

## History of Nappanee, Indiana

What was once a swamp and marshland is now the beautiful City of Nappanee, Indiana. The earliest known inhabitants of the Nappanee area were the Miami Indians who were later ousted by the Pottawatomie Indians around 1700. The first settlers arrived in the 1830's.

Nappanee, located in the southwestern corner of Elkhart County is the youngest of the Town Corporation of the County. The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad helped plat the new village on December 12, 1874 as one of the stations on its Chicago division so that the area's rich and abundant products could be marketed. This was done just six days after the first train arrived at Locke Station. The original Plat of the Town was recorded in Deed Record Book 48, Page 280, which listed and named eight streets which still exist to this day: The Locke-Union Township Road, which extended to meet the railroad became Main Street, north and south; the existing wagon road became Market Street; Madison Street and Elm Street were east of Main Street; with Clark Street and Locke Street west of Main Street; Lincoln Street east and west, was indicated; and one block of East Walnut. Fifty lots were platted with prices ranging from \$30 to \$60.

The original spelling was "Napanee," a name attributed to the Indian culture. The present spelling of "Nappanee" was adopted when the Town was surveyed and selected for a post office under the administration of President Grover Cleveland.

The first dwelling house was built by C.D. Volkmann in 1875 on Lots 37 and 38 on East Market Street with land costing \$20 cash and a mortgage of \$60. Volkmann soon opened a blacksmith shop and later a machine and repair shop. He owned the first car in Nappanee and later called his plant the "Globe Iron Works." The first boy born in Nappanee was Charles Volkmann. There is no record of the name of the first girl born.

Industry began with the planing mill of Joseph Strohm, the Mellinger Saw Mills of 1873, and later the consolidated firm of Copps, Zook & Mutschler. Nappanee soon became known for logging, and the manufacturing of tables and kitchen cabinets, boxes, building materials, cement blocks, mission and piano lamps, and its eggs, poultry and other produce. The first telegraph wire was installed in 1874 to help assist during this industrial growth.

The "Nappanee Weekly News" was founded six years after the railroad town was laid out and received competition from "The Crystallizer," "The Advance," "The Advanced News," "The Farmer's Exchange," "Nappanee Herald," and "The Nappanee Bulletin."

Local telephone service was introduced by Claude R. Stoops in August of 1898. Fifty-two telephones were installed. The first high school was organized in 1895 under Superintendent S.W. Baer and had four years of course requirements in English, Mathematics, History, Science and either Latin or German. It was commissioned by the State in 1898. In 1919, the first library was organized.

The Mechanics Building Loan and Saving Association was organized in 1879 and Farmers & Trade Bank was founded in 1884.

The Amish Mennonite Church appears to have been organized first in the Nappanee region. The first society was founded in 1857. The Mennonited Church was

founded in 1892, and in 1899 the Presbyterian Church was organized. In 1888 the First Brethern or Progressive Dunkards was founded. In 1901, the Church of the Brethern and German Lutheran Church were founded. In 1912, the Church of God was established. The Union Sunday School is credited with being the oldest organized association within the City.

Nappanee has had three types of government: Township (1874-1889); Town (1889-1925); and City (1925-present). In 1896, annual salaries for Town officials were \$15 for Trustees, \$15 for Treasurers, and \$50 for Clerk, while the Marshal was paid \$25/month. The Marshal had broad responsibilities including making arrests when needed, overseeing the “calaboose,” chasing roaming cows, hogs, chickens and performing various other assignments of the Town Board.

The first street bricked was a mile-long stretch of Main Street in 1907. Market Street was bricked later. The remaining streets were considered “real wagon roads.”

A volunteer fire department was organized in Nappanee’s early existence in the form of a bucket brigade. In 1892, the first two-hose companies were established with 20 men each, “Goodwill No. 1” and “Rescue No. 2” Later, a third company, “Alerts,” was organized by C.D. Volkmann.

On April 27, 1970, work began on the present “Municipal Center” located at the corners of Lincoln, Locke, and Nappanee Streets. It was completed in March of 1981. The 1980 census shows that the City of Nappanee has grown to a population of 4,694.

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**he City of Nappanee has had the following Mayors:**

1925-1929	Willard A. Price
1930-1934	Walter Uline
1935-1938	H.J. DeFrees
1939-1947	Ralph Arnott
1948-1955	Mintle E. Hostetler
1956-1961	J. Maxwell Clouse
1962-1963	Ralph L. Greene
1964-1967	Robert P. Sinclair
1968-1971	Everett Pippen Jr.
1972-1975	James E. Newcomer
1976-1979	John L. Mellinger
1980-1991	Robert W. Callander
1992-1995	Kenneth J. Walter
1996-2016	Larry L. Thompson
2017-Present	Phil Jenkins

**The City Clerks and Clerk-Treasurers of the City of Nappanee have been:**

1925-1929	Ralph L. Arnott
1930-1934	Ray E. Walters
1935-1939	Lester L. Deisch
1939-1947	Willard Naylor
1949-1961	Ralph L. Greene
1962-1980	Elnore J. Senff

1981-2014  
2014-Present

Kimberly A. Ingle  
Kathy Brown