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July Update on the Friends of Neill Log House (FONLH):

July 2024

Pathways to the Neill Log House

Tony Indovina, FONLH President and SHHS Board Member

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

Adopted February 2022



Friends of
NEILL LOG HOUSE

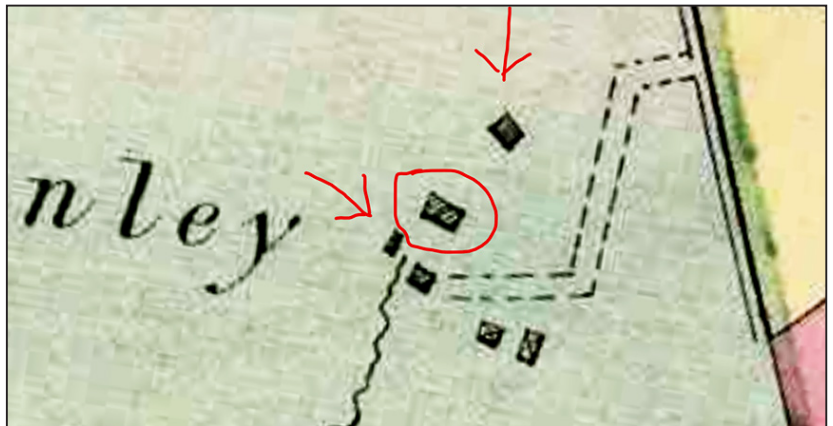
"We secure funds to restore and maintain the Neill Log House, foster knowledge of its historic significance, and work with interested parties to ensure the continued educational use of the structure and its site for future generations."

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.

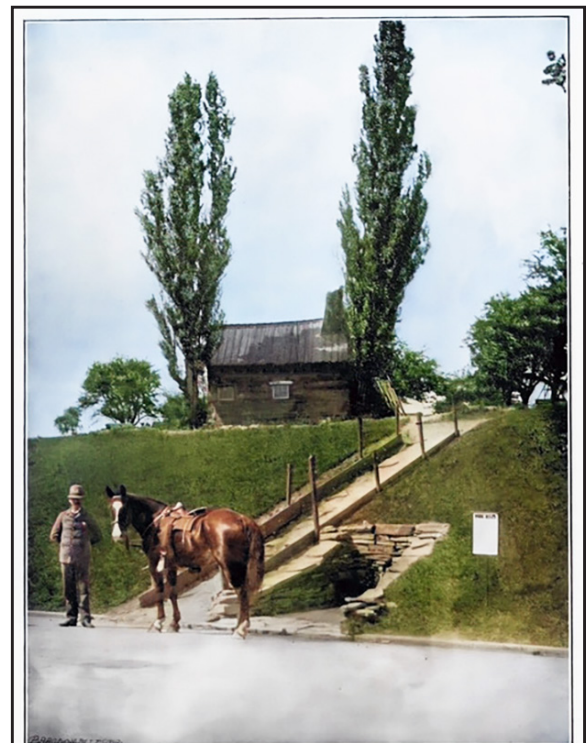
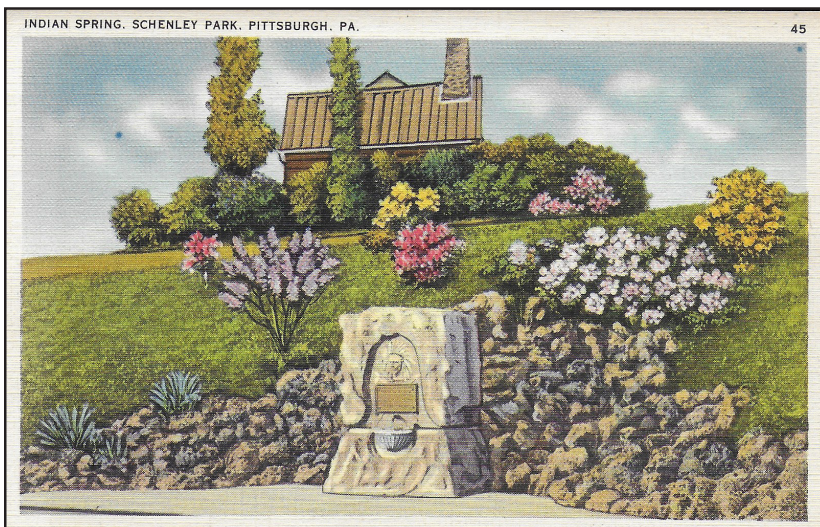


Paths to the Neill Log House have changed much over the years, as we can surmise from old images and maps (*right*). We believe that the steps from E. Circuit Rd. to the house are a relatively modern feature, as they do not appear on photos from some of our archival postcards (*below*). The two postcards from the late 19th and early 20th century reveal the different treatments of the log house and the hillside facing it from the south.

The beautiful sandstone steps that most of us know were recently removed by the City DPW and are being replaced by stone-clad concrete steps being worked on as of this writing. It was commonly believed that the old sandstone steps (which many thought had much charm) were installed during the Depression Era by the Works Progress Administration at the same time as the stone bridges in the ravine below that leads to Panther Hollow Lake. The steps did have charm, but they were admittedly hazardous because of the unevenness in their rise. As we researched the steps, we discovered that they were a more recent addition than we first thought. They were originally installed probably around the same time as the PHLF reconstruction



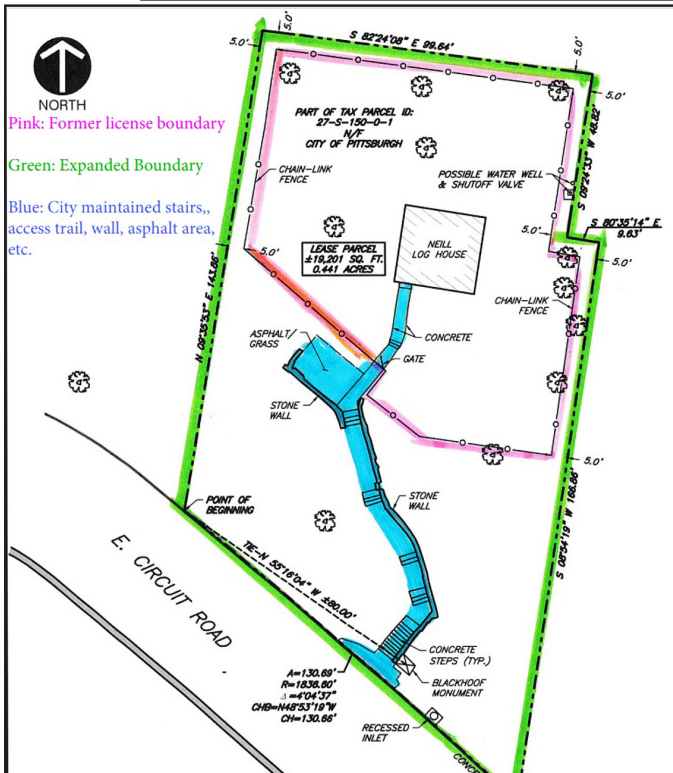
This excerpt from an 1872 map on the Pittsburgh Historic Maps website shows the Neill Log House and surrounding farm buildings in place at that time. A spring runs south down the hill from the house. The farm road to the house entered from what is now Darlington Road.



Spring, Schenley Park.

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This diagram shows the additional land encompassing the new fencing. **Pink** is the former license boundary. **Green** is the expanded boundary. **Blue** is the City-maintained stairs, access trail, asphalt area, etc.

appears above and shows the old and new boundaries of the Neill Log House site with the steps, or park trail, running through the site in blue. As part of the negotiation for this revision, it was agreed that a small portion of land on either side of the steps would never be needed for golfing.

The photo at bottom right shows the progress of the construction of the new steps, up to the pouring of cement that occurred in mid June. Because we believe the original site had no steps to the south or to the spring below the house, this project is not considered a historic reconstruction but rather a park amenity to accommodate visitors to the log house from E. Circuit Rd. The reconstruction of the steps has been undertaken and funded by the Department of Public Works, from the striking design created by the city's chief landscape architect, with intermittent landings and accompanying patio, to the finished work of stone-cladding the steps by highly skilled master stonemasons employed by the City.

It is interesting to note that paths to the house before the park era likely led from Murdoch Farms and the road that is now Forbes Ave., four miles from the Point. This is shown on the 1872 map on the previous page.

We know that in earlier times, for which we have photographic images, the entrance door to the log house was from the northern side (*see postcard on the left on the previous page*) and that there was a large shed attached to what is now the backside of the structure. If that served past times well, we believe the new steps being put in place this summer promises to enhance the future of the Neill Log House.

Watch for announcements of completion of all of this work and a formal opening ceremony later this summer.

in 1969, on what we have always been told is formally classified as a park trail. In the years before the park was created, the log house appears to have had no steps or, as shown on the "Spring, Schenley Park" postcard, only a path to bring water up the hill.

In the course of our planning with the City on site improvements to accompany our recent reconstruction, there was general agreement that the steps and railing needed to be replaced, and this is occurring now.

When FONLH first negotiated a lease to manage the log house and site, it was acknowledged that the City would retain responsibility for the steps, or park trail, from E. Circuit Rd. to the log house. An agreement was recently completed to reflect additional land necessary to encompass the new fencing that will dramatically showcase the house within the entire site (*left*).

In the February 2024 SHHS Newsletter, we published an architectural rendering of how the entire site will be surrounded by this new eight-foot wrought-iron style aluminum fence. Large parts of the fence are already in place, with the rest to be completed very soon after step construction is finished.

An attachment to the recently revised management agreement that was executed between FONLH and the City

