

The Chicago to Galena Road Located & Surveyed by Naper and Snow, 1833

Patricia L. Goitein, Editor, Galena Trail Newsletter

In January of 1833, the Illinois General Assembly ordered that the Peoria – Galena Road be improved and upgraded to a state road. They also authorized that a road be located from Chicago to Galena. The following summer, the Chicago road was surveyed by George W. Snow, under the direction of Captain Joseph Naper. The survey was initiated on May 30, beginning at the South East corner of Lake and West Water Streets in the town of Chicago, and Naper and Snow filed their completed survey plat and notes in Cook County on July 2.

The 1833 Chicago – Galena Road was divided into two distinct parts: Chicago to Dixon’s Ferry, and Dixon’s Ferry to Galena. Naper and Snow located a *new road* between Chicago and Dixon’s Ferry (present day Dixon, IL.), and neither the legislators nor Naper and Snow refer to any previous road or trail that was being upgraded by this survey. The surveyors were required to locate and mark the new road on the most suitable ground for the public convenience, identify bridge sites, and to mark each mile of the route by driving in a stake, a post, or blazing a tree. The width of the road is not specified. Finally, Naper and Snow were told to *“show the probable amount of labor necessary, or money necessary to open said road, so as to afford a safe and convenient passage on the same to travelers and the public generally.”* Their task was difficult, and they were paid accordingly, *“two dollars for each and every mile of said road.”* The only record of settlement noted on the survey between Chicago and Dixon are B.H. Laughton’s, and Wm Forbes’ claims or taverns at the Des Plaines River, and *“Joseph and John Naper’s small fort”* 28 miles from Chicago.

Naper and Snow’s route from Dixon’s Ferry followed the old Peoria-Galena Road. As they followed the old road, Naper and Snow recorded the usual stops at Kellogg’s, Chamber’s, Crane’s, Winters’, Avery’s, and Snyder’s taverns. Apparently unacquainted with the land, they are more descriptive of the landscape than Warner had been. At Mr. Crane’s they noted that they were beginning to pass through “what is termed the barrens.” They crossed Straddle Creek, Unfortunate Creek, Leap Creek, Mud Creek, and Small Pox Creek. They noted a “high mountain (or mound as it is now termed) on the left,” passing deep ravines and sharp hills covered with dense undergrowth. All of their stops, except Snyder’s by Small Pox Creek, are recognizable from the Warner survey. Warner stopped at Rollin’s house on Small Pox Creek, not far from Snyder’s.

Snow's concluding remarks were: *"From Chicago to Dixon's Ferry on Rock River the road is generally on a high dry prairie and no expense of consequence will necessary to open a road with the exception of the streams, and there is passable fords at all of them. From Dixon's to Galena the general of the old road course has been followed – hilly, but a tolerable good road."*

Sources:

An Act, providing for the location of a Road from Chicago to Galena, approved Jan. 7, 1833, published in Laws, passed at the eighth session of the General Assembly of the State of Illinois, Kaskaskia, 1833, pp. 184-85, Illinois State Archives, Springfield, IL.

Field notes survey and distances of the Galena and Chicago Road, with certification of filings in Cook and Jo Daviess Counties and by Abner Field, Secretary of the State of Illinois, Nov. 1833, (IL State Archives RS103.84, Illinois State Archives, Springfield, IL.)

State of Illinois
Cook County
I do solemnly swear that
the plat accompanying this affidavit presents a correct
view of the Road from Chicago Cook County to Galena
Jo Davis County Illinois and that the same has been viewed
surveyed and marked, as required by the act of the General
Assembly of the State of Illinois entitled an act providing
for the location of a Road from Chicago to Galena approved
January 7th 1833 by us
Richd J Hamilton Clerk
Comrs Cook Co Ill
J. D. Naper Comr
G. W. Snow Surveyor

Chicago – Galena Rd. affidavit, signed by Naper and Snow, received by Richard J. Hamilton, clerk, Commissioners Court, Cook County, IL. (IL State Archives)

(5)

Galena Sep 20th 1833

A. P. Field Esqr,

Secretary of State

Sir,

I have recently received and filed in my office a plat & field notes of a Road from Chicago to Galena, Joseph Napier Com & G. W. Snow Surveyor as appears from affidavits accompanying the same.

Respectfully
Yours

W. B. Green Clerk
Com. Jo Daviess County

Chicago-Galena Road, Jo Daviess County certification signed by W.B. Green, clerk, Jo Daviess County Commissioners Court, Sept. 20, 1833 (IL. State Archives, Springfield, IL.)