

The next regularly scheduled quarterly meeting of FONLH will take place, in-person or by Zoom, at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday morning, December 9, at the Arnold Palmer Learning Center of First Tee, at the Bob O'Connor Golf Course in Schenley Park. The agenda promises to be lively, with discussion on some current needs of the Neill Log House and a historic resolution to be presented about the future of FONLH. This will all be reported on in our January Update.

Preview of January's FONLH Update, "The Living History of the Neal Family in Indiana County"

January's SHHS Newsletter will have an article featuring the Neal Family Farm in Homer City, in nearby Indiana County. The article was inspired by a visit made by Tony Indovina and Helen Wilson to pick up cornstalks donated for the recent Neill Log House Harvest Festival. We had an altogether enjoyable fall trip, especially for Helen, who reported that she had never actually been on a working farm. We watched the family operate machinery to harvest cornstalks for winter feed, and Helen, who has two cats, liked being surrounded by all nine of the family's farm cats.

The January article will be a blend of old and new stories of the living history that surrounds the last remaining Neal family farm, located on over 200 scenic acres, operated since 1931 on a historic farm dating to 1738. These Neals are among the many family members who settled in Indiana County on what was once over 3,000 acres of farmland first acquired by their founder, William Neal, brother of Robert Neill. Brian Neal, his wife Stacey, and their children operate the current farm to grow grain and raise beef cattle, which are sold as local farm-to-table freezer beef. They are joined in this endeavor by Brian's father Brad, who owned and operated a dairy farm there before them. As a background to the modern history, the January article will feature a much expanded and updated history on the Neal/Neill family provided for us by Brian's brother Stephen Neal, an academic and working professional who grew up on this farm. Stephen has provided FONLH with much research over the past year that has allowed us to significantly update the historic narrative for the Neill Log House on our website. As an offshoot of this article, we intend to create a new Appendix for our History that will include genealogical information from him and other family members.

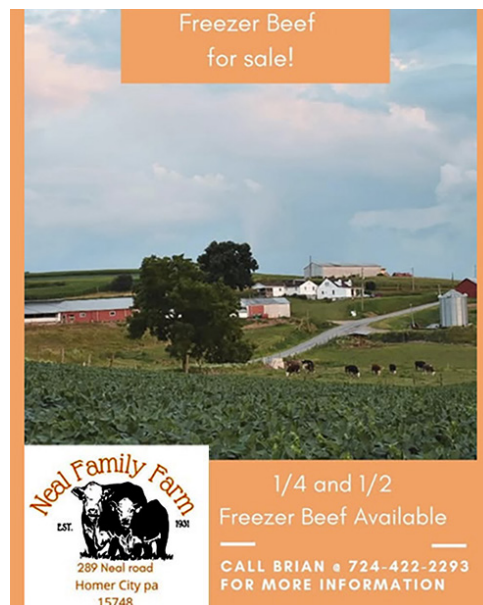
Note: As part of the "living history" of the article, I decided to include some information such as the accompanying photo and sales information maintained on Facebook by the family for their business. This is with my belief that it is important to support family farmers like the Neals, especially as their ranks diminish through competition from much larger businesses. They also survive under constant pressure to sell their land for modern development.

One last personal opinion: small family farms have been the lifeblood of our nation and, historically, much of the world. If you enjoyed your Thanksgiving dinner, thank farmers like the Neals.

Note: SHHS derives no financial benefit from any business included in our publications or programs.



Larry Williams. (Photo by Mardi Isler)



The Neal Family Farm is a family owned and operated farm in Western Pennsylvania since 1931. The family raises high quality freezer beef on grass and hay and finished on soybeans, corn silage, and high moisture corn—all grown on the family farm.

Meeting the Neill Family

Helen Wilson

One of the great things that has been happening throughout the restoration of the Neill Log House is that descendants of Robert Neil have been contacting us and visiting the house. At the Harvest Festival, Neal descendant Larry Williams and his wife Debbie came to the house for the first time from their home in the state of Indiana, bringing with them information and stories and copies of portraits of two of his ancestors.

Larry told us a family story that Elizabeth Neill (1780-1852), daughter of Robert Neill, and Thomas Carroll McCullough (1776-1811) married in Pittsburgh in 1801 and traveled by flatboat to Cincinnati, along with Samuel McCullough and Samuel's wife, Sarah Robb McCullough. Stories are told of the couples anchoring the flatboats in the middle of the river during the journey to avoid Indian attacks. The couples settled in Oxford, Ohio. After Elizabeth's husband and Thomas's wife died, Elizabeth and Samuel wed in 1818. They

had several children together. Two of their children were Larry's 3rd great-grandfather, Neel Carroll McCullough, who was born on Christmas Day in 1820, and his brother, Thomas Neel McCullough, who was born on June 12, 1818. Samuel died in 1823. Elizabeth passed away in 1852.

Both Neel C. (*portrait on the left in the picture*) and Thomas N. (*right*) started banks in the mid 1800s. Neel C. started the Citizens Bank in Anderson, Indiana. Thomas N. started the Citizens Bank in Oxford, Ohio. Neel C. died in 1888. Thomas N. died in 1901. Thomas N.'s obituary appears on the front page alongside the obituary of McCullough family friend President Benjamin Harrison in the local Butler County Ohio newspaper. Thomas N.'s obituary tells a story about his mother, Elizabeth Neill, riding on horseback from Oxford to Pittsburgh to visit her family. Perhaps one of young Elizabeth's visits back to Pittsburgh was due to the death of her father, Robert Neill in 1804.

Meriwether Lewis and the Neill Log House

Helen Wilson

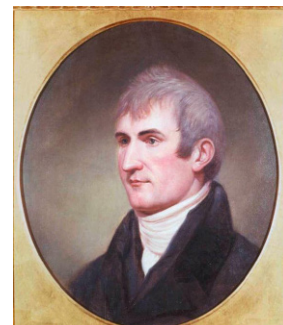
Only a few sentences in the "Neill Log House History" on the SHHS website make mention of Meriwether Lewis: "Current interest in restoring the Neill Log House began when the SHHS was presented with research from the National Park Service suggesting Meriwether Lewis, of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, may have stopped to water his horses at Snyder Spring near the log house on his way to Pittsburgh to begin his westward exploration. The spring is now culverted and covered by the Catahecassa Fountain."

Even though there are only a few references to Meriwether Lewis in the Neill Log House History, he was, of course, a significant national historical figure, traveling all the way to the West Coast and back again in the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1803-1806. You might be wondering why he is associated with the Neill Log House. It turns out that in August 2020, the SHHS was contacted by a National Park Service (NPS) contractor working on a project to connect historical sites connected with the Lewis and Clark expedition to communities along the route to highlight their historic sites and amenities. (See lewisandclark.travel.) The contractor provided FONLH with National Park Service research about Lewis's stop at the spring near the Neill Log House. The spring's proximity to the house suggests it was where Lewis stopped.

It is probable that Lewis was already familiar with this area. He enlisted in a Virginia militia in 1794, whose commanding officer was William Clark, and they became friends. In 1794, the militia was sent to Western Pennsylvania to put down the Whiskey Rebellion. Lewis later joined the Army and for two years was stationed at Fort Fayette, the successor to decaying Fort Pitt (decommissioned in 1797). Fort Fayette was located near the intersection of what is now Penn Avenue and Ninth St. downtown. Lewis was promoted to Captain in 1800, and shortly afterward, newly elected President Thomas Jefferson selected him to be his personal secretary. After the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson chose him to lead the Corps of Discovery, with the aim of collecting information about the huge territory the United States had acquired from France. Lewis asked Clark to join him as co-leader. Jefferson sent Lewis to Philadelphia to receive scientific instruction from members of the American Philosophical Society and to purchase supplies for the journey. Lewis then made his way to Pittsburgh, possibly following an extension of Nemacolin's Trail, later Braddock's Road, which is believed to have run near the Neill Log House, but no hard evidence exists for this claim.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition is well-known and well-documented, so it won't be addressed here. This article is about Lewis's possible visit to the Neill Log House. He would not have been greeted by Robert Neill, who had sold the house and property to John Reed and moved to Downtown Pittsburgh in 1795 and died there in 1804. Reed sold the property to Brintnal Robins, but the dates of the sales are not known, and it's possible Reed and Robins rented the property to tenant farmers, so it can't be determined who, if anyone, Lewis met when he passed by.

A little more about Meriwether Lewis: After the Corps returned from its expedition, Jefferson appointed Lewis governor of the Louisiana Territory in 1806. When he took on that post nearly two years later, he faced immediate challenges on many sides, including personality conflicts, political differences, and questions about the appropriation of government funds. In 1809, Lewis decided to go to Washington, D.C., to settle the financial questions plaguing him. Throughout his life, he had fought bouts of depression, financial problems, and alcohol abuse, and the pressures he was experiencing affected his mental health. He also suffered from malaria. In late 1809, Lewis died at the age of 36 in his lodgings in Tennessee. The common belief is that he committed suicide, but people who have studied his life believe he could have died from complications of malaria or even that he was murdered.



Meriwether Lewis, by Charles Willson Peale, 1807