

# **Click here to return to Neill Log House Update**

## **January Update on the Friends of Neill Log House (FONLH): A New Year for FONLH**

January 2026

*Tony Indovina, FONLH President and SHHS Board Member*



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

Adopted February 2022

"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.



As we turn the page on another year, it's hard to believe that our organization was formed more than four years ago on behalf of the Neill Log House—more than five, if you count our very first efforts! This promises to be a year of historic change for us. At our last quarterly FONLH meeting in December, our board took a major step in stating its resolve about the future of The Neill Log House. We hope to share details about this soon.

In the meantime, enjoy the postcard perfect photo accompanying this update, taken during a recent snowshoe walk around the log house during the pre-Christmas snowfall. Though not intended, the perspective of the house as shown turned out to be exactly the same as the logo created for us several years ago by Natalie Stewart, daughter of Charlie Stewart, and fifth great-granddaughter of Robert Neill.

While the house itself slumbers in the snow awaiting our second year's opening this spring, we continue to be active on many fronts. We met onsite recently with our restoration specialists to consult on a wooden gutter to be installed across the front of the house because of some drain issues at its base. Other plans include the funding and installation of period fencing around the house and its garden. And enhancements to the "narrative" contained in the history on our website will be featured through contributions by several of Charlie Stewart's cousins. This will include some timelines and other information on descendants of Robert Neill and some genealogy to be contained in a new Appendix that we will preview over the next few months.



**Friends of  
Neill Log House**



## **The Neal Family**

*Preface by Tony Indovina*

*The article below is a contribution by Stephen Neal, a sixth-great-grandson of William Neal, oldest brother of Robert Neill, who built our Log House. Stephen grew up on the 200-acre historic farm featured in this article that is now operated by his brother's family. As Stephen relates, the Neals, who all began as farmers, would eventually also become academics and physicians, and he is both. We are indebted to Stephen for all the research he has provided to us on Neal/Neill family history throughout our project. His brother Brian, Brian's wife Stacey, and their children may be the only ones yet engaged in the Neal family's very long tradition of growing grain and raising livestock.*

*William was one of three (of four brothers serving in the Revolutionary War) who came to Western Pennsylvania after the Indian Treaties encouraged settlement here. William and his brother John first traveled together to Mt. Pleasant around 1780. John later acquired his land and stayed in Mt. Pleasant after the war. William settled in Armstrong Township, Westmoreland County, and eventually acquired over 3,000 acres for his farming in both Indiana and Westmoreland Counties. It is believed*

both men learned surveying in order to warrant land and have it patented. Both started their farming tradition that was continued for many generations by the large families each had.

The third brother to come west, Robert Neill, would settle on his 262-acre tract of land called Highland, four miles from Ft. Pitt, also around 1780. Stephen has related to me elsewhere that although Robert shared his brothers' desire to own land, his goals were different than theirs. He chose to support his family as a wagoneer by traveling back and forth to Philadelphia, spending time where his father still lived, and had a business in Lower Paxtang Township, near Harrisburg, where Robert would eventually inherit half his father's property.

When a friend and I traveled to Indiana County in November to acquire cornstalks for our Neill Log House Harvest Festival, it was fascinating to learn that the Neal family has continued their farming tradition on land that was settled before William Neal first came to the area. It has now been three generations since this historic farm outside Homer City was first acquired by the family in 1931. When I asked Brian Neal what happened to the 3,000 acres once owned by their family, he quietly explained in his own words how all the large tracts of land have been lost over the years to speculators and their lawyers. And he talked poignantly about the pressures local farmers are under to hold onto their land. The now closed power plant that can be seen in the distance from his farm is being converted to an energy storage facility, and many are understandably apprehensive about what that means to all of them in this area as the operation seeks to expand its footprint.

Note: As we first did in the December preview of this article on The Neal Family Farm, we are publishing another commercial copy from the "Neal Family Farm" Facebook page in the belief that supporting small farmers, especially one with such a historic legacy, is consistent with the theme of our article. And we again state that SHHS derives no financial benefit from any businesses included in our publications or programs.

## **The Neal Family**

*Stephen Neal*

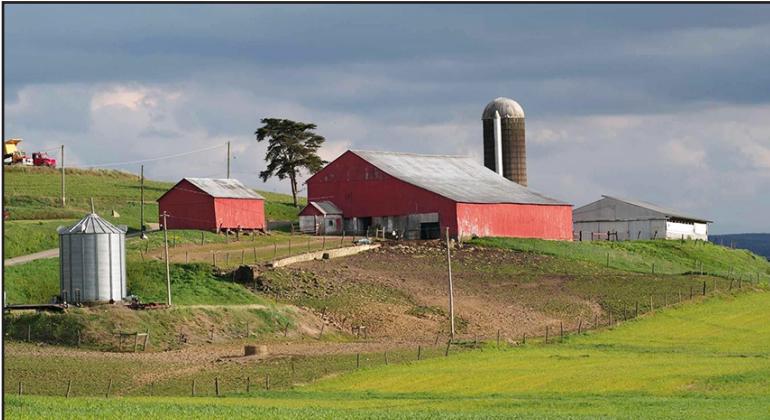
John Neal and his wife Margaret, emigrated from Ulster, Ireland, to Paxtang Township, Lancaster County (now Dauphin County). On June 8th, 1738, John purchased 208 acres in Paxtang township for fifteen pounds Ten Shillings for each hundred acres. He patented and named his property "Neal's Garden."<sup>1</sup> They had four sons and four daughters—William, Robert, John, James, Margaret, Jean, Nancy, and Eleanor.<sup>2</sup> They were proud Presbyterians and members of the Paxton Presbyterian Church, the oldest Presbyterian church building in continuous use in Pennsylvania and the second oldest in the United States.<sup>2a</sup>

Around 1766, William, John, and James each purchased land in Cumberland County (now Franklin County), Pennsylvania.<sup>4</sup> All four sons, William, John, Robert, and James, were soldiers in the Revolutionary War.<sup>3</sup> After the war, the signing of the 1778 Treaty of Fort Pitt in Pittsburgh gave some settlers a sense of security to move to Western Pennsylvania. Around 1780, William, John, and Robert each purchased land in and moved to Westmoreland County; William's land was in what would become Young Township, Indiana County; Robert's land was in what would become Schenley Park, Allegheny County; and John's land remained in what is today Mount Pleasant, Westmoreland County.<sup>5</sup>

John was a farmer and one of the founding members of Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church (now called Middle Presbyterian Church of Mount Pleasant). He was one of six men (Revs. John McMillan, James Power, and Thaddeus Dodd; Elders, John Neal, Demas Lindley, and Patrick Scott) who founded Redstone Presbytery on September 10, 1781. Redstone Presbytery originally stretched from the Allegheny Mountains to the east, as far north as Lake Erie, to the south to Virginia, and "on the west by the setting sun."<sup>6</sup>

Robert purchased his land called "Highlands" on April 9, 1781. He eventually built the Neill (Neal) Log House, which still stands in Schenley Park. He also received half his father's land in Paxtang Township. He began a wagon trade route from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh.<sup>7</sup>

William purchased nearly 3,000 acres in Armstrong and Young Township and was a successful farmer, growing grain and raising livestock. He was a founding member of Bethel Presbyterian Church, the oldest church in Indiana County, founded in 1788. William and his family are buried at Bethel Presbyterian Church, and Neal family members attend the church to this day.<sup>8</sup> His house was used as the voting place in 1792 for Armstrong Township, Westmoreland County: "First District of Westmoreland County, PA shall hold elections at the House of William Neal, Armstrong Township."<sup>9</sup> William passed away on Sept. 5, 1813, with his land being divided amongst his children. Throughout the generations, the Neal family continued to grow, with some staying in the area and continuing to farm, some becoming teachers, and some becoming physicians. One of the physicians attended school in Vienna around the same time as Sigmund Freud and eventually became a missionary. He helped to start a medical school and hospital in Aintab, Turkey.<sup>9a</sup> Another physician in the Neal family opened the first Hospital in Indiana County, PA, in 1904.<sup>9b</sup> Whether farmers, teachers, or physicians, the Neal family continued to grow and be an integral part of Indiana County.



"Barn on Neal Farm" -- Neal Family Farm, RD Homer City, Established 1931. Photo by Stephen Neal.

Throughout the years, the land continued to be divided amongst descendants, including Quinn Oaks Neal and his wife, Mary.<sup>10</sup> Quinn and Mary were successful farmers, growing grain and raising livestock. Quinn's brother, Milton Neal, and his wife, Hilda, purchased farmland in 1931 in Center Township, Indiana County previously belonging to the Cummins family, who had settled in the area just before William Neal.<sup>11</sup> David Cummins and his wife Jeanette came to the area before the Revolutionary War, before the 1778 Fort Pitt Treaty, and prior to the 1784 treaty of Fort Stanwix, likely around 1770. They chose to leave the area and return to Cumberland County (now Franklin County), and then eventually go back to Virginia after scouts had been in the doorway of the house and around the house.

The story goes...“A scout looked into the door of their cabin in the dusk of the evening while she was sitting inside the door nursing her child, her husband being absent. The next morning, they found where two men had lain in the long grass near their house, but had disappeared. Taking alarm, they packed up what they could carry on horseback, buried their kitchen furniture and pewterware in the spring run, and left for a place of safety.”<sup>10</sup> They lived in Virginia for several years until Mr. Cummins passed away around 1780. His death prompted the oldest boy, William, aged 17, and the next oldest, John, aged 14, to return to the home in Indiana County. They obtained some seeds from a neighbor and with the neighbor's help, raised some grain and cut some hay. They then built a house and eventually a barn. The boys then returned to Virginia and brought their mother and younger siblings back to Indiana County. The Cummins family members are also buried at Bethel Church Cemetery.<sup>12</sup> The log house was taken apart log by log in the 1990s and moved to Cambria County. The barn still stands and is used by the Neal Family Farm.

The barn is what is called a Pennsylvania Extended Bank Barn. It was built around 1780-1790. It is built with hand-hewn (by axe) beams, which are fastened and connected with wooden pegs. A bank barn is built into the side of a bank so that both the hayloft and the stables can be accessed from ground level. As the farm grew and extra stable space was necessary for livestock, an extension was built onto the stable end, creating a third level, hence a Pennsylvania extended bank barn.

Milton and Hilda Neal grew grain and raised swine, poultry, and dairy cattle. Milton passed the farm to his son Herman Neal and his wife Jean, who also grew grain and raised sheep, poultry, and dairy cattle, producing milk for Turner's Dairy in Penn Hills.

## Neal Family Farm



Homer City, PA

Call Brian Neal @ 724- 422-2293

Like us on Facebook at Neal Family Farm for updates!

1/4 and 1/2 Freezer Beef \$3.00 per lb of hanging weight

Once contacted with hanging weight  
**5-7 days** to receive payment to Neal Family farm

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### Butcher shop - Dixon Meats

5517 Parkwood Rd, Shelocta, PA 15774

724-726-5732

Dixon's pricing:  
\$1.00 cut vacuum packed + frozen  
additional \$25.00 kill fee per 1/4

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### Approximate cost estimation 1/4 cow:

230 lb hanging weight  
230 lbs X \$3.00≈ \$690 (**paid to Neal Family Farm**)  
230 lbs X \$1.00≈ \$230  
\$230 + \$25= \$255 (**Paid to Dixon Meats**)  
\$690+ \$255 = \$945 total

**\*all prices are approximate and subject to change with the fluctuating market\***  
**ALL sales are final.**  
**7/7/2025**

"Neal Family Farm Beef Offering"-- Growing grain and raising cattle has been a Neal Family tradition in Indiana County since 1780.

“Neal Family Farm Beef Offering”-- Growing grain and raising cattle has been a Neal Family tradition in Indiana County since 1780.



Barn dating to 1780-1790 is 104 ft. long. All beams are original hand-hewn, and connected with wooden pegs -- topmost support by overlapped 54 ft, beams spliced together.

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Herman passed the farm to his son Bradford Neal and his wife Mary, who also grew grain and raised dairy cattle, producing milk for Turner's Dairy. Bradford passed the farm to his son Brian Neal and his wife, Stacey, who are the current owners of Neal Family Farm. Brian is growing grain and raising beef cattle, which are sold as local farm-to-table freezer beef.

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2350/images/33019\\_b078880-00065?pid=179642](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2350/images/33019_b078880-00065?pid=179642)

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8802/records/1887860?tid=161467433&pid=152258463955&ssrc=pt>

<sup>2a</sup><https://paxtonchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/A-Brief-History-of-Paxton-Church-Revised-Nov-30-for-Website.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/14528/images/dvm\\_LocHist000688-00086-1?pid=163](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/14528/images/dvm_LocHist000688-00086-1?pid=163)

[https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62200/images/62200\\_0035\\_1713?pid=687011](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62200/images/62200_0035_1713?pid=687011)

[https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62200/images/62200\\_0032\\_1535?pid=676300](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62200/images/62200_0032_1535?pid=676300)

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/62200/records/687020?tid=161467433&pid=152258630433&ssrc=pt>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2350/records/223329?tid=161467433&pid=152258463035&ssrc=pt>

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2409/records/95543?tid=161467433&pid=152258630337&ssrc=pt>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2497/records/1750607?tid=161467433&pid=152258630433&ssrc=pt>

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2497/records/1750598?tid=161467433&pid=152258463035&ssrc=pt>

[https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2350/images/33019\\_b079044-00789?pid=152331](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2350/images/33019_b079044-00789?pid=152331)

<sup>6</sup>Presbytery of Redstone - Wikipedia

<sup>7</sup>[https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2350/images/33019\\_b079044-00789?pid=152331](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/2350/images/33019_b079044-00789?pid=152331)

<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QPZN-PK7J>

<sup>8</sup>[https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/26763/images/dvm\\_LocHist011364-00235-1?ssrc=pt&treeid=161467433&personid=152258463035&usePUB=true&pid=460](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/26763/images/dvm_LocHist011364-00235-1?ssrc=pt&treeid=161467433&personid=152258463035&usePUB=true&pid=460)

<sup>9</sup>(Laws of PA. Vol 4, P 127). History of Indiana County Book.

<sup>9a</sup><https://www.ancestry.com/mediaui-viewer/collection/1030/tree/161467433/person/152258660506/media/a9fe711b-0737-4177-8d54-cecf894f3256?galleryindex=1&sort=-created>

<sup>9b</sup><https://www.ancestry.com/mediaui-viewer/collection/1030/tree/161467433/person/152614375002/media/5c9b9f80-74c4-480f-921c-ee49bf96de57?galleryindex=1&sort=-created>

<sup>10</sup><https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/6224/records/51819391?tid=161467433&pid=152258661962&ssrc=pt>

<sup>11</sup><https://indiana.pa.publicsearch.us/doc/14965118>

<sup>12</sup><https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/catalog/242324\za\>

## **Pittsburgh's Pre-World War II Jewish Artists**

*Eric S. Lidji, Director, Rauh Jewish History Program & Archives, Senator John Heinz History Center  
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*Editor's Note: Throughout 2025, Eric Lidji has been focusing on Pittsburgh's pre-World War II Jewish artists in his weekly Rauh Jewish History Program & Archives Enewsletter. The following article is the conclusion of the series. During the year, 50 local Jewish artists were featured. To read about the artists go to <https://rauhjewisharchives.org/entry/newsletter/> To subscribe to the enewsletter, google "Rauh Jewish Archives enewsletter" and select "Sign Up" from the list of options.*

If you visited Pittsburgh at the start of the 20th century, you would have found two professional Jewish artists: Aaron Henry Gorson and E. Myer Silverberg.

By the start of the 1960s, many of the leading visual artists in the city were Jewish, including Shelly Blumenfield, Jerry Caplan, Anne Golomb, Aaronel deRoy Gruber, Jane Haskell, Lois Kaufman, Cecelia Lieberman, Anita Morganstern, Samuel Rosenberg, and Abe Weiner, among others.

What made this blossoming possible? Over those six decades, Pittsburgh developed the resources to nurture artistic careers locally. Milestones included the Carnegie Museum of Art in 1895, the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh in 1910, Carnegie Tech's Department of Painting and Illustration in 1911, and the Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project in 1935. Galleries came and went. A group of art critics including Douglas Naylor, Penelope Redd, and Jeanette Jena covered the Pittsburgh art world for local newspapers.

Starting in the mid-1930s and 1940s, the local arts community formed "guilds." These were collectives of like-minded artists who united to promote their particular corner of the art world. Sculptors broke from the Associated Artists in 1935 to found the Society of Sculptors. Potters formed the Craftsmen's Guild of Pittsburgh in 1944. A small group of painters interested in abstraction started the Abstract Group (now Group A) in 1944. Over the coming decades, numerous other visual arts guilds joined these original three.

These guilds and others representing writers, dancers, musicians, and actors formed the Arts and Crafts Center in 1945. The center was a physical home where local artists could gather for exhibits and events. The city of Pittsburgh made the Marshall mansion at Fifth and Shady available to the center.