

Window on Woodville



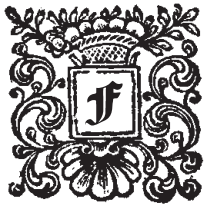
The Newsletter of the

Neville House Associates

Volume VIII, Number III

November 2008

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



From the earliest days of my youth, autumn has always been my favorite time of year. The crispness of the air, the vibrancy of color in the surrounding woodlands and the necessity of preparations for the onset of winter, all contribute to a paradoxical feeling of both exhilaration and solace. Having been involved with re-enacting history since I was ten, I have come to realize that autumn is also the foremost time for recreating history.

Leaving behind the “dog days” of summer allows historical sites and re-enactors alike to “enjoy” their historical interpretations; complete with woolen clothing, blazing fires and candles to light the early autumn nightfall. These are all things, in the sweltering summer months, that can be less than appealing to even the hardcore students of history.

In 1976, I had embarked on my initial journey into the exhilarating world of living history, having “stretched the truth” regarding my age to meet the

minimum age requirements of a local French and Indian War military unit. (I told them I was going to be twelve, neglecting to mention that it would not be for another two years. Fortunately, having always been “large” for my age, I was able to pull off this ruse.) For the next eight years, my summers were filled with parades, battle re-enactments, 18th century military encampments and campfires. It was truly heaven to a young boy.



The table at Woodville Plantation set for a fall feast.

Looking back, I remember that in spite of the how exciting these summers were, I still looked forward to autumn. Most major historical venues, both back then and today, hold their major festivals and encampments at this time.

Spending my weekends traveling to locales such as Fort Ligonier, Meadowcroft Village and Fort Necessity made the

impending winter “off season” seem that much bleaker. While these weekends seemed both hectic and much too short to an adolescent boy, there was a certain amount of tranquility that corresponded with these fall events.






(Continued on page 2)

Table of Contents

Letter From the President.....page 1	From the Garden to the Table.....page 8
2008 Programs at Woodville.....page 3	Comb Back Windsor Chairs.....page 9
Did You Know?.....page 3	George Washington Slept Here... Almost.....page 10
Dominique Chickens at Woodville.....page 4	New NHA Members.....page 10
The Word From Woodville.....page 6	NHA Membership.....page 11
The Word From the Whiskey Rebellion Trail.....page 7	Upcoming Events.....page 12

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

It is both comforting and intriguing to me, thirty-two years later, to recall those days and to still have a similar fervor stir within me. As the volunteers at Woodville move through the last quarter of our inaugural season as owners of the site, activity at the house has “ramped up” in anticipation of receiving fully one-third of our annual visitors in the final three months. If our estimates and projections are correct, we should pass our goal of reaching 2,000 visitors in 2008. This would enable us to shatter the previous attendance record of 1,600. The Neville House Associates are not simply sitting idle, merely hoping this will happen. Rather, our volunteers have been actively improving the site through classes, demonstrations and even improvements to the house and outbuildings. Activities happening from now through the year-end include:

-  Woodville’s third (and arguably most successful) cooking class, “Sweetmeats - Desserts of 1794,” was held in October. It was thoroughly enjoyed by all in attendance. The unique delicacies prepared included Spanish loaf with chocolate, raspberry fool and apple tansy. If you are curious, please try to attend a future class.
-  The site welcomed almost 300 ninth-graders from Chartiers Valley High School, for our sixteenth consecutive year of participating in the Apex Program. For four days during the week of October 20th, interpreters at Woodville demonstrated dancing, cooking, music and Native American history.
-  The NHA Decorative Arts Committee has been working feverishly during October and November to complete the first restoration of a room within the main house in twenty-five years, the Cowan Bedroom. This remarkably accurate recreation will be almost completed by the “Holidays at the House” event on November 23rd. Visitors to “Holidays at the House” will receive a sneak preview of the restored bedroom. Official introduction of the restoration is scheduled for January 2009.
-  Continued historical demonstrations throughout the fall include cooking demos, encampments featuring Wayne’s Fourth Sub-Legion (the soldiers that defended Bower Hill during the Whiskey Rebellion) and a spinning and knitting demonstration.
-  Our ever-improving “Holidays at the House” is Woodville’s signature event of the year. Visitors will see expanded demonstrations, musical recitals and the most accurate re-creation of the 18th century holiday season in Western Pennsylvania.

As you can see, there is just reason for my excitement about Woodville as we move toward the year’s end. It is invigorating for me to rekindle the passions of my youth, as we work progressively at improving the historic interpretations at Woodville - not only for selfish reasons, but for our visitors, members and friends.

As a member, if you haven’t been to the site this year, please stop by during the upcoming holiday season. If you simply visit on a Sunday to see a demo or if you attend our “Holidays” event, I am assured that you will be enchanted by the transforming effect that increased historical accuracy has had on the site. Who knows - it may even rekindle that historical nostalgia that first beckoned you to Woodville Plantation.

Happy Holidays,

Rob Windhorst

Rob Windhorst
President, Neville House Associates



2008 PROGRAMS at WOODVILLE

Step back in time at Woodville Plantation, the home of John and Presley Neville. See how Pittsburgh's wealthiest citizens lived during the period of 1780-1820, the Era of the New Republic. Grounds are open for free self-guided tours year round, Wednesday - Saturday, from 10 am until 6 pm. Guided tours of the house are available every Sunday, from 1 to 4pm. Admission to the house is \$5 for adults and \$10 for families. Children under 12 are admitted free. Please visit our website at www.woodvilleplantation.org or telephone us at (412)221-0348 for more information. We look forward to your visit.



SCHEDULE of EVENTS:

November 2 - People of the Plantation: Meet the Soldier

Join a soldier from Anthony Wayne's Fourth Sub-Legion, one of the soldiers stationed at Fort Fayette in Pittsburgh in 1794. These were the troops sent to defend Bower Hill during the Whiskey Rebellion. Learn about a soldier's life in camp and experience drilling and marching first-hand.

November 23 - Holidays at the House

Come celebrate the holidays in a "different light" with candlelit tours of Woodville Plantation. Learn about holiday customs that differ from today's celebrations such as Twelfth Night, Boxing Day and the firing of Christmas guns. Admission is \$5 per adult and \$10 per family. The site will be open from noon until 8 pm.

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Meet the wool spinstress. Learn how wool was spun and woven into items for use by workers on the plantation.

December 14 - Above Stairs: A Behind the Scenes Look at Woodville

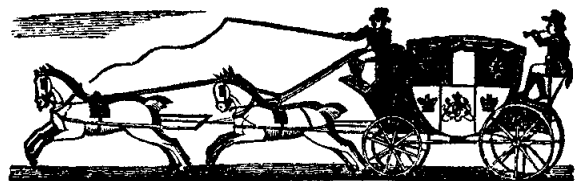
Visitors will be treated to a special tour of a rarely seen area of Woodville Plantation - above stairs in the main house. Visit the private rooms of the Neville and Cowan families and see the distinctive original painted checkerboard floor in A. Cowan's bedroom. Don't miss this rare look into the private lives of the residents of Woodville.

*Woodville Plantation will be closed from December 21, 2008, through January 3, 2009.
Woodville will re-open for tours on January 4, 2009.*

DID YOU KNOW?

The Pennsylvania State Historical marker located near the driveway entrance to Woodville was placed there in August of 1947. It was the eleventh such marker located in Allegheny County, with the original markers being placed throughout the county in the last months of 1946.

Today, there are over 130 such markers throughout Allegheny County. The first marker in the state was placed in September of 1946, on Route 22, just outside of Harrisburg. Prior to 1945, the State of Pennsylvania awarded historically significant sites a small bronze marker describing the site's history. But with the expansion of the use of automobiles, the state recognized the need for larger, more readable signs that could be quickly read by passing motorists.



DOMINIQUE CHICKENS at WOODVILLE

In early August, the demonstration kitchen garden at Woodville welcomed the newest residents of the plantation - rare breed Dominique chickens. With their arrival, Woodville has joined a group of select historical sites that are preserving an endangered breed and historic species. We are also recreating one of the most ubiquitous members of the historic farm environment, the chicken. so who are the newest "interpreters" at the plantation and what makes them more unique and interesting than modern chickens?



Woodville's newest interpreters - the Dominique chickens.

As early as the beginning of the 17th century, anecdotal history places the introduction of the Dominiques (pronounced Dominicks) in America with the landing of the Mayflower at Plymouth, Massachusetts. By the end of the 18th century, the Dominique accounted for approximately eighty to ninety percent of all chickens in the United States.

Dominiques were prized for their exceptional versatility. The chickens are good egg producers, relatively meaty birds, self-reliant foragers, and most importantly, able to survive the cold climates of the Northern United States.

The breed is even mentioned by name during the Lewis and Clark expedition when Meriwether Lewis' journal entry for March 3, 1806, describes a black and white "spruce grouse" as "irregularly intermixed with those of black and dark brown this mixture makes this bird resemble much that kind of dunghill fowl which the housewives of our country call Dominicker."

Unfortunately, by the mid-19th century, specialization in breeding began to take its toll on this universal breed. By the end of the 19th century, the Dominique chicken accounted for less than one-third of all chickens within the U.S. This number would continue to decline until 1970, when fewer than 300 of these birds

existed in the U.S. Through the diligence of the Dominique Club of America and through rare breed programs at historical sites throughout the country, the Dominique is no longer endangered. But rather, it listed as a breed to be "watched." Woodville is proud and honored to be a site that is helping to promote and restore this historic breed.

The etymology of the Dominique name is as interesting as the history of the breed itself. Numerous theories abound regarding the origin of the Dominique name. One less popular theory states that the chicken was brought to Europe by explorers of the Caribbean or Dominican Islands in the 15th century. This is one of the least likely theories, since the breed (or at least a similar looking one) has been described as far back as ancient Rome.

Another theory states that the name was derived from the idea that the black and white coloration of the animals looked similar to garb worn by the Dominican order of brethren in the Catholic Church during the middle ages. This hypothesis is entirely plausible since there are black and white colored breeds in many species other than chickens, including Dominiker ducks and Dominiker mules. In fact, by the 18th century, the terminology of Dominick or Dominicker was used to describe anything of black and white color, including families of mixed race or parentage.

While chickens were almost indispensable to the 18th century housewife - providing meat, eggs, stuffing for bedding and fertilizer for the kitchen garden, these animals were held in very low regard almost universally throughout society. Inventories of the period provide little (if any) information regarding chickens, generally listing almost every animal except them. Even one of the earliest inventories of John Neville's Woodville property in 1782 included "9 horses, 10 cattle, 26 sheep, and 11 slaves," yet conspicuously disregards the chickens.



A peek into the chicken coop.

DOMINIQUE CHICKENS at WOODVILLE (cont.)

This sort of oversight was common in the 18th and 19th century. Thomas Jefferson, an avid record keeper, routinely referred to “Bantams,” “East Indians” and “Algerine fowls” (all early 19th century breeds of poultry) in his letters, yet failed to include any chickens in his annual inventories of Monticello.



A close-up view of one of the hens.

In Williamsburg during the mid 18th century, the inventory of Royal Governor Botetourt (which was taken following his death) lists only “20 turkeys, 18 geese, 9 ducks,” in spite of records from his butler showing references to receiving chickens through purchase or as gifts.

One possible explanation for these missing birds may be the fact that the inventory takers of the period were primarily men. Generally, the care of poultry was a job that was relegated to women.

At Woodville, slaves would have most likely cared for the chickens. The earlier quote from Meriwether Lewis specifically states the Dominiques were raised by “the housewives of our country.”

Although care of chickens was a job given to women, there was very little involved in the care of poultry other than feeding them in the winter and gathering their eggs. Generally the chickens were left to fend for themselves, in a manner that we call “free range” today. Chickens were content to roam the gardens and edges of the woods, foraging for insects and seeds. In the evening hours, these birds would take refuge in the low-hanging branches on the outskirts of the farm, safely away from nocturnal predators.

In most cases, both urban and rural, chickens did not have enclosures or houses. Frequently, the only human involvement in raising poultry would be a collection of nesting boxes filled with straw. These boxes would be

located near the house, in order to facilitate egg gathering. Only on larger plantations and farms would a special “yard” be set up. This area, called a “fattening pen,” would be designed to house up to a dozen chickens that had been selected for upcoming meals. In the pen, these “lucky” fowl lived out their final days eating kitchen scraps and garden refuse, fattening up to become a future dinner. This area would also double as a brooding area for hens that were laying eggs, as well as a makeshift nursery for young chicks. The area where the chickens are



Woodville's recreation of an 18th century fattening pen.

housed at Woodville recreates this sort of facility. Ultimately, the Dominiques will add life to the living history programming at Woodville. By showing visitors this historic breed in a recreated environment (including all of their sights, sounds and smells), visitors to Woodville will have a more accurate representation of life in the late 18th century.

Not only will it increase the authenticity of Woodville's historic interpretation, but it has also helped to

increased attendance. Almost forty people attended the young chick's debut at the beginning of August. Since then, they have become a focal point for visitors to our gardens. Come and see them, if you haven't already.



The resident rooster.

THE WORD from WOODVILLE



Woodville Goes National...

...with an 18-page spread in *Early American Life Magazine*. The holiday story features the interior of Woodville Plantation and discusses holiday traditions of the 18th and 19th centuries, as celebrated at the site. Woodville was also used as the “backdrop” for *Early American Life’s* Traditional American Crafts Directory, which was featured in the same issue. *Early American Life*, a nationally distributed magazine, is available at Barnes & Noble and Borders bookstores. Members can pick up a free copy of the issue, while they last, by visiting Woodville.



Early American Life



Jane Austen

Woodville Welcomes...

...the Jane Austen society of North America (JASNA) to the site. JASNA visited Woodville in August and held a tea in the newly opened still house reception room. The members enjoyed several period flavors of tea, as well as some fresh items from the Woodville gardens, including white cucumbers and Jenny Lind melons. Thanks to NHA board member and JASNA member *Dorothy Plank* for arranging this event.

The 18th Century Meets the 21st Century...

...as Woodville completed the set up of the new office facility in the still house. Thank you to *Marty and Susan O'Toole* for their assistance in setting up the computer and the new Verizon FIOS system. Moving the office files and equipment to the new location officially removes all non-historic operations from the main house, which will permit a greater depth of historic interpretation and accuracy. While more modern in its scope, the office move is one more step towards making Woodville the most authentic period house in Western Pennsylvania. Thanks also to *Doug Haag* for his countless hours of work in sorting and filing thirty years of paperwork.

An Impressive Milestone...

...was reached this year as Chartiers Valley High School's APEX program reached its 16th consecutive year of visiting Woodville. Started in 1992 by the head of Chartier Valley's history department, *Bob Rodriguez*, APEX immerses every ninth grader in a study of the late 18th century by visiting Woodville, Oliver Miller Homestead, Bradford House and Old Saint Luke's Church. Woodville looks forward to many more years of partnership with Chartiers Valley Schools and Mr. Rodriguez. The NHA thanks all of its members who worked to help make this event a success in 2008, reaching over 270 students.

Welcome...

...to the newest NHA Board Member, *Erin Athey*. Erin joins the board as Director of Publicity and Marketing and her job will include advertising, public relations, as well as publishing the Window on Woodville. Erin also works as an interpreter at the site and assists in teaching the cooking classes and demonstrating 18th century spinning. Additionally, she has an extensive background and knowledge of period knitting techniques, which she will showcase in an upcoming, “People of the Plantation” event in December. Her husband *Mike* also works with Woodville as a member of the newly formed Wayne's Fourth Sub-Legion, demonstrating 18th military life at the site.



THE WORD FROM *the* WHISKEY REBELLION TRAIL

One of the 2008 objectives of Woodville Plantation and Neville House Associates is to not only focus attention on Woodville Plantation, but to also bring attention to other Whiskey Rebellion sites and sites relating to the time period of 1792-1795 as well.

Other Whiskey Rebellion sites to visit include:

The Oliver Miller Homestead



On Sunday, November 23, the homestead will be holding an 18th century Thanksgiving. A traditional meal for the Miller family will be prepared in the open hearth bake oven and an 18th century frontier feast will be on display. A Scots Irish Christmas will be celebrated on Sunday, December 7. Celebrate the Scots Irish heritage of the Millers with highland dancing. Participation welcomed! On Sunday, December 14, there will be an 18th century frontier Christmas. Music will fill the homestead as traditional carols will be performed throughout the site. The Miller house will be decorated for Christmas in Western Pennsylvania frontier style. For more information, visit their website at www.olivermiller.org.

The David Bradford House

The David Bradford House is open May through September. They are open on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, from 11-4 pm. Thursdays from 2 - 7 pm. December 5, 6 and 7, the Bradford House will hold its annual Christmas tours. Visit the Bradford House when it is beautifully dressed for the holiday season and enjoy their special holiday exhibit. See how the holiday season was or wasn't celebrated in the 18th century. You may be surprised! For additional information, check out their website at www.bradfordhouse.org.



Friendship Hill



Friendship Hill is the home of anti-federalist and opposition leader to the whiskey excise tax, Albert Gallatin. Gallatin was a U.S. Representative during the rebellion. The home is owned by the National Park Service and is located just south of Uniontown, PA, in Point Merion. The historic Gallatin House, including the Visitor Center, is open Saturday and Sunday only from November 2008, through March of 2009. Visit their website at www.nps.gov/frhi/.

Legion Ville

These men recreate the soldiers of Anthony Wayne's Legion, who in 1794 helped to defend Neville's Bower Hill house against the whiskey rebels. Currently, the Legion Ville Historical Society is working on halting the development of the site where Anthony Wayne's original fortification, Legion Ville, was built in 1793. They are fighting to prevent Wright Pontiac from developing the "Birthplace of the U.S. Army" into a car lot. If you would like more information or if you would like to help, please visit their website at www.legionville.com.



Other related historical sites to visit include:

George Washington Distillery



Opened to the public last year, this site is a recreation of George Washington's 1790s distillery. It is part of the American Whiskey Trail, along with Woodville Plantation and Oliver Miller Homestead, and it recreates the workings of a full-capacity distillery for producing whiskey. See whiskey being made exactly as it would have been at the Bower Hill site. For more information visit the website at www.mtvernon.org, or the American Distillers Whiskey Trail site at www.discus.org/trail.

Mingo Creek Cemetery

Burial site for many of the rebels that attacked Bower Hill in 1794. This site is located approximately one mile south of Finleyville on Rt. 88.

FROM the GARDEN...

"The best fertilizer is a gardener's shadow" - Author Unknown



The garden at Woodville.

A successful gardening season at Woodville drew to a close with the Harvest Day event on September 21st. Antique heirlooms including potatoes (Rose Finn) and savoy cabbage (Drumhead) were among the crops gathered and prepared during the cooking demonstration. An abundant harvest of beets (Lutz) and runner beans (Scarlet) was also seen this year. Earlier in the season cucumbers (White Wonder) and melons (Noir De Carmes) were picked as they ripened. These two unique and period-appropriate heirlooms were enjoyed by members of the Jane Austen Society when they were served during a tour/tea event held by the organization at Woodville.

The Rose Finn potatoes grown are of the fingerling variety, and fall into a category referred to as "folk" potatoes. Having arrived in

America with European immigrants, fingerlings like all potatoes, can be traced to South American origins dating back 6,000 years.

Cabbage also has a long history, having been grown for thousands of years, known to both the ancient Greeks and Romans. Cabbage arrived in Europe around 600 B.C. Because it grows well in cool temperatures, generally has high yields and stores well over winter, cabbage developed in a key crop. The savoy variety is believed

to have originated in Italy; more accurately the border of Italy, France, and Switzerland. Savoy is more tender than many types of cabbage, lacking the very pungent odor associated with the cooking of foliage from the Brassicas family. Savoys are easily recognized by their very crinkly leaves and less tightly packed heads.

Beets have been cultivated in the Mediterranean region for millennia, but the history can be confusing. The uncertainty comes from the word "beet" having been used in reference to chard grown for its edible leaves as well as beet grown for the edible roots. Some of the first references to beet root appear in the mid 1500s, with their cultivation being noted in Germany. The agriculture of these root crops then spreading throughout Europe. The beet is acknowledged in America in advertisements and diaries in the early 18th century. But again, many of these references are unclear if chard or beet root is being mentioned. One early literary note states, "The garden roots that thrive well in Carolina...beet, both types."

The gardens will now be turned over and lay fallow until spring, waiting to be tilled and planted once again.

...TO the TABLE

Colcannon is a wonderful recipe using cabbage and potatoes:

1 cabbage	1/2 cup of butter
2 pounds of potatoes	salt and pepper to taste
1 cup of milk	

Boil cabbage until tender. Boil potatoes until tender. Chop boiled cabbage and potatoes fine and put them together. Season with butter, pepper and salt. Add a little milk or hot water to moisten without making it wet.

Put it into a stew pan over a slow fire and stir it well that it may be thoroughly heated, but not burn, then take it into a dish and serve with cold boiled salt meat (ham).

ORDER FORM for COMB BACK WINDSOR CHAIRS

Thank you for your contribution to the Windsor Chair Reproduction Program at Woodville Plantation, the home of John and Presley Neville. The Comb Back Windsor Chair, or "stick chair," that will be built for Woodville by local artisan Dave Burke is a style that was commonly found throughout America from 1790 to 1820. Fittingly named because of the resemblance of the back to a rooster's comb, these functional chairs would have been used for both formal occasions inside, as well as for more casual affairs on the verandah and in the garden.

Our reproductions are made using woods, such as oak, maple and pine, that would have been found near the site during the turn of the 19th century. The seats are formed from a single piece of white pine that will be contoured by hand. Spindles, legs and turnings will be created from hand-shaved maple or oak. The finished chair will be painted in an authentic "verdant green" color using a historic paint "receipt." Mixed by hand, the paint looks just as it would have in 1790. Each chair will take an individual craftsman approximately one month to complete. Finally, each hand-assembled chair will be affixed with an engraved brass plate recording an inscription of the donors choice.

The Windsor Chair will be used exclusively at the site for events, general seating and re-enactments. Woodville Plantation and the Neville House Association Board of Directors thank you for your donation and for supporting our living history programs. We look forward to seeing you enjoy a respite on the verandah of the Woodville estate, on an authentic reproduction that you sponsored.



*An example of the finished
Comb Back Windsor Chair.*

COMB BACK WINDSOR CHAIRS

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Amount Enclosed (Chairs are \$450.00 each =): \$ _____

Inscription to Read:

Make checks payable to: Neville House Associates
Woodville Plantation Windsor Chair Program
1375 Washington Pike
Bridgeville, PA 15017

GEORGE WASHINGTON SLEPT HERE... ALMOST



For 18th century historic sites, the most ubiquitous question asked by visitors is "Did George Washington sleep here?" For most honest historical sites, including Woodville, the answer is no. But on further investigation, we could alter the Woodville answer to almost.

George Washington made his final two trips to Western Pennsylvania in 1770 and 1784. During his trip in 1770, Washington, "lodged in what is called the town, distant about 300 yards from the fort, at one Mr. Semple's who keeps a very good house of entertainment."

This house was built four years earlier by George Morgan, an Indian agent, and was rented to Samuel Semple, who kept a tavern there into the mid-1780s. At that time, the location was purchased by John Neville and refurnished as his primary residence in Pittsburgh. Thus, Washington slept in Neville's Pittsburgh townhouse about twelve years before Neville owned it.

Later, in 1784, Washington visited his properties at Miller's Run, about four miles from Woodville. He was accompanied by one of the Nevilles on his trip west, but lodged at the home of John Canon (near present-day Canonsburg), not at Woodville or Bower Hill.

So next time the question is posed about Washington's lodging arrangements, members of the Neville House Associates and Woodville can definitively answer... *"Almost"*.



NEW NHA MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members to the Neville House Associates. Huzzah and thank you for joining!

Please add the following new names to your NHA Membership Directory:

Pat Dorning

Steven McClelland

Jane Austen Society of Pittsburgh
c/o Mellanie Steven Cosnek



NEVILLE HOUSE ASSOCIATES MEMBERSHIP



Please take time to renew your membership! Renewing will help the Neville House Associates staff with programming and activities, as well as newsletter and postage costs. Woodville is one of only 2,500 National Historic Landmarks in the United States. Your gift will help to support the continuing preservation, restoration and interpretation of this historic site.



DONATION LEVELS

Student/Senior.....	\$20.00	Wrenshall.....	\$100.00
Basic.....	\$35.00	Christopher Cowan	\$250.00
Mary Fauset.....	\$75.00	Presley Neville.....	\$500.00
John Neville.....		\$1,000.00 (Lifetime Member)	

All memberships include free family admission to Woodville Plantation for the regular hours of operation, gift shop discounts, invitation to "members only" events and the quarterly newsletter. Your gift is tax deductible.

Many companies also match their employee's donations to organizations such as Woodville Plantation. If your employer provides matching donations, please let them know about your contribution. This is an easy way to double your donation. *Thank you for your support!*



2008 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to: Neville House Associates, Inc.

1375 Washington Pike

Bridgeville, PA 15017

Attn: *Julianna Haag, Membership*



Upcoming Events

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Window on Woodville

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Bridgeville, PA 15017-2821

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED