

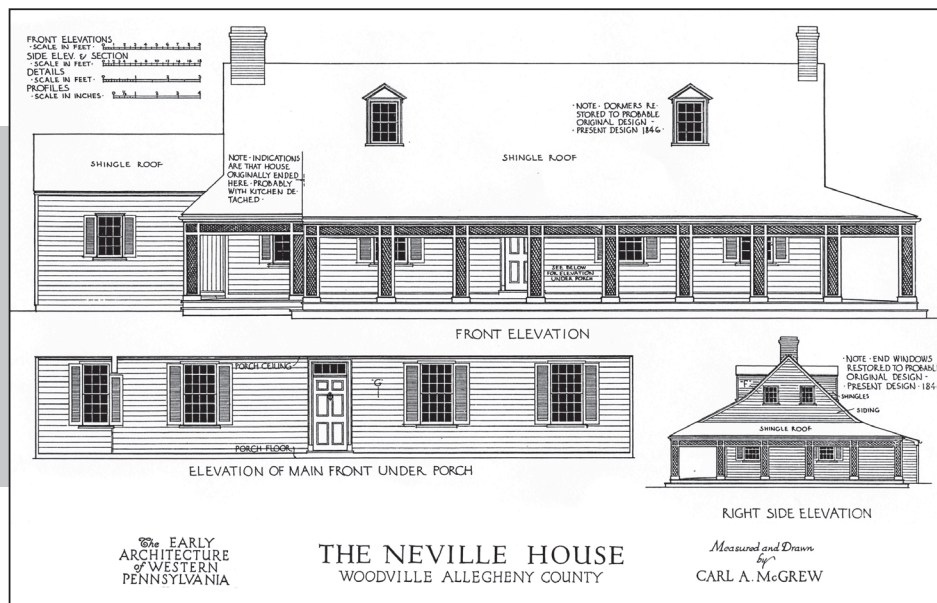
# Sewickley Valley Historical Society Signals

XXXIX, Number 5

April 2012

## Field Trip to "Woodville"

The John & Presley Neville House, 1375 Washington Pike, Bridgeville  
Saturday, April 14, 2012



"Woodville," ca. 1780, is Southwestern Pennsylvania's principal link to the late 18th century, interpreting the period 1780-1820. The house, which belonged to Presley Neville, barely escaped destruction in 1794 during the Whiskey Rebellion.

A tour of the house and grounds at "Woodville" will be conducted by Rob Windhorst, President of the Neville House Associates. Rob graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania with a degree in marketing and history. He began volunteering at "Woodville" as a docent in the Fall of 1992 and in the following year began working with the Neville House Associates (NHA) in the development of their historic clothing program. In 1996, he joined the NHA Board of Directors as Director of Gardens, and for the next ten years, he worked to

develop the demonstration kitchen garden that is located on the site today. In 2006, Rob was elected President of the Neville House Associates and is acting Executive Director. In 2007, he was instrumental in organizing the transfer of ownership of the site from Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation to the NHA. During the past six years, Rob Windhorst and the NHA have completed a room-by-room analysis of the house and have refurnished and restored each room at the site, creating a very accurate historical picture of life at "Woodville" from 1780-1820.

**MEET AT THE OLD SEWICKLEY POST OFFICE AT 10:30 A.M.** to carpool to "Woodville." The tour will be followed by an optional Dutch Treat lunch at Damon's, 1595 Washington Pike, Bridgeville. Please call the Historical Society at 412-741-5315 for tour reservations, indicating whether or not you are willing to drive to "Woodville," how many passengers you can take in your car, and if you plan to stay for lunch.

**DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS IS WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2012.**

*The mission* of the Sewickley Valley Historical Society is to promote interest in and to record, collect, preserve, and document the history of the Sewickley Valley.

*State of Taxes*

*Produce of the United States under the Inspection of John Neill Inspector of*

<i>Names of Collectors</i>	<i>Number of stills at 50 Cents</i>	<i>Capacity of stills at 50 Cents</i>	<i>Stills at 50 Cents</i>	<i>Capacity of stills at 50 Cents</i>	<i>Stills at 60 Cents</i>	<i>Capacity of stills at 60 Cents</i>	<i>Stills at 70 Cents</i>	<i>Capacity of stills at 70 Cents</i>	<i>Stills at 80 Cents</i>	<i>Capacity of stills at 80 Cents</i>	<i>Stills at 90 Cents</i>	<i>Capacity of stills at 90 Cents</i>	<i>Stills at 10 Cents</i>	<i>Capacity of stills at 10 Cents</i>	<i>Stills at 10 Cents</i>	<i>Capacity of stills at 10 Cents</i>
<i>John Wilson</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>2093</i>	<i>503</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>790</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>581</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>20</i>	
<i>Samuel Bruce</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>1838</i>	<i>1306</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>2594</i>	<i>203</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>1159</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>824</i>	<i>150</i>	
<i>Benj. Wells</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>1570</i>	<i>1132</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>1246</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>1853</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>218</i>	<i>57</i>	
<i>John Wells</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>651</i>	<i>775</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>689</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>703</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>272</i>	<i>67</i>	
<i>John Webster</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>1035</i>	<i>777</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>821</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>294</i>	<i>70</i>	
<i>John Crabb</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>227</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>1195</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>547</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>147</i>	<i>25</i>	
	<i>170</i>	<i>13115</i>	<i>2622</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>7415</i>	<i>415</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>5676</i>	<i>570</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>2229</i>	<i>401</i>	

# The Whiskey Rebellion

As we peruse with consternation our 2013 Allegheny County property tax assessments, it is easy to empathize with another group of aggrieved taxpayers: Western Pennsylvania farmers who violently opposed a 1791 excise tax on whiskey. This tax, contrived by Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, was part of an effort to put the new federal government on a sound financial footing. Resistance to the taxation, which took the form of demonstrations, non-compliance and harassment of the tax collectors, was perceived by the government as treasonable—nothing less than a secessionist insurgency against the United States of America. Under President George Washington’s personal command, an army of 13,000, consisting of militias from Pennsylvania, New York and Maryland, was raised and deployed to Western Pennsylvania, suppressing the insurrection.

The excise of 1791 imposed a duty on every gallon of whiskey. The cash-starved subsistence farmers opposed both the tax and its imposition by what they perceived to be a remote, insensitive central government. The region’s timber, grain and meat were too heavy to be transported at a reasonable cost east across the mountains, and there was no certain market down the Ohio River. Whiskey was, therefore, the one commodity that could be relatively easily transported and profitably traded. A pack horse could carry at most four bushels of grain, but turn it into whiskey and the horse could carry the equivalent of twenty four bushels—that is, two eight-gallon jugs. Whiskey was consumed from cradle

to grave by everyone on the frontier. It was indispensable to life, health and happiness.

A main focus of the tax resisters’ resentment was General John Neville (1731-1803), who represented power, wealth and social position as the Inspector of Revenue for the Fourth Survey District of Pennsylvania, a large area that included Bedford, Fayette, Allegheny, Washington and Westmoreland counties. Neville, a Virginian, became acquainted with the west as a soldier in Braddock’s expedition in 1755 and in Dunmore’s War. He was commandant of Fort Pitt from 1775 to 1777. Both the General and his son, Colonel Presley Neville (1755-1818), distinguished themselves during the Revolutionary War. Around 1775, General Neville began the construction of plantations known respectively as “Bower Hill” and “Woodville,” on either side of the creek known as Chartiers, seven miles from Pittsburgh. Both Neville and his son eventually owned houses in Pittsburgh as well.

The principal event of the Whiskey Rebellion was the July 17, 1794, burning of John Neville’s estate at “Bower Hill.” Some six hundred rebels converged on the estate, which had been fortified in expectation of trouble and manned by soldiers under a Major Kirkpatrick. They insisted that John Neville resign his commission. Neville had taken shelter in a nearby wood. When his absence was noted, the rebels demanded that they be allowed to search the house for Neville’s official papers. Permission was

*at which there shall be whole number of Stills is of less Capacity than 100 Gallons employed in Distilling Spirits from Materials of the Growth of the Province for the Survey in the District of Pennsylvania commencing the first Day of July Ending the 31<sup>st</sup> Day of December 1798*

Month	Number of Stills at 24 Cents	Capacity of Stills at 24 Cents	For 2 Months Number of Stills at 20 Cents	Capacity of Stills at 20 Cents	For 1 Month Number of Stills at 20 Cents	Capacity of Stills at 20 Cents	For 15 Months Number of Stills at 20 Cents	Capacity of Stills at 20 Cents	Number of Stills at 42 Cents	Capacity of Stills at 42 Cents	For 6 Months Number of Stills at 42 Cents	Capacity of Stills at 42 Cents	Stales Amount
21			7	201	60	20	7	67	24	12	1	116	174 72 950 72
22	1	12.0	28	80									180 72
21	1	268	48	22	2	232	83	57	8	521	218	87	1975 86
14	6	158	19	42	5	497	149	10	23	179	64	114	9 695 291 90 969 91
92	1	30 1/2	7	36	1	258	77	60	7	128	16	88	1 206 177 89 769 68
16													225 95
22	15	22 1/2	219	10	13	1060	219	80	9	606	216	16	25 1936 813 23 6689 84

*Pittsburg Office of Inspection  
December 12<sup>th</sup> 1799*

*John Neville Inspector of the Revenue*

not given, and as violence seemed inevitable, the women in the house were permitted to find shelter across the creek at Presley Neville's house, "Woodville." The presence of the women there probably saved that Neville house from destruction. Gunfire was exchanged, and the leader of the rebels, James McFarlane, was mortally wounded. The rebels eventually forced the capitulation of the defenders at "Bower Hill" and proceeded to loot, then burn the entire plantation. The General and his son were able to find sanctuary in the city.

The Federal Government, as noted above, swiftly responded to this provocation by sending an army to punish the rebels, and some 2000 of them fled the area as the army approached. Twenty were arrested and taken over the mountains to Philadelphia for trial. None of them was ultimately convicted. The last troops left Pittsburgh in June of 1795. General Neville continued to supervise the collection of the tax. The document you see above, from the collection of the Sewickley Valley Historical Society, signed by John Neville as Inspector of the Revenue, lists duties on stills for the half year commencing the July 1 and ending December 31, 1798. The government collected \$6689.84. (see at right)

In 1776, John Neville had bought a large island in the Ohio River five miles below Pittsburgh, first called Long Island, then Montour's Island, and today known as Neville Island. In 1794, after the burning of "Bower Hill," he built a house on this island.

In 1801, having rented out his Pittsburgh home, the General moved to Montour's Island and died there on July 29, 1803. He was buried in Trinity Churchyard in Pittsburgh and subsequently moved to Allegheny Cemetery in 1902.

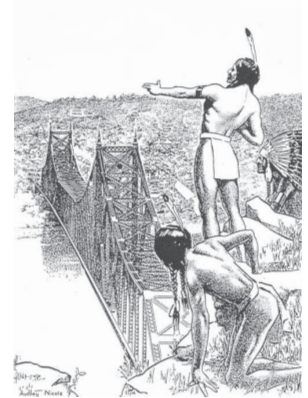
The surviving Neville plantation, "Woodville," passed out of the Neville family upon its sale by Presley Neville in October 1814 to a Stephen Barlow for \$12,000. The next owners were the Christopher Cowans; she was a niece of General Neville. Then came the Wrenshall family and the Fausets. After the death of Mary Wrenshall Fauset October 27, 1971, the property came into the possession of Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation in 1976. Today "Woodville" is managed by the Neville House Associates.

*Abstract of Duties on the Stills  
Collectors Amount to the 31<sup>st</sup>  
of Dec<sup>r</sup> 1798 amounting  
to 6689 Doll & 84 cents*

**Sewickley Valley Historical Society**  
**200 Broad Street**  
**Sewickley, PA 15143**

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**April 2012**



## *Report of the Nominating Committee*

The Sewickley Valley Historical Society Nominating Committee  
(Joe Zemba, Chair; Gloria Berry; Milana Bizic; Maleet Gordon)  
proposes the following slate of officers and directors for election to a two-year term  
at the SVHS Annual Meeting, May 16, 2012:

Secretary: Leslie Traugott  
Treasurer: Nominations from the floor will be accepted  
Directors: Charlotte Bober, James Darby, Peter Floyd  
Betty Ann Miller, Marian Miller, Ross Rogers

## *Friends, Sponsors, Patrons, Benefactors*

*Thanks to the following, who have generously supported the Sewickley Valley Historical Society  
with gifts in addition to membership dues:*

Mr. J. J. Brooks, Jr.; Sewickley Cemetery; Mr. & Mrs. Michael Tomana

## *Donations*

Mr. & Mrs. Edwin V. Clarke, Jr., in memory of Jean Millar