depict a birth trail across the world, ending with 329 of them born right here in Nebraska. 43 were born in Iowa, 69 in South Dakota, 63 in Russia and 11 in Germany. The 38 that make up the remaining were born from scattered locations across the United States. Most of these children seemed to be under 10 years

old in 1900. Those born in the old countries tended to be teenagers. The two emigration trails converged at Naper. Europe to South Dakota and then into Nebraska, or the Midwest to Iowa to Nebraska were the routes taken. Why so many Russians came to this area is another historical story to be told at another time.

"Little Russia" we were, still are, and proud of it. The names of 1900 are still found around Naper, carried by the descendants of these intrepid pioneers. Many have gone on, but their legacy remains to this day.

The

## Naper Paper

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