

Brigadier General John Neville

John Neville was born in Prince William (now Fauquier) County, Virginia, on July 26, 1731. His father was Joseph Neville, Sr., and his mother was Elizabeth Bohannan.

In 1754 he married Winifred Oldham (1736-1797), and that same year, he served with George Washington in the ill-fated campaign against the French at Jumonville. This defeat at Ft. Necessity marked the beginning of the French and Indian War, and later, in Europe.

In 1755 he served under General Edward Braddock in the unsuccessful attack on Fort Duquesne (Pittsburgh). Presley Neville was born in 1755 at the family home in Winchester, Virginia. There John became a landowner, a Justice of the peace and sheriff of Frederick County, and Vestryman of the Episcopal Church. Amelia was also born in Winchester, in 1763. Three daughters did not survive. Presley graduated in 1775 from the University of Pennsylvania with high honors in French classics.

The Virginia Provincial Council set John to command Ft. Dunmore (Pitt) in 1775. The dispute between Virginia and Pennsylvania over boundary lines was settled in 1777. He remained there until 1777, when, as a colonel of the Fourth Virginia Regiment, he served at the battles of Trenton, Princeton, Germantown and Monmouth (and Valley Forge?). Presley served as Marquis Lafayette's aide-de-camp for two years. Both John and Presley were captured in the Battle of Charleston in 1780. Following his release in 1782, Presley married Nancy Morgan, daughter of General Daniel Morgan.

In 1783 John was brevetted a Brigadier General by the Continental Congress, and he was elected to the Superior Executive Council of Pennsylvania.

Since there was no church structure for the Episcopal congregation, a frame church was erected in 1790 on William Lea's Kings-grant land, supported by the Neville family and other neighbors. Neville also sponsored the seminary education of Francis Reno in nearby Canonsburg, which led to Reno's ordination in 1791, and his call to be the first resident Episcopal priest at St. Luke's Church.

John Neville was called by President George Washington to be Inspector of Revenue for this district, to demonstrate that the excise tax on distilled spirits initiated in 1791 by Alexander Hamilton could be collected somewhere west of the Allegheny Mountains. Because frontier churches were also community meeting places, perhaps St. Luke's Church was a meeting place for Federalist supporters, "The Friends of Order." The anti-Federalists, "The Friends of Liberty," largely Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, did utilize Mingo Creek Presbyterian Church for their meetings.

In 1794, Neville was rebuffed by irate farmers on Tuesday, July 15 when he and Marshal David Lenox tried to arrest William Miller. Angry farmers on July 16 challenged Neville to resign his commission and destroy all tax records. Young Oliver Miller was killed. On Thursday, July 17, 500 Anti-Federalist farmers attack Neville's mansion, named Bower Hill, and after their leader, Major James McFarlane was killed, the mansion was burned down. This insurrection is called the Whiskey Rebellion. Neville and other plantation owners in the Chartiers Valley moved away. Neville went to Pittsburgh and to Montour's Island in the Ohio River, which he renamed Neville's Island

John Neville died July 29, 1803. He and Winifred (1797) were buried in the burial ground at Trinity Episcopal Church, Pittsburgh. In 1900, their graves were moved to Allegheny Cemetery in Pittsburgh, due to commercial development in the city.

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