

ARNIE MASSIER

By Naper Settlement

It was Arnold “Arnie” Massier’s stories that drew Jennifer Reichert to her neighbor’s front porch as a young girl. From recollections of the “early days” of Naperville to his service during World War II, these stories helped form a bond that would last decades.

Massier, a Purple Heart veteran, was a life-long resident of Naperville and a beloved member of the community known for sharing his experiences as a soldier and prisoner of war during World War II with local history classes.

At the outbreak of World War II, Naperville was part farming community, company town, and college town — all with a population of less than 5,300 people. One in five Naperville residents served their country during World War II, including all three of the Massier brothers — Arnie, Adam, and George.

Arnie served in the U.S. Army and fought in Tunisia and Sicily before being captured in Italy on October 31, 1943. He endured 18 months in Stalag 2B, a German POW camp. Adam served in the military police doing fire watch at a London cathedral, and George served in the U.S. Navy. Both Arnie and Adam would return to Naperville. George Massier perished during the torpedo attack of the USS Indianapolis.

After returning to Naperville, Arnie did not speak of his war experience for decades. That changed when Jennifer Reichert, his beloved neighbor, asked him to give a 10-minute presentation to her class at Washington Junior High. That one class turned into presentations for all the classes in her grade.

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Arnie spent the next 30 years speaking to thousands of students about his war experiences. In 2007, his oral history became a part of the Library of Congress’ Veterans History Project.

Upon Arnie’s death in February 2020, Reichert searched for ways to keep the Massier family’s stories alive. As Arnie’s heir, she knew his possessions — which he acquired for over a century — would be the key to educating future generations.

Reichert contacted Naper Settlement to donate his family collection as well as provide

hours of oral history on the Massier family. She and the Naper Settlement curatorial team spent weeks recording, cataloging, and packing items to be preserved.

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where Arnie worked as an upholsterer for 38 years. In 1940, Kroehler Manufacturing Co., branded as “the world’s largest upholstered furniture maker,” was Naperville’s largest employer.

“It was important to me to make sure that Arnie’s legacy lives on and that the role that he played in our nation’s history is known to as many people as possible. By gifting this collection to the Naperville Heritage Society, the artifacts will be used to share Arnie’s dedication to his community and country with museum visitors,” said Reichert.

Items from the Massier Family Collection are now on view in Naper Settlement’s new exhibit, Answering the Call: Naperville at War 1941-1945. The exhibit will be featured in the museum’s main galleries until the end of 2021. It showcases Naperville’s World War II story with Arnie playing a central role in the exhibit’s narrative.

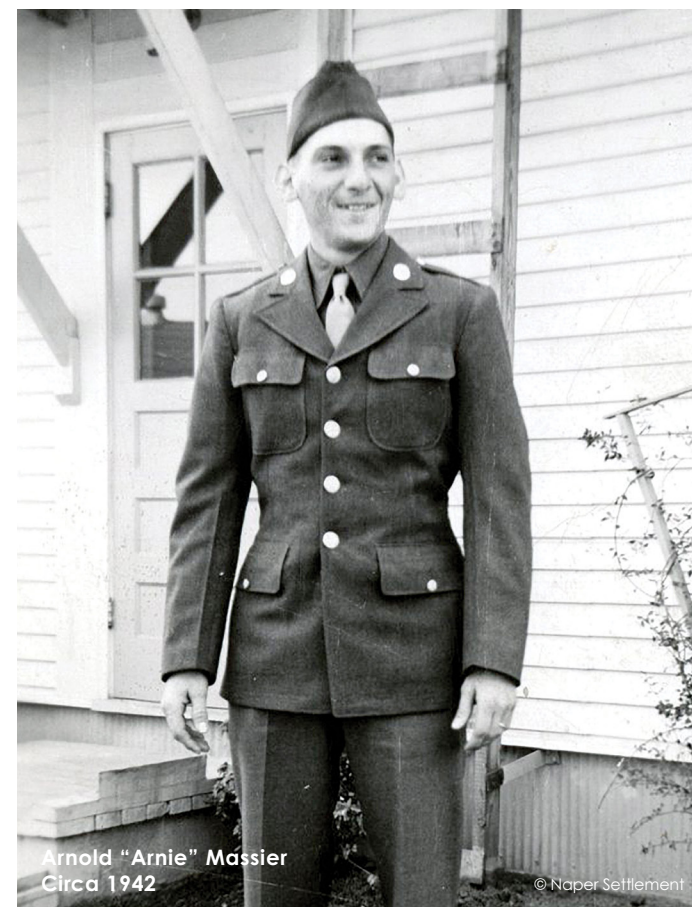
Museum visitors will explore local soldiers’ stories – including the Massier brothers – as well as stories of the Japanese internment workers who came to work in Naperville, and the significant role of Kroehler manufacturing to the war efforts.



The collection includes Arnie’s many service and conduct decorations such as his Purple Heart, Good Conduct Medal, European African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, and a Prisoner of War Medal.

The collection also includes appliances, consumer goods, and furniture and materials from Kroehler Manufacturing,

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Arnold “Arnie” Massier
Circa 1942

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Purple Heart, Good Conduct, European African-Middle Eastern Campaign, World War II Victory, and a Prisoner of War Medal

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Boots, discharge papers, dog tags, Purple Heart Medal
Exhibit: Answering the Call: Naperville at War 1941-1945
Naper Settlement,
523 S Webster

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Overcoat

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