

A History of the Juniata Valley and its People under the Editorial Supervision of John W. Jordan, M.D. Librarian of Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa., Volume II, Illustrated, New York, Lewis Historical- Publishing Company, 1913

## The Neely Family

The **Neelys** are first mentioned in Juniata Valley records in 1773, in Lack Township, Juniata County, tax lists. They are of the Scotch-Irish stock so potent and so prominent among the "makers" of Pennsylvania and, as one writer states, "the race that never bred a Tory." The emigrant came from county Londonderry, Ireland, prior to the year 1750.

(I) The first record obtainable is of **William Neely**, whose boyhood was spent near the present town of Roxbury, Franklin County, Pennsylvania. He had a brother, **Robert Neely**, two years younger, who was stolen by the Indians about 1750, being then five years of age. He was reared by the tribe which captured him, taught their ways, adopted and given an Indian maid for his wife. The following letter written by Colonel James Perry, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a cousin of **William Neely** and of the captured boy (the original of which is now in the possession of **Margaret J. Neely**, of Galveston, Indiana), furnished the information which led to the identification of **Robert Neely** as the captive:

"Pittsburgh, Oct. 22, 1805.

*"Dear Cousin:*

*"Tho' you and I are so nearly related. I do not know that ever a line passed from you to me or from me to you. I have often Tho't that it could not be for want of friendship or natural affection, as I conceive we are both possessed of it. I would rather impute it to thoughtless negligence. I came to live in this place last spring, to keep store. I, perhaps, may continue some time. My family, a number of girls, are grown up, three of them married. My two sons are now beginning to be able to do business for me. This day **William Cinney** called on me, on his return home. He told me you were anxious to hear from your brother, **Robert**, which I do not in the least doubt. I have, a few weeks since, received information of him. I had often heard of such a person, somewhere near the lakes. After I came to this place last spring, I heard of him on Buffalo Creek, about five miles from the Lake and eighteen above Niagara. I wrote a few lines to him, to know whether he was the same **Robert Neely**, which I suspected he was, and received an answer from **Mr. Granger**, Indian Agent, informing me he was the same. I had not given him any account of his friends until I was certain he was the person. A copy of **Mr. Granger's** letter you have, as follows:*

"Buffalo Creek, Aug. 13, 1805."

*'Sir: Your letter to **Robert Neely**, dated April 21, was lately put into my hands. There is no doubt but the person, by the name of **Robert Neely**, living with the*

*Seneca Indians, about five miles from this place, is the person whom you inquire for. He has often mentioned to me the place where he was taken and some circumstances respecting his family, which correspond with your description. Previous to reading your letter to him, he was questioned on the subject. He said he lived near Connocogeague Creek, that he went with his uncle, **Perry**, to feed cattle, that his uncle was killed by the Indians and he was taken; that his father and mother were dead, that he had a sister and he thinks he had a brother. **Robert** does not appear to have a perfect recollection of his family relations, but says he believes you are his cousin. He has mentioned to a person here that his father used to make whiskey. He is a man of about sixty years and his looks indicate living a long time with the Indians. He has imbibed their habits. He is very honest and industrious and gets a good living in their way. He still retains his native language, but speaks the Indian tongue better. He was very glad to hear from you, and requests me to write to you for a more particular account of his family; says he thought his relations were all dead. He does not recollect anything about Braddock's defeat."*

*'I am Sir, your obedient humble serv't,*

*'Erastus Granger, Agent of Indian Affairs.'*"

*"Col. James Perry.*

*"I have written to him as particular account of his friends as I could collect. I have never heard anything of your sister, Mary, since she went to Virginia, so that I could give very little account of her. I wrote to him that I thought you or some of your sons would go and see him as soon as you heard where he was.*

*"I am, dear cousin, with respect.*

*"Your humble serv't,*

*"Mr. William Neely. James Perry."*

**James Neely**, son of **William Neely**, upon the knowledge contained in this letter, visited his uncle and tried by every inducement to bring him back to his family, but in vain. Devoted to his squaw, and inured to the life of the red men, neither the ties of blood nor the attractions of civilized life had any power over him. Early in life **William Neely** settled in Lack Township, Juniata County, purchasing a tract of land from the Indians, which he cleared and improved, there residing until his death. The farm was held in the **Neely** name one hundred years until 1873; later it became the property of **Robert Robinson**. **Mr. Neely** was a Presbyterian, a prominent member of the church of that faith at Waterloo, Juniata County. He married **Sarah Harvey**, of Path Valley, Franklin County, and had issue: 1. **John**, of whom further. 2. **William**, married, in 1802, on the same day as his brother **John**, a sister of his brother's bride, **Miss McFeaters**, and died two weeks after his marriage. 3. **James**, married **Martha McConnell** and had two daughters: **Mary**, died in July, 1866, and **Eliza**, married **Robert Alexander**, moved to Wooster, Ohio, where she died. 4. **Nancy**, died in infancy.

(II) **John**, eldest son of **William Neely**, was born in Lack Township, Juniata County, Pennsylvania, June 20, 1774, died August 5, 1846. He also became a farmer, purchasing a tract of land in Tuscarora Township, same county, on which he resided until his death. He married **Margaret McFeaters**, in 1802, and reared a large family. She died July 24, 1845. Children: 1. **William** (2), died in Juniata County, November 10, 1872; married **Mary McConnell**, January 30, 1834; she died July 14, 1864; children: **Margaret Jane**, of Galveston, Indiana; **Thomas McConnell**, of Greenfield, Adair County, Indiana; **John Harvey**, of Norwich, Page County, Iowa; **Mary Adelene**, married **Joseph Gray**, of Galveston, Indiana; **Rachel Lucinda**, married **Peter Sassaman** of Kokomo, Indiana; **Nancy Anna**, married **Samuel McCulloch**, of Shenandoah, Iowa. 2. **James**, married **Margaret Alexander** and moved to Ohio, where he died without issue. 3. **Mary**, died January 5, 1881; married **William I. Patterson**, died August 24, 1846; children: **Robert H.**, deceased, a farmer of Tuscarora Township, Juniata County; **Oliver J.**, moved to Shenandoah, Iowa; **Nancy**, married **William I. McCulloch** and moved to Shenandoah. 4. **John** (2), of whom further. 5. **Robert Harvey**, died March 30, 1887; married **Rachel Beale**; children: **James H.**, **Charles**, **Ella F.**, and **Mary P.**, died August 29, 1889. 6. **Sarah**, died November 7, 1883; married **John McCoy** and left three sons and three daughters, residing in Ohio; children: **Margaret Ann**, **John Neely**, **William Kennedy**, **David**, **Mary**, **Ellen**.

(III) **John** (2), fourth child of **John** (1) and **Margaret (McFeaters) Neely**, was born in Tuscarora Township, Juniata County, Pennsylvania, June 6, 1814. From the age of three until his death at nearly four score years, he lived on the old homestead, one of the most productive and beautiful farms in the township. He attended the subscription schools, where his thirst for knowledge and studious habits enabled him to acquire a good education in spite of their limited advantages. He became a prosperous farmer, his energy, industry and diligent business methods enabling him to acquire a competence. He was liberal in the education of his children, and his every thought was to equip them for lives of usefulness. His devotion to his family and to his church were ruling characteristics, and to further their interests he spared not himself. As the **Neelys** had been for generations, he was a Presbyterian, belonging to the Middle Tuscarora Church. He died at his farm in Tuscarora Township, May 30, 1892, aged seventy-seven years, eleven months and twenty-five days.

He married, January 13, 1853, **Margaret Jane Ewing**, born in Perry County, Pennsylvania, November 20, 1831, who survives him (1913), their married life extending over a period of nearly forty years. Children: 1. **William A. K.**, married **Azile M. Burchfield**, of Mifflintown, and moved to Wayne, Nebraska. 2. **Virginia M.**, died November, 1910. 3. **James M.**, died September 6, 1862. 4. **J. Howard** (twin of **James M.**), of whom further. 3. **Anson Gilroy**, died August 15, 1862. 6. **S. Arminia**, married **L. A. Bower** and resides in Denver, Colorado. 7. **Peorus A.**, now a farmer on the old homestead; married (first) **Annie Robinson**, (second) **Mrs. Margaret (Speer) McCulloch**, widow of **George McCulloch**. 8. **Rev. David T.**, a minister of the Presbyterian Church, now of Baltimore, Maryland ; married **Sarah Shelley**. 9. **Dr. Edgar C.**, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, now a practicing physician of Newville, Pennsylvania; married **Mary Dougherty**.

(IV) **J. Howard**, fourth child and third son of **John** (1) and **Margaret J. (Ewing) Neely**, was born at the old homestead, Tuscarora Township, Juniata County, Pennsylvania, September 7, 1858, after a course in the public school, he entered Millersville State Normal School, in Lancaster County, whence he was graduated, class of 1879. He then took a preparatory course at Airy View and Tuscarora academies, entered Princeton University, whence he was graduated with degree of Bachelor of Arts, class of 1884, and three years later the degree of Master of Arts was conferred upon him. This study was not continuous, as an interval of some years occurred between his normal and academic course, during which he was engaged in teaching, and in 1879 and 1880 he was principal of the Hummelstown, Dauphin County, schools. After graduation from Princeton he resumed teaching, holding positions in Airy View and Mifflintown academies. During that period he began the study of law under the instruction of **Alfred J. Patterson**, of Mifflintown. He continued legal study under **Mr. Patterson** until his admission to the Juniata County bar, August 26, 1886, then became his partner, practicing as **Patterson & Neely** until 1892. In 1890 **Mr. Neely** was elected district attorney for Juniata County, serving three years. In 1892 the partnership existing as **Patterson & Neely** was dissolved and since the dissolution **Mr. Neely** has practiced alone in Mifflintown. He is devoted to his profession and gives to the business entrusted in his entire time and energy. He is a Democrat in politics, as was his father, and has always taken an active interest in public affairs. He is a member of Union Lodge, No. 324, Free and Accepted Masons; Newport Chapter, No. 238, Royal Arch Masons; Lewistown Commandery, No. 26, Knights Templar, and in Scottish Rite Masonry, thirty-second degree, belongs to Harrisburg Consistory. In religious faith he is a Presbyterian, both he and his wife belonging to the Mifflintown Presbyterian Church.

**Mr. Neely** married, December 31, 1891. **Ella K.** daughter of **William** and **Jennie E. (Hamlin) Banks**, of Mifflintown. Children: **Lucien Banks**, born March 3, 1893, died November 29, 1893; **J. Howard** (2), born November 22, 1894, now a student at Princeton University, class of 1916; **William Hamlin**, born February 2, 1896, a graduate at Harrisburg Academy, class of 1913; **Helen**, born December 27, 1899; **Margaret Banks** and **Elizabeth Banks**, twins, born September 21, 1902.

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