

History of Neville Island

Taken from the History of Allegheny County II
By A. Warner - Published 1889

Neville Island

This comprises Montour's Island in the Ohio River, which, after being successively included in Moon, Fayette, Robinson and Ohio, was erected separately April 8, 1856. The proceedings in this case were begun December 3, 1853. The island is about 5 miles in length and averages three-eighths of a mile in breadth, with a total area of about fifteen hundred acres. It is an alluvial deposit, and correspondingly fertile. The surface is level, and the island is not known to have been submerged in the highest freshets. Every part of it is under careful tillage, and in no other portion of the county is the labor of the farmer and the gardener so well repaid as here.

The ownership of the island has at various times been vested in persons of distinguished character in the country. By proclamation of the King at the close of the Seven Years War, a field officer of his army named Douglass became entitled to five thousand acres of land, and located a part of it upon Long Island, as it was then called. He subsequently transferred his title to Charles Simms, who sold certain portions of the island to John Harvie and General Neville, for whom Col. William Crawford made the surveys in 1776. The supreme executive council of Pennsylvania conferred the island upon General William Irvine in consideration of his services in the Revolution and a legal struggle for its possession was then begun. It was urged on behalf of General Irvine's claim that the grant to Douglass was in violation of the treaty of Fort Stanwix, and therefore his title was null and void; but the United States Court confirmed Simms in his title, and also Neville and Harvie, who were interested in the ownership by deeds from him. Henry Montour, from whom the island derives its name, was an Indian interpreter of French and Indian descent, and the trusted friend of American interests throughout the protracted Indian troubles of the frontier. Of General John Neville, from whom the Township is named, Neville B. Craig thus speaks:

John Neville was a man of great wealth for those days. He was the descendant of a lad who at an early day, was kidnapped in England and brought to Virginia and subsequently accumulated a good property there. John Neville was a man of good English education, of plain, blunt manners, a pleasant companion and the writer well recollects how eagerly he listened to his well told anecdotes, and how, by his manner, he could give interest to trifling incidents. He was born on the headwaters of the Accoquan Creek, Virginia, on the direct road from Washington's paternal estate to Winchester and Cumberland, and the residence of his father is laid down on Sparks' map of "The Operations of Virginia" in 1754. From this circumstance, probably, it was that he became an early acquaintance of Washington, both of whom were of about the same age, and thus, with the ardor of a young man, he engaged in Braddock's

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expedition. Prior to 1774 he had made large entries and purchases of land on Chartiers Creek, then supposed to be in Virginia, and was about to remove here when the revolutionary troubles began. He was elected in that year a delegate from Augusta County, IE, Pittsburgh, to the provincial convention of Virginia, which appointed George Washington, Peyton Randolph and others to the First Continental Congress, but was prevented by sickness from attending.

In 1774, by direction of the provincial convention of Virginia, John Neville marched from Winchester with his company of one hundred men and took possession of Fort Pitt on behalf of the colony, and retained the command of that post until the appointment of General McIntosh by Congress. Neville was in active military service throughout the revolutionary war, and served with conspicuous ability in the southern campaigns. At the close of the war he returned to his estates in Allegheny County and in 1791 received the appointment of inspector of internal revenue for the district. Neville remained firm in his determination to perform the duties of his office, at the expense of his property and the imminent peril of his life. His popularity returned when the "whisky rebellion" had subsided and the course he had pursued gained for him the respect of all. Neville filled many other positions of public trust, and was at one time a member of the Supreme Executive Council of PA. General Presley Neville, his son, inherited the abilities of his father. He was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. At the age of twenty years as ensign in his father's company. He rose to the rank of major, and was aid-de-camp to LaFayette for three years.

The most distinguished resident of the island, and the only member of the family of General John Neville who ever lived there, was his son-in-law, Major Issac Craig. Born in County Down, Ireland, in 1741, he settled at Philadelphia in 1765, and began his career ten years later as a lieutenant of marines on the Andrew Doria, under Captain Nicholas Biddle. He was subsequently transferred to the army, and participated in many important battles. In 1780 he was ordered to Fort Pitt for service and was identified with all the important military movements in this section until the cessation of hostilities. General Knox appointed him deputy quartermaster at Pittsburgh and he was employed in various capacities under the government until the close of the War of 1812. He became involved financially about this time, through large liabilities assumed for others, and retired from active employments to the quiet seclusion of Montour's Island, where he died in May 1826.

About 1795 Archibald Hamilton settled. He and his sons, David, William & Hugh, were lifelong residents and the family is still numerous represented there. James, Rufus, Isaac, George & William Cole were early residents on the eastern portion of the Island.

The Long Island Presbyterian Church was organized by Revenue Samuel C. Jennings, D.D., and the pastor of Sharon Church in Moon Township. Mr. Andrews, his predecessor, held the first religious serves on the island in 1828. The church was built

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in 1843. Revs. M.L. Wortman, G.M. Spargrove, James Kirk and others have been pastors. There is also a Methodist Society and a church was built about the same time as the Presbyterian.

The Township is conveniently accessible by the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne & Chicago and the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie railroads on either side of the river. Farming and market gardening will doubtless continue to be the principal occupations, and from the nearness of the great centers of population in this part of the country, these pursuits will be increasingly profitable from year to year.

The population of the Island in 1860 was 236; in 1870 it was 289 and in 1880 it was 306.

MORGAN NEVILLE

Allegheny County Sheriff from 1819-1822, was a member of the Allegheny County Bar, and had been the editor, and then owner, of the Pittsburgh Gazette newspaper.

Morgan Neville left Pittsburgh for Cincinnati in 1824, where he later edited "the first daily paper west of Philadelphia".

Sheriff Neville's father, Colonel Presley Neville, had served as aide-de-camp to General LaFayette, during the Revolutionary War. When General LaFayette visited Pittsburgh 1825, he made it on special point to see the house on Walter Street that had once been the home of his "warm personal friend".

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HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE NEVILLE ISLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - TAKEN FROM THE 1924 HOME COMING WEEK CELEBRATION BOOK

The first Neville Island Presbyterian Church was erected in 1848. The old red brick church was situated in a grove of great oak trees, overlooking the River. There were two doors in one and a great lilac bush grew between them. The cut shows the original building, the architectural dignity and simplicity of which was somewhat marred in later years when it was "improved" with belfry and paint.

The Early History of the Island

The first real owner of Neville Island was General John Neville, to whom it was given by act of Congress in consideration of his valuable services to the colonies during the Revolutionary War. General Neville was born in Virginia not far from the birthplace of Washington, one year earlier than the Father of his country, and the two men were very close friends. General Neville never lived on the Island, but for many years had his home near Woodville, on Chartiers Creek. His only daughter, Amelia, became the wife of Captain Isaac Craig, also a Revolutionary soldier and to her the General deeded the Island. Captain Craig and his wife lived for many years on the island in a home that was magnificent according to the standards of the day, on the spot where the old Pittock home now stands. Their hospitality was of the most generous kind and as Captain Craig enjoyed a wide acquaintances amount prominent men, they entertained in the course of the years many distinguished guests. It is said that Louis XVIII of France and his daughter, traveling incognito while fleeing from Napoleon, spent a night at the Craig home and departed the next morning, leaving no clue as to their identity. The Craigs did not know until long afterward that they had entertained royalty under their roof.

Isaac & Amelia Craig left the property to their son, Neville B. Craig and he was succeeded by his son & daughter, John & Amelia Craig, who lived here till their death. The grave of John Craig is in the old cemetery on the island. Amelia was buried in Allegheny Cemetery.

The Island was heavily timbered with oak, maple, locust, and other indigenous trees in primitive times, and game of all kinds common in this latitude abounded. Deer were found here long after the coming of the white man. Mrs. Elizabeth Whitaker, who was born in 1818, in her later life distinctly remembered seeing her father shoot a deer from the window of their home on the island. The river was, of course, unpolluted by sewage from the city and drainage from the mills along its banks, and was pure and sweet as nature made it. It was well stocked with fish and the early settlers, if one may judge from brief remarks that have crept into the early annuals of the district, seem to have been quite as enthusiastic disciples of Isaac Walton as their successors of our own

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generation. The river, the creator of the Island, has always been a great factor in the life of the people. The pioneers were not slow to recognize the wonderful beauty of the noble stream with its rugged hills on both sides, which the Frenchmen named "La Belle Riviere". Before the erection of bridges connecting the island with the mainland, the citizens were put to great inconvenience in crossing the river and transporting freight to and fro. But there was some compensation in the isolation, for the community acquired a character of its own. It was indeed one neighborhood, with some forty farmers and their families; a total population of say 250. With the farms well cultivated and the homes neat and well kept, one can easily understand why it had the reputation of being one of the beauty spots of the whole country.

The Island contains approximately one thousand acres. The record shows that in 1822, six hundred acres were sold for \$1,000. To show the increase in real estate values it may be related that in 1923 three acres sold for \$23,000.

The new church was erected in 1917 and is situated on a slight elevation on First Street, and is the most conspicuous building on the whole Island.

The Beginning of Christian Work

The religious history of the island begins in 1822 or 1823, when Rev. Michael Law, pastor of Montour church, held services occasionally at the Craig home on Sunday afternoons during the summer. Very little information has come down to us about Mr. Law. He is spoken of as a friend of Major Craig & Dr. Jennings characterized him as "The good pastor and catechizer". A few years later but before 1828, Rev. John Andrews, editor of the Presbyterian Banner, preached occasionally.

The name Hamilton appears in the history of the Island toward the close of the 18th century. Their Advent meant much to the religious life of the community, for the first Sunday school was organized in 1828 by Mrs. David Hamilton. She is described as a woman of notable piety, a great student of God's word and a woman of prayer. Mother Hamilton was the superintendent, secretary, treasurer and teaching force all combined in the Sunday School.

There was no public school building on the island until 1842, but there was a private school earlier than the date names. Mrs. Harriet Craig Fleeson, who lived near the lower end of the island, gathered in the children and taught them with her own family for several hours a day during the winter months.

About 1842 a log schoolhouse was built near the center of the island, and here the church services were held for several years. In this log school house the church was organized May 6, 1843, with 15 members.

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The names are as follows:

- Disart Cornelius & wife Margery
- Moses Blazer & wife Margaret
- David Hamilton Jr. & wife, Mary
- Archibald Hamilton
- Amelia Scott (Mrs. James H. Hamilton)
- Catherine Scott
- James Scott
- Joseph Watters, Sr.
- John Hutchinson Hamilton
- James Dickson & wife Mary

At the organization Moses Blazer was chosen ruling elder and David Hamilton, Jr. deacon. About this time, William Dickson, Sr., united with the church. He was a man of mature years and had a mind well stored with the great truths of Christianity through his early training in Scotland. Very soon after joining the church he was elected elder, and watched over the little flock of God lovingly & prayerfully. He was a "good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," and was affectionately called "Father Dickson". The first communion service was held in an oak grove in front of the Hamilton home and is spoken of as being well-attended and observed with due solemnity. The communion bread was prepared and the linen cared for by Mrs. James Dickson and Mrs. James H. Hamilton alternately for many years.

Dr. S.C. Jennings who preached here at different times through many years, speaks of the kindness of the people to him and their loyalty to the church as remarkable. They were willing to endure hardship and make sacrifices for the cause of Christ.

But the organization could not long prosper without a house of worship and in the summer of 1848 the old brick church was erected. It was 38 X 40 feet, surrounded by great trees and had two doors in the end with the great lilac bush between them. Treat was the rejoicing when in the autumn of the same year the church was dedicated with cries of "Grace, grace unto it". The presbytery of Ohio, which then included the Pittsburgh district, met in the new church in October, upon invitation of the brace little congregation, and participated in the dedication exercises.

Pastors are as follows:

Dr. S. C. Jennings	1848-1859
L .M. Wortman	1859-1965
G. M. Spargrove	1866-1868
James Kirk	1868-1871
M. L. Wortman	1874-1881
W.G. Taylor	1881-1883

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E.F. Walker	1883-1884
Charles McNulty	1885-1886
M.L. Wortman	1886-1888
S.P. Cochran	1888-1894
C.N. Moore	1896-1903
W.L. Nicholson	1904-1906
W.P. Shrom	1906-1917
J.G. Patton	1918-1922
J.M. Meally	1922-1923
J.E. Garvin	1923-

About 1886 an organ was purchased, the first, it is believed, to be used in a country church west of Pittsburgh, with the possible exception of Sewickley. Callie Hamilton, who later became the wife of Rev. D.R. Imbrie, was the first organist. Her sister, Amelia Hamilton, followed her; then came Lizzie Dickson, who became Mrs. A.L. Phillips, and Emma Dickson, afterward Mrs. Parker. These were all granddaughters of Mrs. Mary Hamilton, who organized the first Sabbath School.

Perhaps the most discouraging epoch in the history of the congregation was the period of the world war. The government decided to erect on the island a great ordnance plant, that would supply the army and navy with the largest guns in use. A part of the island was to be utilized for a great arsenal also. Representatives of the iron and steel interests had often attempted to acquire the island for manufacturing purposes, but they always met a positive refusal to sell from the farmers. Many of the farmers had been owned by the same family for several generations, and were the more highly prized on their account. Besides, the island seemed to be intended by nature for just the use the gardeners and farmers were making of it. Its great natural fertility, increased by skillful cultivation and fertilization, had made it one of the garden spots of the world. The earliest and finest fruits and vegetables offered in the Pittsburgh market for many years were grown on the island. The homes were neat and well kept - many of them spacious and beautiful. Prosperity and contentment prevailed. Pleading the exigencies of national defense and exercising its right of eminent domain, the government rode rough shod over all sentimental considerations and took possession of the land. An army of men was quickly put to work, and soon the beautiful and peaceful island was a sorry sight. The stately homes of the old settlers were removed or demolished, and rudely constructed shacks erected instead. Great manufacturing plants were laid out. Scores of families who had no intention or expectation of moving from the community a few weeks before were forced to seek homes elsewhere. Many of these were active and loyal in the church, and men were wondering where it would stop. "Will there be any church left when the exodus is over?" was the query in everybody's mind. It was a time of great perplexity for pastor and people.

When the war came to an end so abruptly, the government suddenly withdrew and

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auctioned off its holdings. Many farms brought prices so much higher than those paid the farmers that it was impossible for them to buy back their former holdings. Most of the land was acquired by large manufacturing interests, and the result is the island as we see it today. A few retained their homes; others continued to occupy them as renters. When the battle was over it was found that through the ranks of the church were sadly depleted, enough of the old guard remained to hold the organization together. Valuable recruits were enlisted among the new people who had come to fine homes in the community and the work goes on today, under the blessing of God, in the same spirit of sturdy loyalty that has characterized the workers from the beginning. New problems and responsibilities have been thrust upon the old church as the only church on the island. Many of the new people in the community of foreign extraction and not in sympathy of our American Christianity. To reach these people and win them to Christ and the church – this is the task of the future.

Meanwhile the new church edifice, begun in the early days of the war, was nearing completion, and the burden of its weight weighed heavily on the shoulders of the faithful few. In a sense it was most fortunate that construction had begun when it did, as building costs were much lower than in the post-war period. The structure costing \$20,000 would probably have cost three times the amount five years later – a sum quite impossible for the congregation to raise. In other words a better building was erected than would have been impossible at a later date.

An incident connected with the building enterprise deserves to be recorded here. Dedication day, with its enthusiasm was past. The members had responded nobly, and felt that they had given every dollar they were able to give. Bills to the amount of \$5,000.00 remained unpaid. A congregational meeting was called to place a mortgage on the property. Many were reluctant to see this done, but it seemed the only way out. When the meeting was called to order one of the elders arose and proposed to contribute \$1,000 toward the liquidation of the debt it others would contribute the remaining amount needed. Another elder quickly responded with a like subscription. The contagion spread, and in a short time the meeting adjourned with the amount oversubscribed. The debt was provided for and no mortgage loan was needed. Dr. W.P. Shrom, who served the church as stated supply for 11 years, was minister in charge during the building period.

REVOLUTIONARY WAR CANNON IN MEMORIAL PARK

In 1953, Dravo entered bridge construction in the New England area for the first time since building the Sagamore Bridge piers over the Cape Cod Canal in 1912. In the new project, consisting of five river piers in the Penobscot River for the Bangor-Brewer Bridge, four Revolutionary War naval cannons were dredged from the bottom of the river. Historical records indicated that the guns were remnants of the ill-fated expedition, commanded by Commodore Dudley Saltonstall, against the British in 1779. The American flotilla was chased up the Penobscot River by British warships and either destroyed or scuttled. One cannon, suitably mounted, was placed at the entrance of Dravo's Neville Island Park, the other three were presented to various historical organizations.

Dravo donated the cannon to Neville Township to be placed at the War Memorial.

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Taken from the 19th Annual Report (1975) of Neville Township

THE OLDEST FARMHOUSE & LAST BARN REMAINING ON NEVILLE ISLAND

The last reminder of the days when Neville Island was an area of flourishing farms still exists. Asparagus ala Neville Island was on the menu of the Waldorf Astoria and strawberries from this fertile ground were served in all the fine hotels and restaurants of Pittsburgh in those days. Neville Island's sweet corn was known up and down the valley.

Now, only one barn and farmhouse remain to remind us of those days.

The earliest records show that a survey of this area was made in 1783 for General William Irvine which encompassed 846 acres.

As time passed and parcels of this large area were divided, records show Amelia Craig bequeathed this acreage to Oldham Craig and wife, Matilda, of the City of Allegheny.

Then came a series of sales over the years. In 1917, Dr. Adam Wolcyrz of Pittsburgh about 7 acres for this parents for \$10,500.00 including the house and barn.

In 1922, a strip of the farm was sold to Graham Bolt & Nut Company from Grand Avenue to the front river. The office building of the Pittsburgh Screw and Bolt Company was built on this area and the land housed the offices of Dravo Light Metals Plant. Also, about 1922, the remainder of the land was laid into lots and sold for homes.

About 1 acre, including the original farmhouse, was bought by Dr. Wolcyrz's sister, Helen Glinka, and husband, Andrew.

At their death, the house and buildings on the land was inherited by their two daughters, Janice Shuty and Aldona VanVoorhis. The home is currently owned by Janice's son, Robert & wife, Barbara.

The farmhouse and barn are located on Ohio Street & Pershing Way.

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Neville Township Coat of Arms

The Coat of Arms of General John Neville has been adopted in 1975 as the official shield of Neville Township. While the General's specific reasoning in selecting the Bull for the Family Coat of Arms is not known, it is known the Bull generally was chosen because it was considered a symbol of strength and virility.

The words beneath the picture of the crest, "Ne Vile Velis", translated from Latin to the English, "Think Nothing Base". Base, a synonym for vile in this motto would mean morally low, low minded, dishonorable or disgraceful, according to Webster's Dictionary.

The Coat of Arms was painted by Ken Batista, son of Guido & Mabel Batista of Grand Avenue.

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This historical information was used to develop a brief overview of the time history and changes that have taken place. This overview was developed by Chester Engineers for NIDA 2001.

PHYSICAL SETTING

Neville Island is approximately 5 miles long, 2,000 feet wide, and comprised of 1,200 acres. The Island is founded upon the deep glacial outwash deposits typical of the Ohio River Valley. The total depth to bedrock is generally on the order of 65-80 feet. There is little bedrock information on Neville Island due to its depth and general absence of need to be considered in most water supply, hydrogeologic or geotechnical foundation investigations. Bedrock has not been mapped in sufficient detail for the preparation of an overburden thickness or bedrock contour map.

The basal glacial outwash consists of coarse sand and gravel. Large boulders are sometimes encountered. This unit yields amounts of groundwater and is used both on Neville Island and regionally as a major groundwater supply source for both industrial and potable water supplies. Yields are commonly in the 100-to800 gallon per minute range. West View Water, Neville Chemical, Dravo and the old Neville Island Glass plant have all used the glacial materials as a water source. This is the groundwater unit euphemistically known as "Pittsburgh's Fourth River". Only the West View Water and Neville Chemical wells are currently listed in the DEP Water Well inventory for Allegheny County.

A fine-to-medium sand is generally found above the production aquifer zone. At this sequence nears the surface, the fine sand and silt content increases, reflecting more recent alluvial flood plain deposits.

The present relatively flat land surface over much of Neville Island creates a false impression of the original unmodified topography. Industrial fill materials are present to considerable depths at many locations that are not obvious. Fill is generally a heterogeneous mixture of coal, coke, slag, ash, and other material of a similar character. The fill may exhibit a wide range of chemical signatures ranging from relatively inert to severely contaminated. Potential development sites with known fill include the vacant lot by the RPS building, the old Dravo Light Metals Plant by the I-79 interchange, and the site of the Neville Chemical water wells along the Neville Road back channel. The fill material has special regulatory significance. This is discussed in Section 3.2 of this report. The original intent of this report was to construct a map of known fill location and depths based upon public information.

The navigation improvements on the Ohio have significantly altered the Island boundaries and appearance over time. Long-term residents Henry & Ruth Hartz remember the Island in 1919:

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“The rivers were low at that time, and you had a sandy beach all along the river. All the way around the Island was just a sandy beach. It must have been 20 foot long, anyway, to the water.”

The Ohio River navigational dams have long been a factor affecting shorelines land use and groundwater flow patterns. The first dam was the Davis Island (#1) constructed in 1886 across the river above Neville Island. Lock and Dam #2 was constructed in 1899 across the Main Channel at the foot of the Cottage Avenue Park. The old lock wall and Lock House are still present. The method for controlling water in the Back Channel is uncertain. Construction on the present dams were completed in 1922. The Corps of Engineers rebuilt and converted the dam to a gated structure between 1935 and 1938. This action raised the pool in additional seven feet.

There is a 18-foot difference between the upper and lower pools. The fact that the Back Channel Dam is located further down river than the Main Channel Dam dramatically distorts the groundwater flow pattern. The surface-water elevation difference creates strong hydraulic gradients in the groundwater. This has been a significant factor in groundwater contamination transport patterns.

THE AGRAGARIAN ERA

Neville Island has also been historically referred to as Montours Island and Long Island. There is no reference to Neville Island being permanently inhabited during the pre-Colonial era. The name Montours Island has been referenced to a date of 1628, but this is uncertain. Separate references cite Henry Montour as being its Indian-owner and a Chief of the Shawnee. He is also referenced as being an Indian interpreter of French and Indian decent. In 1776, the Island was surveyed for General John Neville. In 1776, the entire Island was covered by forest. F. Cumings, in his 1808 “Sketches of a Tour”, provided an early account of Neville’s or Long Island:

“It is narrow but its soil being of the finest quality, it might be divided into several good farms; there is however, but one on it, cultivated for the proprietor, Major Craig of Pittsburgh who has on the middle of the Island a large but very plain wooded farm house.”

As the 1800s progressed, Neville Island was progressively deforested and converted into farmland becoming known as the Market Basket of Pittsburgh. This marks the first great environmental change in land use. The change from forest to cultivation is generally accompanied by an increase in topsoil erosion. The location of houses and roadways on the Main Channel side of the Island reflects a slightly higher elevations. An article in the October 1900 “Burgettstown Home Monthly” refers to “large and pretentious homes” of this period thusly:

“Indeed so rapidly did wealth come to these early farmers that they became noted as the most prosperous community, and their homes the most beautiful and

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comfortable in the vicinity of Pittsburgh. Neville Island was at the time the gem of the Ohio”.

The tremendous industrial expansion that occurred in Pittsburgh during the Civil War started to affect Neville Island as early as 1872 when the first plans were made for the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie (P&LERR) Railroad to cross the river to Neville Island. In 1884, a railroad bed was graded along the south bank of the Island and construction of a bridge was started but not completed.

In 1890, there were 70 families on the Island. In 1892 bridges were constructed and the West End Traction Company began service. Neville was no longer an Island.

RESIDENTIAL & INDUSTRIAL TRANSFORMATION

A new Century of 1900 saw a great tide of change come over Neville Island. In that year, much of the land was sold for business. Construction was started on the first industrial plant, American Steel & Wire. On July 30, 1900, the first P&LERR steam engine began service to Neville Island. Three farms were acquired by residential real-estate interests. The plan for Neville Island City was promoted as the “9th Wonder of the World”. The sale of lots started on April 25, 1900, with a base price of \$500. The promotional materials touted the presence of two water works, a gas well, and no smoke from the mills:

“The great mills will belch forth their smoke either north or south of the city; and as the wind comes from the west, the residents may confidently depend upon the finest of pure clear wholesome air.”

In the 1906/1908 USGS Map of Neville Island, the railroad and mill complex at the east end is evident. The railroad also extends along the south bank to a building at the present area of the I-79 interchange. Grand Avenue has been constructed down the middle of the Island with the residential streets of Neville Island City in the vicinity of the Municipal Building.

Although the transformation of Neville Island was clearly advanced by 1908, the year 1918 is the time often cited as the final end of Neville Island as an agricultural community. In 1918, the US Government seized 130 acres in the area of the Gulf Terminal to be used as the site of a large ammunition plant. The area included the Cole property noted on the 1876 land map. With the site no longer needed after the war, the Government held a land sale in 1921. The farming interests sought to regain their land but were outbid by Carnegie Steel with prices up to \$7,700 per acre.

The Sanborn Fire Insurance maps assist in documenting the progressive industrialization. The earliest maps located to date in either the Sanborn or Carnegie

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Museum collection date from 1926. These maps can be used to develop more detailed history of individual parcels. As an example of the utility of these maps, it is important to know that there was a gasoline service station located between Hubert & Elsie Street by 1926. This is the property now occupied by the laundromat. Any potential sale of this property would need to consider the possible residual presence of environmental contamination from this 1926 service station.

Aerial photographs document conditions starting in 1938 and for the year 1949,1967,1973,1988 and 1993. By 1938, almost all the eastern end of the Island had been industrialized. There were still some open parcels on the western end. By 1938, the new Neville Road (also know as the Navy Road) at the east end had replaced the old location of Grand Avenue that now bisected Neville Chemical. The 1949 photograph shows the westward extension of Neville Road to its present intersection at the Fire Station. The site history provided by the photographs guides our understanding of potential environmental concerns on any particular parcel.

THE NEW MILLENNIUM

The dawn break of the New Millennium again finds Neville Island at the beginning cycle having a new future role as a member of the regional community. The devolution of the 1900's industrial rise and fall has created not only environmental legacies but also new opportunities. The recent construction of the Island Sports Complex has demonstrated how landowner vision, creative engineering and a responsive regulatory environment have combined to change an unusual contaminated site into a vital market force and recreational asset to the Island. The new FEDEX/RPS terminal has likewise been developed in a manner consistent with its environmental legacy. In recent years, other companies such as New Penn Motor Express, West Rentals, Verichem, Pittsburgh Gear, Tri-State Trailer, Overseas Packaging and Calgon Research Lab have constructed new or modernized facilities that have slowly started to improve the image of Neville Island.

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Taken from the Waterways Journal on April 2, 2001

The date is June 2 or 3, 1917, and the boat is saddle-bagged on the outside wall of Lock 2, Ohio River. The boat, which was owned by Jones & Laughlin Steel Company, was raised by Capt. Warren Elsey.

The Aliquippa was badly twisted in the accident and spent almost a year being repair. Its troubles were not over, however, 11 year later on August 30, 1928, it capsized at Woodlawn PA, and three people lost their lives. The bodies of the victims were found trapped in their cabin.

Taken from The Times/Beaver Newspaper - May 25, 2001

The Pennsylvania Trolley Museum located at One Museum Road, Washington, PA, has an unusual trolley car with a left facing door that served Neville Township, an island surrounded by the Ohio River.

"They added the left -handed door; otherwise, they'd let you off in the river", said Scott Becker, executive director of the museum.

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Cemetery Inscriptions from The Neville Island Presbyterian Cemetery

Surname	First Name Other	Birthdate / Deathdate
B?	Maggie Age 2 days	d: April 26, 1888?
B?	Milton J Age 4 years 2 months	d: Jan. 18, 1861
Baker	Alice Wife of M F Baker, in her 25 th year	d: Oct. 5, 1895
Baker	Annie J Wife of M F Baker, Aged 29 Years, Mother	d: Sept. 2, 1885
Baker,	Infant	
Baker	Willie Son of Emma B. HOPKINS, age 6 yrs 6 mo 10 days	d: Nov. 2, 1876
Cole	John M Son of John & Maggie COLE 3 yrs 2 mo 7 days	d: Sept. 3, 1856
Cole	Mary 51 years	Oct. 20, 1858
Cornelius	Elizabeth	(Stone worn)
Cornelius	Emma Dau of Elenor & Josiah?	July 19, ??? / ?? Apr ???
Cornelius	Isabella	Stone worn - see HAMILTON
Cornelius	John J?	Stone worn
Cornelius	Le???el McC Wife of J.?. Cornelius	?/ 18,1854 /18-May 1884
Cornelius	Majora Nee WHITE	Jan 23, 1809/ Dec 14, 1878

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Cornelius	MaryAnna	Oct 15, 183?/ Nov 11, 1876
Cornelius	O.D.	Jun 26,1836/ Mar 6, 1867
Cornelius	Oysart	Oct 20,1804 / Apr 27,1884?
Craig	John Neville	Feb 2, 1793/ July 21, 1870
Craig	Matilda Relict of Reese E. Fleeson	Mar 12,1788/ Mar 9,1854
Eckert	Infant Son of H S Eckert	d: July 22, 1881
Fleeson	Thos P.	Oct 4, 1818/ July 22, 1888
Fleson	John C Age 5 years	d: 1852
Graham	George	Stone worn
Graham	Mary Jane	9-??-???? / ?-??-183?
Graham	Walter Edward Son of James & Margaret	Feb 23, 1866/Jul 12, 1867?
Green	Maggie Wife of George Green	May 4, 1842/ Dec 20, 1869
Hall	W A Murray Aged 19 mo. 24 days, Son of A W & J P Hall	d: Aug 21, 1873
Hamilton	?? Age 10? Years	Feb 3,1855 Jul 12, 1867?
Hamilton	Archibald In his 83 rd yr	d: Mar 2, 1871
Hamilton	H	Stone Worn
Hamilton	Isabella Dau of A R Hamilton, 11 Yr 2 day	d: Apr 2,1857

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Hamilton	J S	Stone Worn
Hamilton	Sara Catherine Dau of J & C Hamilton	Sept 21, 1716/ Apr 4 ????
Huting	Mary nee McCabe	Jan 21, 1853 / Jan 20, 1886
McCabe	??	Stone worn
McCabe	Elizabeth	Stone worn
McCabe	Florence Virginia	Sept 15, 1866 / Sept 3, 1888
McCabe	Lilie B Dau of Whit? McCabe, 15 years	Jul 1, 188?
McCabe	Lillian	Stone worn
McCabe	Marjary E	18??
McCabe	Milton H	Apr 27, 1827/ Jan 29, 1881
McClure	Andrew	Stone Worn
McClure	Margaret F Wife of Wm. McClure	Mar 1, 1790/ Jun 2, 1885
McGuire	Jefferson S Son of Samuel & Eliza Jane McGuire	Jan 23, 1854 7 Mo, 20 Day
McGuire	? Child of Samuel & Eliza?	d: 1852
Parepar	Lotta in her 28 th Yr, Dau of Elizabeth H & Milton McCabe	d: Aug 26, 1895
Phillips	Infant Son of R & M Phillips	
Phillips	Matilda Age 24 years	d: Mar 9, 1876

History of Neville Island

Phillips	William W Son of H & ?A. Phillips	Dec 9,1876/ Jul 13,1877
Riley	Margaret	Feb 1,1873/ Oct 2, 18??
Sharp	Elizabeth Mother, 86 Yr 5 Mo 27 Days	d: Feb 7, 1873
Smith	Elizabeth	1823 - 1894
Smith	Henry	1853 - 1873
Smith	Lizzie	1855 - 1879
Smith	Peter	1800 - 1876
Watters	Benjamin M	Apr ? 1855/ May 12, 1878?
Watters	J.W.	Jun 4, 180?/ Dec 27, 18??
??eens	Margaret? Age 80? years	d: May 16, 18??

History of Neville Island

The Surnames of Pittsburgh **General John Neville - patriot and tax collector**

By Hax McCullough

Printed in the Bimonthly Newsletter of the Historical Society of W. PA

The gentlemanly General John Neville (1731-1803), who must be remembered in conjunction with the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794, was significant in many other ways in the history of Pittsburgh. In his time, he was probably this area's most popular and distinguished citizen. He was a Virginian by birth and an owner of large tracks of land in Chartiers Valley, PA., Virginia and Kentucky. He was descended from the English Richard Neville, East of Warwick (1428-1471), "The Kingmaker" and character in Shakespeare's Henry VI. In the colonial world, the Nevilles were pillars of patriotism, propriety and public service. They were dignified, educated people of traditional good manners and taste. In the words of his grandson, Neville B. Craig, "he (John) was content to service his country openly and manfully".

John Neville first came to Western Pennsylvania with General Edward Braddock's ill-fated expedition of 1755. Neville fought in the Revolutionary War in which he rose to the rank of general. He commanded Fort Pitt from 1775 to 1777, and served as Quartermaster of Pittsburgh. In 1785 he built his home "Woodville", now restored (and opened to visitors) by the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation. It was his later home, "Bower Hill" that was burned to the ground in 1794.

A founder of the first Protestant Episcopal Church in Allegheny County, "Trinity Church", John Neville lived for a time at Ferry (Stanwix) and Water (Fort Pitt Blvd.) streets where his immediate neighbors were his son-in-law, Major Isaac Craig; his only son, Colonel Presley Neville; and General James O'Hara. In later life, he lived on Neville Island in the Ohio River where he died.

The Whiskey Rebellion

John Neville provided the reason for The Whiskey Rebellion when he attempted to collect the federal excise tax on whiskey and set off a short civil war, the new nation's first. As in the case of the Boston Tea Party, it was about taxation from afar and a grassroots refusal to pay. Nearly every settler had a whiskey still on his farm; a right of ownership landowners felt was theirs. They made whiskey from their own corn and rye because it was easier to ship and not perishable. The federal whiskey tax was levied in 1791, but not collected aggressively until 1794. Virtually every farmer resisted at that time, because they sold or traded whiskey like money for whatever they needed.

Violence erupted. We have a first hand description of what happened by John Neville's son-in-law, Maj. Craig: Pittsburgh, July, 1794 - About day-break in the morning of the 10th instant, a number of armed men attacked General Neville's house, he himself only

History of Neville Island

defending it; he however, dispersed the party, having wounded six or seven, one of who, it is said, mortally. (On the 17th) a large number of men, it is said amounting to seven hundred, assembled and attacked his house, defended only by himself, Maj. Kirkpatrick and ten soldiers. During the attack, General Neville seeing it impossible to defend the house against such numbers, took an opportunity of escaping. ..As soon as the Major surrendered, the enemy set fire to the house, which is reduced to ashes.

On August 1, 1794, 7,000 local people gathered in opposition to the whiskey tax. Force was needed to put down the insurrection, and on October 1, 1794, President George Washington (a lifetime friend of Neville) sent an army of 12,000 "to liberate" Pittsburgh. Federal troops made their rendezvous at Cumberland and Bedford, and marched in two divisions westward. As hoped by President Washington, sending a large army had the desired effect. The insurgents, fearing for their lives, abandoned their cause and the rebellion collapsed.

There is a Neville Avenue in Coraopolis and a Neville Road on Neville Island, known also as Neville Township. The island continues downstream in the Ohio River from opposite Avalon to opposite Haysville.

There are Neville streets in Emsworth, Edgeworth, North Versailles and Bower Hill. In Oakland, S. Neville Street begins at Boundary Street in Panther Hollow, goes under Forbes Avenue and ends at Centre Avenue. Where once it continued through Bloomfield and Polish Hill, there is now a busway.

History of Neville Island

Neville Township Demographics
Allegheny County Survey Zone Forms

Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation September 1981

Neville Township (003-76) is an island in the Ohio River 4 ½ to 9 ½ miles northwest of the Point in Pittsburgh. It is found on the Pittsburgh West, Emsworth and Ambridge quadrants of the U.S. Geological Survey Maps (1:24000).

Formerly part of Ohio Township and known as Montours Island, Neville Township was incorporated in 1856 and named for General John Neville who owned the island in the 18th century.

Neville Township is 3 square miles in area. The terrain is generally level and the highest point above the river is about 50 feet. It is linked to the mainland by the Coraopolis Bridge (003-25) and the Fleming Park Bridge (003-76-R2-F7-9).

The western section of the island is home to 1300 residents. The streets here are laid out in a grid pattern; except at the extreme western edge where they are located on the northern side of Grand Avenue and dead-ended at the river bluff.

General John Neville deeded the island to his daughter Amelia when she married Captain Isaac Craig, who had also served in the Revolutionary War. They made the island their permanent home and were soon joined by others who came first as renters and then purchased the land. The fertile soil enabled the island to become one great garden; and the early farmers were prosperous. Neville Island at that time was the "gem of the Ohio".

Each farm had its own wharf and drive to the river and boats from Shousetown (Crescent Township) transported the produce to markets in Pittsburgh. In 1880, there were more than 40 working farms supplying garden produce. Today, the only reminder of the island's agrarian beginnings is a farmhouse and barn at 5500 Ohio Street (003-76-274N-150-R1-F23-27).

Around the turn-of-the-century, the island's privacy was destroyed when bridges were built connecting it with the mainland, and the island was widely advertised for development. One of the bridges, a railroad bridge was under construction in 1900; at the same time a steel mill was built. After WWI, more than 50 industries from steel companies to chemical plants; changed the island from a sleepy farm community to an industrial center. Traffic from the Interstate 79 bridge completed the change in recent years.

History of Neville Island

Zoning has kept residents separated from industry. The Dravo Mechling Corporation at First Street marks the spot where industry stops and the residential area begins. Founded in 1891 by Francis Dravo, the company moved to Neville Island in 1901. In 1958, Dravo operated the largest inland boat works in the country and also specialized in the repair and maintenance of river vehicles. The first vessel launched in 1915 was the first steel deck barge in the U.S. In addition, Dravo built several of the locks and dams that made the rivers navigable and has also supplied concrete for landmark construction projects like Three Rivers Stadium and the Convention Center.

In 1918, during the war, the government took control of the island and erected the largest ammunition dump in the world. The war ended soon after the purchase and the project was abandoned. Residents were not permitted to have their land returned to them and the property was bought by steel mills and factories.

The Neville Township residential section can be characterized as neat rows of modest single family 2 - 2 ½ story houses. Many are resided or have lost porches, but most have flower and vegetable gardens.

A few older structures remain. The construction of Interstate 79 in 1976 necessitated the demolition of many residences. An Italianate house at 5213 River Road was used at one time as the offices of the Witherow Steel Corporation.

Another interesting building on River Road is an abandoned Repair Facility of Lock #2. This is in danger of demolition and should be preserved as part of the river heritage.

Steel companies built homes for their employees. Gunnison Homes, The U.S. Steel Corporation subsidiary, constructed 55 homes in 1950. Many of these were torn down when the I-79 bridge was constructed.

An Ohio-based firm, called Lustron Homes, built homes in the 1940s that were steel throughout. One of these is extant at 7037 Grand Avenue.

Interspersed throughout the more modest homes are a few more substantial houses. Again, most have been unsympathetically altered.

There is only one church on the island - The Neville Island Presbyterian Church at South First Street. It is a 1917 Romanesque building. The congregation, however, dates back to 1848 and the original church stood at the site of the Long Island Presbyterian Cemetery, presently the island's most important historic site.

The only school closed when Neville and Coraopolis school districts merged in 1972. It is currently used as offices.

History of Neville Island

The island became notorious in 1979 when Allegheny County's ill-fated Ohio River Park – called "Poison Park" was returned to the Hillman Company after toxic wastes were discovered there.

Despite the encroachment of industry, the residents refuse to leave the island. Some old-timers remember when it was still a rural area and everyone had his own beach. Others, however, are not optimistic about the future of Neville Township. They fear that industry will eventually force all the residents out.

ADDRESS: Front River Road & Phillips Avenue
LOT & BLOCK 274-P-248
Period: 1880-1899
Brick structure

This house sits on a grassy lot and overshadows its younger neighbors in size and scale. It is 2 ½ stories with a gable roof, with paired scrolled brackets under the cornice. The west elevation has 7 bays of segmentally arched windows framed in wood. This fenestration is echoed on the first story and the bay window. There is a porch to the southwest whose roof is supported by wooden posts. There is latticework at the base of the porch. A single wooded door of molded panels is the entranceway. There is a similar porch on the south elevation. Fenestration echoes the west façade. The north elevation has a dormer with triad semi-circular arched d/s windows. The second story has 5 bays of d/s with elaborate cornices which are echoed on the first floor. Windows flank double doors of glass and molded panels with transoms. The bays on the NE have been altered. The rear elevation (e) is 2 stories with casement windows and a 3-floor roof addition of siding and sliding windows. There is a wooded fire escape. A porch as been removed from the north elevation.

This large Italiante house is the most elaborate high-style building on the island. Although doubtless built as a riverfront residence, the house served for a time as offices of the Witherow Steel Corp. and is now apartments.

The Witherow Steel Corp. merged with Donner Steel in 1929. This was acquired by Republic Steel in 1930. Witherow Steel specialized in bars for re-enforced concrete.

Photos

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ADDRESS: First Street – Neville Island Presbyterian Church
LOT & BLOCK 211-B-76
Period: 1900-1919
Romanesque Revival, Brick, Slate roof

Sited in the residential section of Neville Township in close proximity to Dravo Corporation, this building is set back off the street on a grassy lawn on a corner lot. The façade (e) is dominated by a crenelated bell tower – with semi-circular louvered windows and a flat arched leaded glass window with stone sills and lintels. The portals are double wooden doors with leaded glass lunette set in a semicircular arch with heavy keystone. Steps with an awning cover lead up from the walkway. The roof is gable and constructed of slate. The façade gable end has a large semi-circular arched stained glass window with heavy keystone, stone sill and corner piers. Flanking are smaller similar windows. The rear (w) gable and echoes this fenestration. The north elevation is a deckship roof with a central gable projection. A semi-circular arch lunette has paired leaded glass windows, single sash with transoms. All other fenestration echos this, with stone lintels and stills. The south elevation has a projecting bay with 3 basement level windows; flanking the projection are d/s leaded glass windows. A single wooded door with a hood supported by consoles, is the entrance to the pastor’s office on the SE corner.

This is the only church in the Township. The congregation was organized in 1842 and the first building constructed in 1848, at the site of the present Long Island Presbyterian Cemetery. Plaque on façade. History researched by Mrs. Janice Shuty.

ADDRESS: Grand Avenue at South Cottage Avenue (Old Firestone Home)
LOT & BLOCK: 159-J-375
Period: 1940-1959 (Built 1948)
Lustron Homes, metal prefabricated construction.

Small one story house is constructed entirely of metal. A small entry porch undercuts the roof at the NW corner. Walls are square metal panels. Windows are tri-partite; one is set in a projecting rectangular bay on the west side. The roof is metal single-like plates. Door and windows are replacement.

This house was recorded as an oddity. It was constructed for James Firestone, by the Ohio-based firm of Lustron Homes that specialized in houses in the 1940s that were steel throughout. All exposed metal surfaces were covered with baked on enamel to make the rust resistant. The house still has its original colors of soft gray inside and pale peach outside. This type of home is maintenance free as far as painting. The panels are washed annually.

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ADDRESS: North Second, North Third & River Road
LOT & BLOCK: 274-P-135
Period : 1900-1919
Neo Classical/ Tudor, Brick

This building faces the Ohio River on the north elevation and is one story with a projecting entrance bay with double glass doors in a Tudor arch above which as a signature stone reading NEVILLE SCHOOL. Flanking are single mesh windows. The wings have 1 bay of 5 d/s windows framed in stone.

The west elevation is 2-story with a flat roof and a projecting entrance bay. There is a cartouche in the parapet above triad Tudor arches frames in stone. Below, in the pediment above the entranceway, is a relief of a torch and open book. Double plate glass doors are in the recessed entranceway. Flanking are 1 bay of 5 hopperstyle windows on each story with similar windows at the corners. The north elevation of this section has 3 bays of similar windows and rosette ornamentations on the façade.

This is a post 1930s addition of 3 stories. Fenestration is glass block with hopperstyle windows.

The Neville and Coraopolis School Districts merged in 1972 to form the Cornell District. Prior to the merger, all Neville Island students attended the same school from kindergarten through 12th grade.

Building was sold to the Carpenters Apprenticeship and currently houses offices and classrooms.

ADDRESS: 5500 Ohio Street **Shuty Home**
LOT & BLOCK: 274-N-150
Period: 1861-1880
Vernacular, frame

Frame farmhouse is sited directly facing the north channel of the Ohio River. It was probably built in three sections. Section 1 is 2 stories with 3 bay façade and off-center doorway with sidelights, transom and peaked lintel surround. Small porch has beveled edge square posts, jigsaw scroll braces and a dentil row. Section 2 is a considerably taller 2 stories with 2 bays on façade. Section 1 has small d/s windows; section2 has tall d/s windows. All windows have wood cornice moldings. Both sections are covered with weatherboards, but a frieze at cornice level is flush boards with paired brackets, and broken by the top portion of second story windows. Section 3 at the rear is 2 story, cove lapsided with turned column frame porches and concrete block foundation.

There are a number of small early 20th century cottages at the rear (south) now used as

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private homes, as well as a board and batten barn, apparently the only surviving barn on the island.

This is the oldest house now on the island and is a remnant of an 846 acre tract that belonged to General William Irving in 1787. The land then passed to Oldham Crain as a bequest from his mother Amelia Craig, the daughter of General John Neville. In 1917, 7 acres were purchased by Dr. Adam Wolcyz as a farm. In 1922, the Graham Bolt & Nut Company and the land office of Dravo Light Metals Plant purchased further acreage. The land was then laid out in lots and sold. Helen Glinka bought 1 acre that included the farmhouse and barn, the barn being the only one extant on the island.

Current owner, Robert Shuty is the grandson of Helen Glinka.

LOCATION: Front River Road at Cottage Avenue
LOT & BLOCK: 273-F-120
Period: 1898-1906 built
Eclectic, Brick Original use : Dam repair facility

This building is sited on a bluff overlooking the Ohio River. It is 3 ½ stories with a hip roof with corbel capped chimneys and dormers with triad windows on the E & W elevations. There are heavy dentils under the cornice and a continuous band of stone below. The north elevation has a rectangular oriel window on the third story flanked by triad semicircular arched windows with stone hood-molding and stone sills. Below are triad fla-arched windows with stone lintels and sills. Three semi-circular arched doorways are on the first story with a continuous stone band springing from the arches. Fenestration is echoed on the south elevation except for the center bay which has 3rd story d/s windows with transoms and a 1 bay of fenestration similar to the other elevations.

7030 River Road is a Colonial Revival house of brick. It has a slate hip roof with dormers and is 2 ½ stories, with 4 bays by 2 of d/s replacement windows. There is a stone water table. The north elevation has an enclosed porch (facing the river). This was formerly the lockmaster's house. Adjacent are remnants of lock #2.

Lock #2 was located at Glenfield, PA and was constructed between 1898 - 1906 at a cost of \$97,000.00 It was opened in October 1906. It was a navigable passage single lock and was closed in August 1922 when the Emsworth Lock & Dam was built. The stones were removed to the downstream side of the Emsworth Dam to re-enforce the banks from erosion. The repair facility and lockmaster's house were built during the same period as the lock. The Repair Facility appears to be structurally sound and is one of the more outstanding buildings on the Island. Unfortunately, it is in damage of demolition by

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the owner as a “white elephant”. It might be considered for adaptive reuse and continue as a monument to the Ohio River.

During the 1990s the property was sold several times and has been converted into offices.

LOCATION: approximately 3000 block of Grand Avenue
LOT & BLOCK 212-M-3
PERIOD: 1841-1860

Neville Island Presbyterian Cemetery

Early cemetery, the only one on Neville Island, is reached by a lane in the midst of industrial development along Grand Avenue. The cemetery is on a bluff overlooking the river, and is very well maintained, but the quality of the site is heavily compromised by nearby heavy industry. 50-60 stones are arranged in a C-shaped formation around a slight open space depression, the former site of the Presbyterian Church. Stones are modest slabs, many of the type with both heads and foot markers; there are two strongly Victorian obelisk-type stones. The earliest marker appears to date from 1854, with no burials after 1900.

This cemetery was founded in the early 1800s and contains about 100 graves of settlers who predated Neville Islands Industrial Revolution. Interred here also are members of the family of Mrs. David Hamilton who established the islands first religious congregation. In 1848, a small red brick church was erected, its site still clearly visible. In 1887, the property was deeded to the Long Island Presbyterian Church for \$16.00. Less then 40 years later, the building was razed and a new church built on First Street, called the Neville Island Presbyterian Church, whose members maintain this cemetery today.

LOCATION: Back Channel Ohio River
LOT & BLOCK 158 - S
PERIOD: 1900-1919
BUILT: 1900 Metal truss
ORIGINAL USE: Railroad bridge

This is a single track bridge, spanning the back channel of the Ohio River from the south bank to Neville Island.

This bridge was originally constructed in 1900 with span changes in 1918. Partially destroyed by fire, the bridge was reconstructed April 16, 2901. The first train of the P & L E Railroad crossed the bridge on July 30, 1900.