

June Update on the Friends of Neill Log House (FONLH): Completion of Contract for Summer Construction Pending

Tony Indovina, SHHS Board Member and FONLH President

Mission Statement for the Friends of the Neill Log House (FONLH Inc.)

Adopted February 2022



Friends of
NEILL LOG HOUSE

"We secure funds to restore and maintain the Neill Log House, foster knowledge of its historic significance, and work with interested parties to ensure the continued educational use of the structure and its site for future generations."

Individual support for the FONLH restoration effort will always be needed. To make online donations by credit card or PayPal, go to the SHUC website, shuc.org, and click on the "Projects" link in the black menu bar at the top of the page. A pull-down menu will appear. Select "Friends of the Neill Log House." Alternatively, checks can be sent to SHUC (put FONLH in the memo line) at the following address: SHUC, 5604 Solway Street, Pittsburgh, PA, 15217.



On May 18, a contract proposal for reconstruction was formally submitted to FONLH. The contractor, Village Restorations of Hollidaysburg, PA, was previously approved as qualified by the City. Their contract offering came about as the result of much information exchanged with FONLH over a number of months and the scope of work determined to be necessary by FONLH to correct all the deficiencies identified with the Neill Log House. Once everything is reviewed and approved by our Building/Design Committee, our Executive Committee and legal counsel and, of course, the City of Pittsburgh as owner, all parties will sign off for work to begin no later than the week of August 14.

An onsite hewing demonstration at the Neill Log House is scheduled for August 5. More details will follow for what promises to be a fun event.

We will be able to share all the details of work planned in our next update. In the meantime, everyone will have to wait to see if we agreed on hand-riven oak or cedar shingles, oak or locust logs, and why. ("Riven" means "split apart riven wood, or wood split apart along the grain.")

Buildings "roofed with hand riven, highly finished (white) oak side-lap shingles... are commonly found in eighteenth and nineteenth century German settlements throughout Pennsylvania and follow the German diaspora through Maryland down the Shenandoah Valley and into North Carolina."¹ This type of roofing shingle was in common use from the early eighteenth century in Eastern Pennsylvania, from where Robert Neill reportedly came. His death notice reports he was born in 1745 in Lower Paxtang, Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, to John and Margaret Neal (Neill).² It is likely Robert Neill brought with him skills and woodworking techniques commonly employed by Germans and other early immigrants of Eastern Pennsylvania for the construction of his log house.



During a recent visit by the owner and a preservationist from Village Restorations, FONLH board members learned about the characteristics of the log work done on the Neill Log House. Photo by Helen Wilson.

¹Houston, James, and John N. Fulgelso. *Fabricating and Installing Side-Lap Roof Shingles in Eastern Pennsylvania*. Association for Preservation Technology International, date unknown.

²Death Notice, Robert Neal, <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/FMfcgzGsmhfcLXZzqPSkSzLpLWkMxCpg?projector=1&messagePartId=0.0>

Don't forget to check out the SHHS's Neill Log House display board at the Squirrel Hill Branch of Carnegie Library.



Bittern. Photo by Todd Wilson

A Bittern and a Sora

Helen Wilson

SHHS members Todd Wilson and Lauren Winkler have been birdwatching in Panther Hollow in Schenley Park. They and many others went looking for the bittern and sora that were hanging around in the Panther Hollow marsh in May. A bittern is a type of heron. A sora is a type of small waterbird belonging to the rail family.



Sora. Photo by Lauren Winkler