

Sewickley Valley Historical Society Signals

XXXVII, Number 6

April 2010

Wednesday, April 21, 2010

7:30 p.m., at the Old Sewickley Post Office

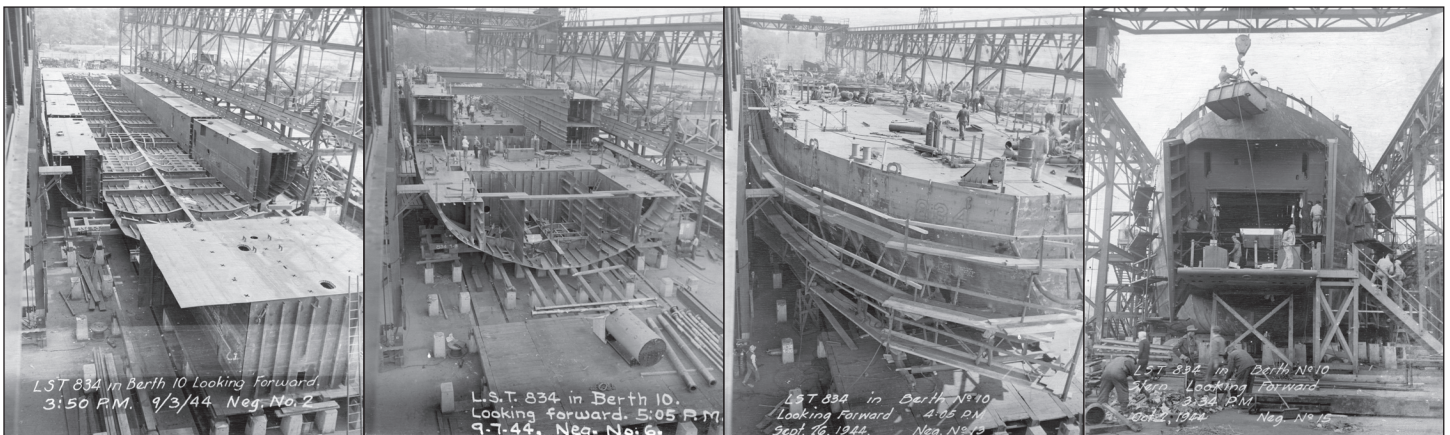
Landing Ship, Tank:

The Construction of LSTs at Neville Island during World War II
a program by Denis Galterio

Denis Galterio first became interested in LSTs when he was reading about Winston Churchill, who proposed that a Landing Ship, Tank (LST) would be vital to launching invasions from the sea. In the past ten years, he has accumulated an extensive collection of memorabilia, which will be on display; had a model of an LST constructed; and created the Pittsburgh Naval and Shipbuilders

Memorial, Inc., a not-for-profit organization to help honor the men and women who served aboard and built LSTs on Neville Island for Dravo and in Ambridge for American Bridge.

Denis Galterio lives in Franklin Park and has a marine insurance brokerage headquartered in Sewickley.



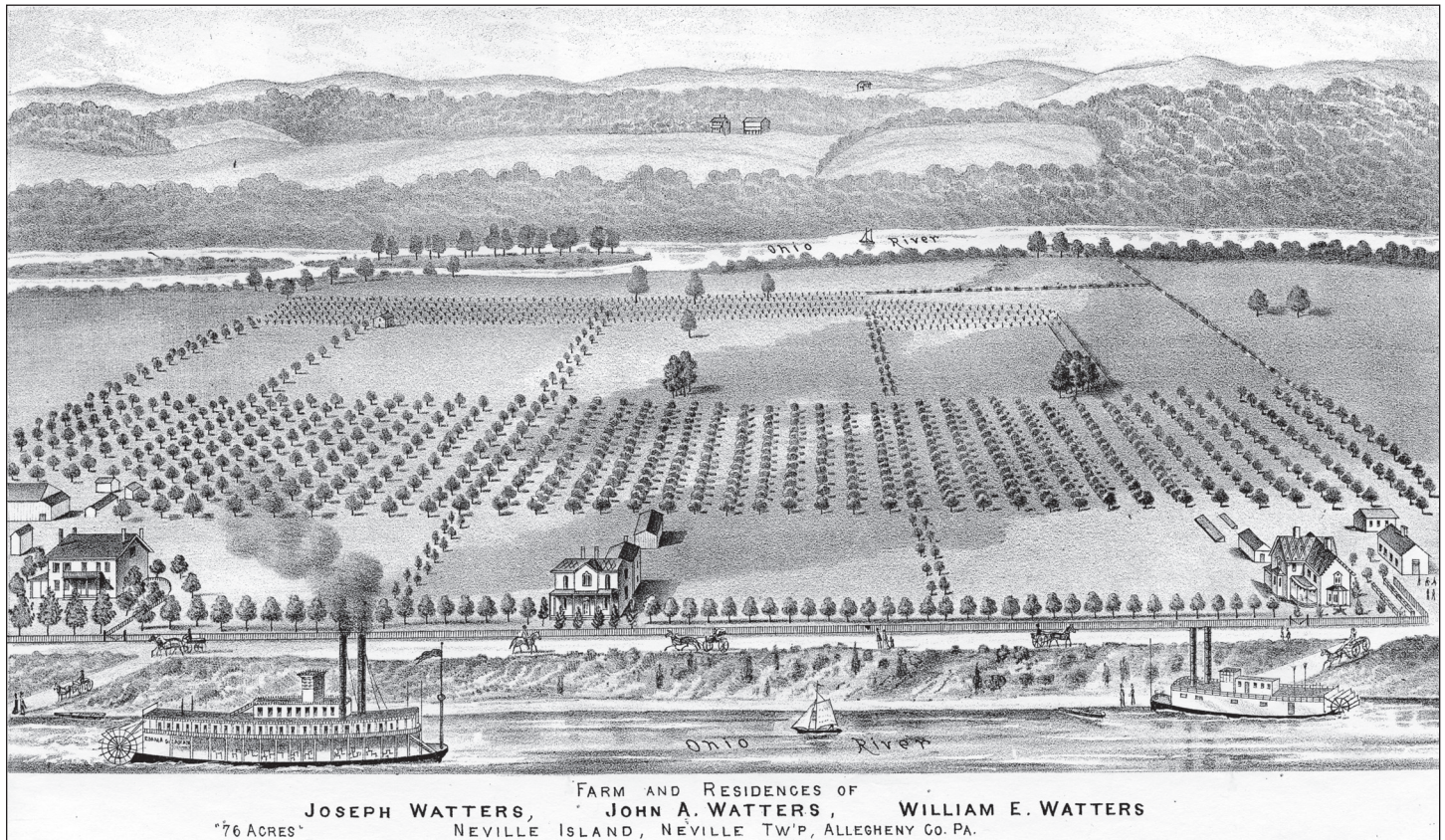
LST 834 under construction, 1944



You'll be able to visit LST 325 over the Labor Day weekend this year. On September 2, the ship (shown at left during the Normandy invasion, June 12, 1944) will arrive in Pittsburgh. This LST, whose home port is Evansville, IN, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. For more information, see the USS LST Ship Memorial website, <http://www.lstmemoial.org>.

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.

Neville Island



from *Illustrated Atlas of the Upper Ohio River & Valley...*, compiled and illustrated by E. L. Hayes, Philadelphia, 1877

This low-lying island in the middle of the Ohio River ten miles downstream from Pittsburgh was variously known as Montour's Island, Hamilton's Island and Long Island until General John Neville (1731-1803) assumed ownership in 1800.

The Virginia born Neville served with George Washington and Edward Braddock during the French and Indian War and was commandant of Fort Pitt when the Revolutionary War broke out. Colonel of the 4th Virginia Regiment, he was promoted to Brigadier General in 1783. General Neville is best known in Western Pennsylvania for his role as Inspector of Revenue, with the unenviable task of enforcing the Excise Law of 1791, which was viciously resisted here by farmers and distillers who turned grain into whiskey. This was the first test of the new Federal Government's authority, and President Washington sent troops in 1794 to quell the uprising, known as the Whiskey Rebellion.

General Neville's "Bower Hill" plantation near today's Bridgeville, Pennsylvania, was burned to the ground by insurgents demanding the General's resignation, but he continued to do his duty. General Neville never lived on the island that bears his name, but his only daughter, Amelia (born 1763), and her husband, Captain Isaac Craig, did. Neville died on the island at the home of his daughter on July 29, 1803.

Initially covered in lush forest, Neville Island's sandy alluvial soil, rich in minerals, was perfectly suited to the cultivation of crops, particularly vegetables, and in short order the whole of it was developed into farms. Jacob Lashell, who owned a ferry crossing the Ohio River between Sewickley and Coraopolis, would put together flatboats of fresh lumber, purchase potatoes and other farm produce from the island and float downriver to sell both. In time, the island provided some of the most celebrated produce in the United States. It became known as "the market basket of

Pittsburgh." The first strawberries ever marketed in Pittsburgh were grown on Neville Island. Hotel owners and wholesale produce companies such as the H. J. Heinz Company contracted with farmers for produce. New York City's Waldorf Astoria Hotel featured "asparagus à la Neville Island" on its menu.

A bridge was constructed in 1894 at the upstream end of the island, joining it to the mainland and beginning a process of industrialization that eventually displaced all the farms. The Dravo Corporation moved there in 1901 and began building ships in 1915. Eventually more than 6,000 hulls would be constructed and launched by what would become the largest inland boat works in the United States. During WWII, 16,000 workers were employed there. In 1946, the Delta Queen, brought from California for use in cruising the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, was restored and refitted by Dravo.

The old Sixth Street Bridge was floated downstream on pontoons and re-erected at the downstream end of the island in 1927, connecting Neville Island with Coraopolis. The Ohio River in the vicinity was made more navigable after 1885 by locks and dams at Davis Island, Neville Island and Osborne, replaced by the Emsworth Lock and Dam in 1922 and the Dashields Lock and Dam in 1928, but flooding remains a

problem. There were memorable floods in 1907, 1936, 1937 and 1972. Interstate 79 crossed the island in a construction project lasting from 1971 until dedication in 1976, connecting the island with the north side of the Ohio.

Neville Island was incorporated as Neville Township on April 8, 1856.

For further information on Neville Island, see *Neville Island*, by Gia Tatone and Dan Holland, with Neville Green, in Arcadia Publishing's *Images of America* series, Charleston, SC, 2008. We have several copies of the book for sale at SVHS headquarters for \$21.99, plus tax.

Mark your calendars & plan to join us on June 11, 12 & 13 (optional)



Gamble Mill (1786), Bellefonte, PA

for the Sewickley Valley Historical Society trip to State College, Lemont, Bellefonte and Boalsburg, PA, hosted by B. G. Shields. We'll meet at the Old Sewickley Post Office at 3:00 on Friday afternoon, June 11, to drive to State College, where we'll stay at the Hampton Inn. On Friday evening, dinner will be at the Nittany Lion Inn. Saturday will include a visit to the Centre County Historical Society, which is an easy walk from our lodgings. This will be followed by a short drive to the Victorian town of Bellefonte, where we will visit Tallyrand Park, Union Cemetery and the Historical Society. Later we'll have lunch at the 18th century Gamble Mill. After lunch, we will drive back to Lemont for a visit to the recently restored Granary, which is just down the street from B. G.'s house, and then enjoy a Strawberry Festival celebration in the adjacent public park. If you stay over Saturday night, Sunday will feature a visit to the Pennsylvania Military Museum in nearby Boalsburg, which is one of the towns that claims to be the birthplace of Memorial Day.

Details will follow in Next month's *Signals*!

Report of the Nominating Committee

The Sewickley Valley Historical Society Nominating Committee

(Nancy Baldwin, Gloria Berry, Steven Davis, Jane Hitchins, Cordelia Jacobs)

proposes the following slate of officers and directors for election at the Annual Meeting, May 19, 2010:

Secretary:	Elizabeth Stein
Treasurer:	Margie Gilfillan
Directors:	James Darby, Peter Floyd, Michael Murphy, Ross Rogers, Peter Sour

In Memoriam

Larry Freitag

New Members

Susan Buerklin, Sewickley; Mary A. Dunn, Moon Township;
Laura Graden, Moon Township; Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Recker, Zelenople; Gay K. Wyne, Sewickley



SAVE THE DATES!

CEMETERY 150TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND, 2010

SATURDAY, MAY 29, NOON - 8:00 PM

SUNDAY, MAY 30, NOON - 4:00 PM

CIVIL WAR ENCAMPMENT: 63rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry

MUSIC: Maidens IV (Celtic Song & Dance)

THEATRE: Mockingbird Theatre Company (a traveling theatre troupe with a horse-drawn stage, presenting a melodrama and variety show)

GOOD FOOD provided by Fondi's, plus Kettle Corn & Shaved Ice

SELF-GUIDED TOURS of Sewickley Cemetery

Event underwritten by John Dioguardi and Rome Monument

Signals is designed and edited by Susan C. Holton. Visit our website, www.sewickleyhistory.org — e-mail us at sewickleyhistory@verizon.net — or call us at 412-741-5315. We're open 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Tuesday through Friday, or by appointment.

Sewickley Valley Historical Society
200 Broad Street
Sewickley, PA 15143

Non-Profit Org
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Sewickley, PA

April 2010

