

Wentz Post

A Publication of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

Volume XXXVI, No. 1

WENTZ POST Spring 2019



Sunrise, sunset,

Swiftly fly the years,

One season

following another...

Sunrise at the Peter Wentz Farmstead

Sunrise, sunset,

Swiftly fly the years,

Seedlings turn overnight to sunflowers,

Blossoming even as we gaze.

Lyrics from FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

Photos courtesy of Jay Ryan



Sunset at the Peter Wentz Farmstead

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society is to preserve and interpret the 18th century Pennsylvania German farmstead established by the Wentz and Schultz families, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places. The Society's goal is to stimulate public interest and support the site's heritage through educational programs and public events focusing on the architecture, crafts, customs, and furnishings of the period.

**Peter Wentz Farmstead Society
Board of Directors****OFFICERS:**

President-Kathrina DeWitt Yost
Vice President-Carol Allen
Treasurer-Lee Kirk
Asst. Treasurer-Jim Hern
Rec. Secretary-Nadine Vigliano
Corr. Secretary-Carol Berardelli

BOARD MEMBERS:

David Carhart
Wayne "Duffy" Grove
Terri Gentile
Patricia McDonnell
Andrew Rothenberger

WENTZ POST

Volume XXXV, No. 1

Spring 2019

Published as a benefit of membership
in the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society.

Editor: Frank Luther

Photography: Jay Ryan, Bea Grove, Sarah Biehl,
Jack Armstrong, Donna Armstrong

Advisors: Kathrina DeWitt Yost
Patricia McDonnell
Margaret Bleecker Blades

All correspondence should be sent to:
Peter Wentz Farmstead Society
P.O. Box 679
Worcester, PA 19490-0679

Phone: 610-584-5104

Fax: 610-584-6860

E-mail: mail@PeterWentzFarmsteadSociety.orgWebsite: www.PeterWentzFarmsteadSociety.org**PWFS COMMITTEES**

By-Laws-Duffy Grove
Development-Carol Allen, Dave Carhart
Finance-Lee Kirk
Garden-Donna Armstrong
IT-Andrew Rothenberger
Membership-Carole Berardelli
Museum Shop-Rick Yost
New Structures-All Members
Nominating-Jim Hern
Scholarships-Terri Gentile
WENTZ POST-Frank Luther

Peter Wentz Farmstead

Hours of Operation
Tuesday-Saturday: 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Sunday: 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM
Last Tour: 3:00 PM

Closed Mondays and Holidays

Reservations required for group tours.



Do you have an IRA? Are you 70 ½ years old and make a required minimum distribution (RMD)? Would you like to make a contribution in the future to support the Farmstead?

If you answered yes to these three questions, the new tax law provides a win-win opportunity for you and the Farmstead. You can make a contribution to the Society directly from your IRA. This contribution counts towards your RMD and is tax free to the contributor and to the Society.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE*by Kathy Yost*

This edition of the WENTZ POST welcomes both Meg, our new Director, and introduces the readers to Virginia Kopecky. Virginia is our Museum Assistant at the Farmstead. Since we have decided that 'all things agricultural' will be the theme for the editions this year, we welcome her article on herbal healing as a starting point for the year. We will be learning about the cycles of our colonial garden, the seasonal changes and challenges and, of course, the ongoing training of Sam and Peg---our new plow team. In this edition, you will see a picture of our new cart which just arrived on the site.

Spring is right around the corner so we would also like to introduce you to Peter Cottontail Wentz—a VERY close friend of the Wentz Weeders! Enjoy the publication and hope to see you at the Farmstead soon.

**WELCOME, MEG!****WELCOME, MEG!***by Kimberly Boice*

Margaret Bleeker Blades, or Meg, grew up on Long Island and got her start in museum work at the *Old Bethpage Village Restoration*, volunteering there on Sunday afternoons during 10th – 12th grades.

Meg's undergraduate degree from *Principia College* is in interdisciplinary studies, a self-designed combination of History, Art History, and Literature coursework as well as internships at *Historic Deerfield* (Deerfield, MA) and the *DAR Museum* in Washington, D.C. She then earned an M. A. in History-Museum Studies from the *Cooperstown Graduate Program*; her thesis topic was 18th Century Dutch Long Island Furniture.

After graduation, Meg worked for the *Connecticut Valley Historical Museum* in Springfield, MA as the Museum Curator for two and a half years, then worked as Curator for the *Chester County Historical Society* in West Chester for twelve years before becoming the Director of *The Highlands Mansion & Gardens* in Ft. Washington for twenty years.

She and her husband live in Wayne, PA.

A CONVERSATION WITH MEG*by Linda Snyder*

Margaret Bleeker Blades, Historic Site Supervisor: An imposing, off-putting title but the lady who holds that position is a delight to engage in conversation. Meg, as you will hear her called, is thankful for the warm welcome she received from staff, volunteers, and frequent visitors.

A Collections Curator early in her career, collections are close to her heart. It is a pleasure to know she is committed to doing the very best for ours at the Farmstead by documenting the items and making sure they are well cared for.

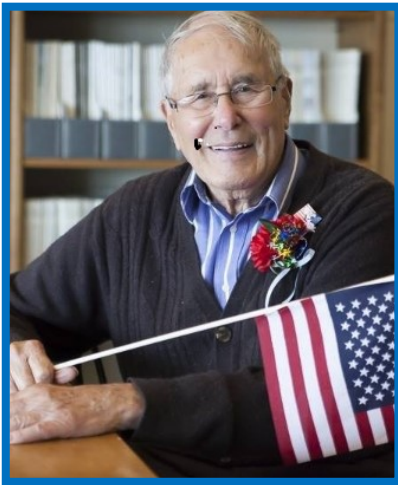
Meg's interests are not one-sided. She mentioned closing her eyes to experience the sounds and smells of sites and get a small sense of what the residents would have heard and smelled every day.

Meg loves gardens and left the Highlands, where she was last employed, with a beginning restoration of their garden. That project having reached a plateau, Meg was looking for a new challenge.

Enter the opening at the Farmstead. Meg expressed how nice it was to find such interesting programs in place like Night Life. We are pleased Meg accepted this position and look forward to seeing how she will expand the Farmstead experience for visitors, staff, and volunteers.



IN MEMORIAM



Harry Snyder
1921-2019

Many of you may recall meeting and/or working with him—Harry—a true gentleman!

Harry Snyder, 97, of Lansdale passed away Friday, January 11, 2019, at his home. He was the beloved husband of Doris (Selke) Snyder, to whom he was married for over seventy-two years.

Born August 27, 1921, in Philadelphia, he was the son of the late Phillip and Reba (Zion) Snyder.

Mr. Snyder served his country in the United States Army, 2nd Armored Division, in WWII. He landed on Omaha Beach in the Normandy Invasion and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. He received five Bronze Stars for his service and was awarded the "Chevalier" of the Legion of Honor from France, as well as the recipient of the W.S. Hancock Award for his service in WWII.

During his retirement, he volunteered for over 25 years for the Lions Club, Meals on Wheels, as President of the local chapter of AARP and as a tour guide at Peter Wentz Farmstead.

Harry was a long-time volunteer and only about five years ago retired from providing tours for us on Fridays, when in his early 90's. He was a product of his time—grew-up in Philly, played in various bands (including a String Band), loved music, coins, Margaritas from Red Lobster, and his family, plus so much more.

It was an honor to know him and he will continue to inspire me to live a true life.

(Courtesy of Kimberly Boice.)



(Photos courtesy of Donna Armstrong)

WENTZ'S HERITAGE GARDEN

by Donna Armstrong

It's almost Spring and nothing delights a gardener more than thoughts of digging in the warm soil. The Wentz Weeders, a small, dedicated group of volunteers, are no exception.

We have a beautiful, unique garden and love to share it. Our association with a group of local heritage garden people resulted in a great source of networking and visiting their gardens. Gardens represented included Bartram's Garden, Pennsbury, Elfreth's Alley, Goshenhoppen Historian's Antes House garden, and The Wyck in Germantown. When they visited us here at Wentz, not only did they tour our property, but enjoyed refreshments all relating to our garden, such as lavender cookies and mint iced tea!

Another avenue of sharing has come through participating in the Wentz Church Garden Tour. Twice in the last seven years we've introduced gardeners to a fenced-in 18th century German kitchen garden with raised beds! Many availed themselves to take a tour of the house, thus making their stop a complete experience.

A few years ago, we were honored to be featured in a book published by Landis Valley. Other heritage gardens included were Colonial Williamsburg and Jefferson's Monticello, to name a few. They even gave us a full-page photo of a bird's eye view of the garden which we've printed for you.

In the upcoming Summer issue, we'll share a listing of some of the plants we'll be growing.



VIRGINIA KOPACKI, MUSEUM ASSISTANT

(Virginia Kopacki is the Museum Assistant at Peter Wentz Farmstead. Before joining the staff last January, she worked at the William Brinton 1704 House as the Site Manager and Volunteer Coordinator. She also worked as Curator for the LGBT Center of Central PA: History Project in the Archives and Special Collections at Dickinson College, where she earned her bachelor's degrees in Anthropology and Women's and Gender Studies. Ginny has also worked for Old Sturbridge Village and Gettysburg National Military Park as a living historian. In addition, she has presented her academic research on women and reenactment before the American Anthropological Association and other conferences. Her article "Kill or Cure" about doctors and childbed fever was recently published in the HOMEFRONT HERALD, a magazine for reenactors. When not at work, Ginny can usually be found in kit at WWII or Civil War living history events or sharing her travel adventures on Instagram as Lady Bluestocking.)

HERBAL HEALING AND THE COLONIAL GARDEN

by Virginia Kopacki

Before the onset of modern medicine, people who lived in the 18th century had to make-do with herbal remedies and medicines. Many of these remedies were written down as receipts (recipes) and used to treat all kinds of ailments and wounds, with differing levels of success. For many, the garden provided remedies for health and healing at home.

Pennsylvania German herbal medicine was influenced by traditional German healing, urban medicine recommended by doctors, British medicine, and even Native American healing (McGraw/Klepp 1994, 88). While the rural medical practices of German women borrowed heavily from these sources, the practices and experimentation of Pennsylvania Germans did little to affect the development of urban medical knowledge (McGraw/Klepp 1994, 89). Both German and English herbal medicine focused heavily upon the "fantastic" and even the supernatural world (Sauer 1762-1778, 4).

German herbal medicine in the late 17th century into the 18th century in Pennsylvania and other colonies often originated from far-flung sources. Sauer's herbal, a remedy book with German medicines, was very popular among the German immigrant populace in Pennsylvania. Its author, Christopher Sauer II, based his herbal book off of several earlier books, especially *Volkommnes Krauter-Buch*, printed in America by German booksellers, and its earlier iteration *Theatricum Bonaticum, ist das, Volkommnes Krauter-Buch*, originally published in Switzerland in 1697 (Sauer 1762-1778, 5). Sauer's intended for his work to serve as a home remedy almanac for Pennsylvania Germans who lived far away from doctors and practitioners. Many of the ingredients in his cures could be sourced quickly from the home gardens of healers.

In the mid-18th century, even rural medicine was taken over by imported cures and ingredients, which steadily began to supplement traditional herbs grown in gardens. By this point, scientific knowledge began to replace mysticism, though supernatural and spiritual causations were still widely believed to cause disease and

illness, especially among the superstitious. Healers at this time were caught in "an abyss between the receding power of the supernatural and the eminence of the new scientism [with] little energy, no tools, and scant permission to climb out of the abyss and build the bridge between the worlds of past and present, nature and science (Achterberg 1991, 116)."

In the 18th century, much of herbal medicine relied heavily on belief in the mystic. Medical professionals and homesteaders alike believed that the "cycles of the moon and the zodiac" impacted both health and wellness and affected the kinds of plants and herbs that could be grown (Dillon 2011, 10-11). As a result, colonial physicians frequently discussed the merits of different herbs in relation to the moon, attributing characteristics of the herbs to the signs of the zodiac. For example, healers believed that the weed plantain was controlled primarily by "Mars, Aries, and Scorpio", while others asserted that Venus controlled the herb (Dillon 2011, 73).

Many receipt books, like that of Elizabeth Coates Paschall, a Philadelphia native with a keen interest in healing, updated older remedies with new variations. Most of her ingredients came from her own garden. Over time, Paschall, like other healers of her time, tweaked the receipts that she had written in order to find the best cures possible. Many original manuscript receipt books from the 18th century feature considerable notations scrawled in the margins; some of these receipt books even span across centuries as families add their own remedies and experiment with older techniques. Many of the herbs that appear in 18th century remedies are still commonly found in gardens today.

Achterberg, Jeanne. 1991. *Woman as Healer: A Panoramic Survey of the Healing Activities of Women from Prehistoric Times to the Present*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.

Dillon, Clarissa. 2011. "Plantain." *A Work Highly of Use: Part II*.

McGraw, Judith. 1994. *Early American Technology: Making and Doing Things From the Colonial Era to 1850*. Williamsburg, VA: The University of North Carolina Press.

Weaver, William W. 2001. *Sauer's Herbal Cures: America's First Book of Botanic Healing, 1762-1778*. New York: Routledge.



Receipts

To make Pomatum.

TAKE almost a dram of white wax, two drams of *sperma ceti*, an ounce of oil of bitter almonds; slice your wax very thin, and put it in a gallipot, and put the pot in a skillet of boiling water; when the wax is melted, put in your *sperma ceti*, and just stir it together, then put in the oil of almonds; after that take it off the fire, and out of the skillet, and stir it till cold with a bone knife; then beat it up in rose-water till it is white; keep it in water, and change the water once a day.

Eliza Smith. *The Compleat Housewife: or Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion*. 1739.

An excellent Snail-water.

TAKE of comfry and succory-roots, of each four ounces; liquorice three ounces; the leaves of harts-tongue, plantane, ground-ivy, red nettles, yarrow, brooklime, water-creffes, dandelion, and agrimony, of each two large handfuls: gather these herbs in dry weather, and do not wash them, but wipe them clean with a cloth; then take five hundred of snails cleans'd from their shells, but not scour'd; and of whites of eggs beaten up to a water, a pint; four nutmegs grossly beaten, the yellow rind of one lemon and one orange; bruise all the roots and herbs, and put them together with the other ingredients in a gallon of new milk, and a pint of canary; let them stand close covered 48 hours, and then distil them in a common still with a gentle fire; this quantity will fill your still twice; it will keep good a year, and is best when made spring or fall, but it is the best when new; you must not cork up the bottles in three months, but cover them with paper; it is immediately fit for use; and when you use it, take a quarter of a pint of this water, and put to it as much milk warm from the cow, and drink it in the morning, and at four o'clock in the afternoon, and fast two hours after it; to take powder of crabs-eyes with it, as much as will lie on a six-pence, mightily assists to sweeten the blood: when you drink this water, be very regular in your diet, and eat nothing falt or four.

Eliza Smith, *The Compleat Housewife: or Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion*. 1739.

**PUTTING SAM AND PEG TO WORK**

by Margaret Bleecker Blades, Director

What a wonderful introduction to the Peter Wentz Farmstead! Many thanks to the volunteers, staff, and visitors who have made me feel a part of the activities and programs at the Farm. I just got back from a road trip to Ephrata, where the farmers picked up the ox cart for the girls. The photos show this wonderful cart loaded on to the trailer. The cart was made to the specifications of Jim, Jay, and Rich, is wonderfully hand-crafted, balanced, and built to match the ultimate size of Sam and Peg as well as to the jobs they will do on the farm. We are all very excited to be taking these next steps in the historic farming program at the Farmstead, and want to say an enthusiastic "Thank You" to the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society for your very generous support of this project. Some sleigh bells might even find their way on to the harness in the appropriate season!



SURVEY COMMITTEE REPORT

Submitted by Jim Hern, Survey Committee Chair

The Survey Committee sent out a survey to every member of the Society and received back thirty-nine completed surveys. This thirteen percent return is considered good compared to the standard return. There were some very interesting results and comments.

First, thirty-five of the thirty-nine surveys received were from members over the age of sixty-five or older. This does not bode well for the long-term future of the Society. This writer will recommend that the Board set up a Committee with the objective of enticing younger adults and families to join. Two of the respondents were in the thirty to fifty range and the remaining were in the fifty-nine to sixty-five range. Younger than thirty? None.

We asked several questions and I have provided below the results and comments of each question.

Reason they joined the Society: Interest in history (27), Live near the Farmstead (11), Seek a worthwhile investment of time (6), Love of farming and farm animals (5), Wentz descendants (5), Other (8).

Attend Spring/Fall Meetings: Yes (15) and No (12).

Is Thursday at 7:00 the best time for these two meetings? Yes (18) and No.

Comments: Daytime would be better and we think catering the Fall Dinner Meeting will help attendance.

Speaker Preferences: Entertainers (9), Reenactors (17), Historians (16), Current Events (3), Farming and farm structures (5), Other (2).

Dues Reasonable? Yes (38), No (2).

Comments: Society does have among the lowest in area; if special needs member, charge less.

Do you read the Wentz Post? Yes (38), No (1).

Comments: Post biographies of the Wentz families; send copies only to those without email.

Can you receive the Post on the site electronically? Yes (15), No (14).

Suggested Projects: More research on Wentz family, Plant more orchards, Living history events, Better storage and security, More trash receptacles, Hayrides, History camp for adults, Bus for seniors to events, New signage, New Visitor Center.

Interest in Volunteering: Being a Board Member (1), Interpreter (1), Special events (1), Trip Committee, 0).

Interest in Trips: Single day (18), Two day (6), Greater than two days (4).

Comments: The Board will try to schedule another one-day trip.

Do you know someone interested in being a member? Yes (3), Maybe (2), No (33).

Years as a Member: Over ten years (25), Five to ten years (8), ne to four years (6).

Comments: Clearly new and younger members are needed.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS AT THE FARMSTEAD

Wednesday, April 4th at 10:00am or 1:00pm---Child's Play Series-Meet the Sheep

Learn about our woolly friends, the sheep, and make a wool craft to take home with you. We will also visit the sheep that live at the site.

Ages: 3 & up and accompanied by an adult; fee: \$5 per child; PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED.

Saturday, April 13th from 10:00am-3:00pm---Sheep Shearing Day

Watch as the farmers shear the sheep, and experience many spring activities on a colonial farm. For the children there will be colonial toys and games, scarecrow building, and a puppet show. Highlights are open-hearth cooking, farm tours, spinning, weaving, colonial music, and many other historical crafts.

All ages; fee: \$2 per person suggested donation.

Wednesday, May 1st at 10:00am or 1:00pm---Child's Play Series- Meet the Chickens

Preschoolers will learn about our feathered friends with a visit to the chickens that live at the site, helping to collect eggs, and taking home an egg of their own.

Ages: 3 & up and accompanied by an adult; fee: \$5 per child; PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED.

Saturday, May 11th from 10am-4pm---Native Plant Sale with the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy

The Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy (PWC) is hosting a Native Plant Sale at the Peter Wentz Farmstead again! Natives use less water, require less work, and provide year-round interest AND benefit to wildlife. The Sale will feature expert advice from PWC staff, free native gardening information, and a great variety of native vines, ferns, shrubs, trees, flowers, and grasses for sale. We'll also be highlighting gardens and plants typical of the 18th century during an on-going, hands-on activity just outside of the greenhouse. Park in the main lot for the Farmstead, then follow the signs to the sale location.

Friday, May 17th beginning at 7:30pm---Night Life-Spring & Summer

What happened at the Wentz House in the spring and summer after the sun went down? Join us for an exploration of life at night in the 1700's at 7:30 / 7:50 / 8:10 / or 8:30.

Ages: 12+. Pre-registration required.

KIDS' FUN PAGE

Hi, Peter Wentz Kids,



My name is Peter Cottontail Wentz, and I am a special rabbit who lives at the edge of the beautiful Wentz garden. Unlike my relative Peter Rabbit who lives in England, I have never been chased out of the garden. I am always welcomed because of course I am a Wentz rabbit. Mrs. Armstrong and her helpers are the keepers of the garden. They give me carrots, beets, lettuce and many other yummy vegetables to eat. I don't even have to dig them out if I don't want to. Come and visit our wonderful garden and see if you can name many of the vegetables and other plants growing here. You might even catch a glimpse of me. Meanwhile, have fun with this page. Color my picture below. You might want to draw some other vegetables from the Wentz Garden that I will find tasty.

