

# Wentz Post

*A Publication of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society*

Volume XXXVIII, No. 1

WENTZ POST Spring 2021

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*from Kathy Yost*

Welcome to 2021. Good-bye 2020. There are some comforting impressions that happened at Peter Wentz in 2020 that I will hold dear. It's a testimony to how that site and the people you meet there grab your heart and don't let go. While there has been very little traffic through our gift shop, we still did our annual physical inventory. I have to thank Sandy White and Susan Bishop and all the others whose creative juices make touching all those items fun and meaningful. It was watching and learning from Scott as he created the diorama of the excavation exhibit with great excitement—even though I teased him about building an ant farm! It was the hours Linda Snyder and I spent lining up all the Wentz Posts and the Trustee reports to track on collection information—it was like a good detective novel. It was seeing 'our girls' in the field enjoying their new 'snack dispenser' and lined up perfectly to look like bookends. It was the energy Lori Curtis and Lee Kirk and Carol Berardelli and Andy Rothenberger put into researching and buying our new computer. I had entire conversations with them and never heard a single verb that I knew. They speak a language that is lost on me. Meg's excitement when she gets talking about an area of interest to her—sparkle in her eyes, arms waving. Best memory? Watching Jay and Rich cast timothy into the fields.

What makes this historic site important is not only the physical beauty it presents, but all of you. The members and those who volunteer provide the soul of the Society. I would be lost without the fine Board of Trustees who are smart, imaginative, and very funny. In 2020 I needed a lot of funny. How about you?

Hoping to see you all soon and wishing you all a great 2021. Please reach out to the Board with any questions or suggestions you might have.



*(The Peter Wentz Farmstead Winter Garden, photo courtesy of Meg Bleecker Blades, Site Administrator.)*



## MORE WENTZ SITE RESEARCH

*by Meg Bleecker-Blades, Site Administrator*

The current interpretation of the Peter Wentz Farmstead is based on research compiled mostly from 1969 to 1977, during the restoration of the house. Primary issues included investigating the origins of the colorful interior paint schemes, as well as the type, style, and quantity of furnishings used throughout the house in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. These questions were ably guided by an extensive document, *The Master Plan for the Peter Wentz Farmstead* written by the National Heritage Corporation of West Chester, PA, with John Milner as a principal author.

Since that time, several additional research projects have explored specific areas of interest, some putting to rest questions about the family such as, was Peter Wentz the elder a pirate? As it turns out, no, he was not, but it made for some lively storytelling and debates while the question lingered.

As the house is occupied as an historic site we continue to ask more and more detailed questions. Subsequent reports to supply answers have included studies focused on site and genealogical research on the Wentz and Schultz families between ca.1700 – 1969 conducted by Jean K. Wolf in 2000. A project completed by U of PA Architecture student Lucinda Bartley in 2018, focused on the cultural and ecological landscape. An exhibit in the loft of the house tells the history of Jack, an enslaved man, whose presence at the Farmstead between 1765 through at least 1770 is documented through the interleaving entries in Worcester Township tax records and the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Benjamin Franklin's newspaper published in Philadelphia. Jack's quest for personal freedom is starkly outlined in these public documents, though it leaves us with unanswered questions when he once again disappears from the printed record in 1770.

*(Continued on page three.)*

**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  
 Secretary-Nadine Vigliano  
 Recording Secretary-Maria Evans  
 Corr. Secretary-Carol Berardelli

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

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

**PWFS COMMITTEES**

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

**WENTZ POST**

Volume XXXVIII, No. 1 Spring 2021

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

Editors: Donna Armstrong, Frank Luther

Contributors: Jack Armstrong

Margaret Bleeker-Blades

Scott Houting

Virginia Kopacki

Pat McDonnell

Linda Snyder

Advisors: Kathrina DeWitt Yost

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

**PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD IS OPEN.**

Tours are limited to single family groups every hour (**a group is one or more people**), preferably four or fewer in any one group. Larger family groups may be split into two smaller groups. Tours are of the first floor only. **Everyone must register if they would like a house tour. Drop-ins are not accepted.** Even if you are visiting onsite for another program you are required to register for a house tour:  
[peterwentzfarmstead@montcopa.org](mailto:peterwentzfarmstead@montcopa.org).



**MORE WENTZ SITE RESEARCH**, *(cont. from page one.)*

Topics for additional research abound. Even the well-known story of Washington's stays at the Farmstead twice during October of 1777 can be expanded. During a recent review of *The Papers of George Washington* in the collection of the Library of Congress, Museum Assistant Lori Wysong located on line photographs of orders written by Washington with the heading "Headquarters at Peter Wentzes [sic], Worcester Township, October 16, 1777" giving us additional proof that Washington slept here.

Today, historic sites most often rely on a Historic Structure Report (HSR) to provide a thorough review of current research, augmented with extensive further searches of original documents as well as comparison with other surviving buildings of the same period. The HSR is a research document that contains relevant information from all primary source materials related to the property. It is used to guide the preservation and interpretation for a historically significant building. The report is both a catalog and a detailed discussion of all information about the site, enhanced with in-depth research as well as detailed architectural drawings of the building.

Historians or historical architects are usually the lead authors of the HSR, and co-authors may include specialists in regional history, economic history, agricultural history (especially in the case of a farmstead), engineers if needed to assist with the technical analysis of the structure if there are questions about its structural integrity—whatever specialty current research directs us towards to develop a thorough written record for the property.

The HSR is such a well-recognized resource for historic sites that the US Department of the Interior has established exacting standards for the report, which are set out by *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. The HSR is described as the gold standard for historical research for a property with historical significance, and it has come to be the foundation document for master planning, restoration, landscape planning, and interpretive development.

The Peter Wentz Farmstead, as a property owned by The County of Montgomery, recently issued a Request for Proposals for a Historic Structure Report for the Farmstead. Using the County's very efficient bidding system, a public invitation was issued to any qualified organization to design a project to research and conduct a Historic Structure Report for the Peter Wentz Farmstead. To our delight ten companies from throughout the northeast responded with proposals.

Using the County's system to solicit bids, a committee of four County staff reviewed each proposal, scored each against the stated requirements of the projects, and finally selected the highest-scoring company, Patterhn Ives/Frens& Frens. The lead author, architectural historian Phillip Pendleton has extensive background in research and publications focused on southeastern Pennsylvania vernacular architecture and architect Dale Frens has lead restoration projects at significant historic sites throughout the area. The team they have assembled promises to produce a useful, readable, and thorough document that will guide the planning and interpretation of the Farm-

Farmstead well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As the Peter Wentz Farmstead approaches its 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of being an historic site open to the public, we are looking forward to having the Historic Structure Report as a tool to continue enhancing and expanding what we know about the house and property and to share this additional knowledge with our public.

**IN MEMORIUM**

*by Linda Snyder*

Over the last year and a half, we have said goodbye to two Wentz descendants and two other supportive friends.

Virginia (Wentz) Sinn left us on September 26, 2019. Remembered by a friend as feisty but sweet and caring, Ginny was the family historian. She created family trees that reached back to the family roots in Germany. Born at what is now Hope Lodge historical site, Ginny was active with many organizations. These included Zion Lutheran Church, Wissahickon Valley and Fort Washington Historical Societies, Hope Lodge Questers and several others. Using her needle point, quilt, and seamstress skills, she made spiritual banners for several churches and Spring House Estates. As a volunteer at special events at Peter Wentz Farmstead, she will be missed.

Virginia Bourne passed peacefully on May 20, 2020 surrounded by her family. Crowned May Queen at Burnside Elementary, Ginny later graduated from Norristown High School. Employed as a secretary after graduation, she soon met her future husband, William Bourne. She and Bill began Bourne Graphics in 1950. Bill has done several depictions of the Farmstead and survives Ginny along with their three children. Strong of will and sharp of mind with her zest for life, Ginny will be missed by family and friends.

Mary S. Hitchener passed away on December 4, 2020. Another Wentz descendant, she was born in Philadelphia and raised in Eagleville, PA. Mary was a registered nurse in Pitman, NJ where she resided for 54 years before returning to our local area three years ago. Enjoying a range of interests from classical music to gardening, Mary raised Newfoundland and Cardigan Welsh Corgi dogs. A talented weaver, she wove beautiful blankets, tablecloths, shawls, and scarfs which she gave as gifts or sold at juried craft shows. A member of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society, she will also be greatly missed.

Marilyn Lewis left us on December 7, 2020. Born in Philadelphia, she graduated from Norristown High School and attended Harcum Junior College and the University of Miami. Serving as a Member of the House of Representatives, she was active politically throughout her lifetime, supporting her husband's bid for Governor of Pennsylvania in 1974. As an Alternate Delegate to the 1976 Republican National Convention, she

## IN MEMORIUM

campaigned for presidential candidate Ronald Reagan in 1980. Serving on too many corporate boards to name here, Marilyn's generosity was well known. Her son, Andy, recalls driving around at night before many Christmases and dropping off gifts and money anonymously on the front porch of those in need. An avid gardener, cook, baker, and caretaker for animals of all types, her adventurous spirit led her to bungee jump off the tallest building in Auckland, New Zealand and sky-dive when challenged by one of her grandchildren. A lover of flying, she was a licensed (inactive) private pilot. Her faith in God and her love for family and friends helped her persevere through tough times. She will be sorely missed by all who knew and loved her.



### THE WOOD-STOCK WATER PUMP: AN INTERPRETATIVE STORYLINE

by Scott Houting, PWF Curator

Visitors to the Peter Wentz Farmstead will occasionally ask the simple question, "How did the families living in the house get their water for everyday chores and drinking?" The simple answer is, from a well dug outside the house. However, considering that wells in the 1700's or later could reach a depth of sixty feet in southeastern Pennsylvania, *the bigger question is how did the families extract the water from the well to pour into buckets or water troughs?* The answer was the wood-stock water pump.

Prior to mechanical pumps powered by hydraulics or electricity, families relied upon the principle of vacuum or suction to draw water through pumps from ground water supplies. The central feature for achieving this was the mechanical piston valve of the wood-stock water pump.

The construction of the wood-stock water pump started at the farm well site, usually outside the summer kitchen. Hired craftsmen, known as pump makers, worked onsite due to the sheer weight of the pump material and unforeseen requirements needed to complete each individual pump.

The pump maker started his job by selecting the proper length log of white oak or walnut, due to the water durability of these two hardwoods. Once the log was selected, the outer bark removed, and the work of building the pump could begin. Hand planes and draw knives would shape the log into the typical octagonal shape common in the Philadelphia region. Once the log was finished on the exterior, the craftsmen would begin to bore through the log to form the open center. Two men turned the heavy augers to ensure a straight, centered hole. Adding the blacksmith-forged iron handle and side water spout completed the pump construction.

Before placing the finished stock pump over the well opening, the pump maker would shape and bore one or two additional logs to serve as pipes depending upon the depth of the well. These log pipes were both tapered at one end to fit inside each other. Iron bands around each tapered end added strength to the fittings. The bottom of the lowest log pipe included a screen filter and would often rest on a flat stone placed at the extreme bottom of the well. The screen helped to prevent sediment and dirt from being sucked into the clean extracted water.

A mechanical device called a hoisting gin would lower the water pipes and pump into the well. The pipes would be guided by ropes and pulleys to set squarely and firm in the well. With the pump and pipes weighing upwards of two hundred pounds each, the process of placing the pump over the well required both human strength and mechanical accuracy. The finished installed pump demanded straight vertical installment for the water to pump under good pressure. The pump was completed by a wood cap placed on top of the pump. These caps were often decorated with a wood finial or other device. The cap covered and protected the interior of the pump and added a decorative touch.

The wood-stock water pump operated on the principle of a vacuum. The main mechanical feature of the pump was the piston valve assembly. The piston was a carved wood cylinder, bored out in the center to allow the water to enter. A leather band tacked around the wood piston provided a tight fit inside the well to keep water from falling back down. The piston was attached to a long iron rod, called the piston rod, which was attached to the exterior handle.

The pump created a vacuum, which produced suction. When the operator brought the exterior handle up, the piston rod and attached piston dropped through the pipes into the water. Water pressure below the piston forced the piston to open, allowing water to flow through the hollow piston into the pump chamber. The downstroke on the handle raised the piston with the drawn water. As the downstroke continued, water was increasingly drawn upward through the pump until the volume of water flowed into the side spout and out into a bucket.

**THE WOOD-STOCK WATER PUMP**

By 1860, new technology began replacing the hand-crafted wood pumps with factory mass-produced manufactured pumps. Cast-Iron replaced wood as the preferred pump material. The early decades of the 1900's brought rural electrification to the countryside of America. The era of the 18<sup>th</sup> century wood-stock water pump was over.



**DIGGING A CAMP KITCHEN**

*by Jack Armstrong*

This 2017 Wentz project was for a revolutionary war event to demonstrate what a military camp "kitchen" would look like. It is a VERY small example with just three fireplaces. For a long encampment, this would be part of a huge circle MANY yards in diameter to accommodate lots of cooking fires.

First, a ditch is dug with the dirt piled away from the work area. Each fireplace is a small "tunnel" dug into the bank with a "chimney hole" going down to meet it. This way ALL the heat is tightly contained and the wood needed is FAR LESS that an open fire. The people tending the cooking would sit on the opposite bank.

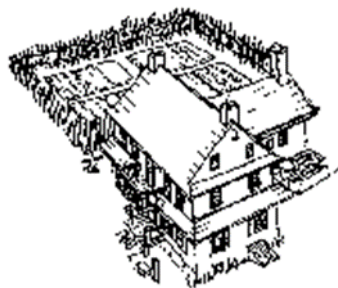


**VIRTUAL FIELDTRIPS**

Can't get out? Please check out our Virtual Fieldtrips page for information on digital learning.

The Peter Wentz Farmstead has prepared four videos that can give you a virtual tour of the Farmstead. Wentz Workshops are a series of hands-on demonstrations at Peter Wentz Farmstead that show how ordinary colonial people would have lived and worked. The four topics in the series are: Cider making, Smokehouse, Sauerkraut, and Cooking in the Kitchen.

Access the Montgomery County/Peter Wentz Farmstead site at [www. https://montcopa.org/Peter-Wentz-Farmstead](https://www.montcopa.org/Peter-Wentz-Farmstead).



**DID YOU KNOW THAT...**

Peter and Rosanna Wentz settled here in 1744 and by 1758 had built their English Georgian style house with many features reflecting their German heritage?

The American Revolution moved into the area during the autumn of 1777 and the Wentz home became temporary headquarters for General George Washington and his staff?

While at the Farmstead, General Washington planned his attempt to keep the British forces from occupying Philadelphia, which resulted in the Battle of Germantown on October 4<sup>th</sup>?

It was also t the Farmstead on October 18th that the news of Burgoyne's surrender to General Gates at Saratoga was received and celebrated. According to tradition, a salute was fired so close to the house, the glass in a number of windows was shattered?

After the war Peter Wentz sold the farm to Devault Beiber and in 1794 Schwenkfelder Reverend Melchior Schultz and his family bought it?

Generations of the Schultz family continued to live and farm here until 1969, when the County of Montgomery purchased the property?

The County restored the house to the era when it served as Washington’s headquarters?

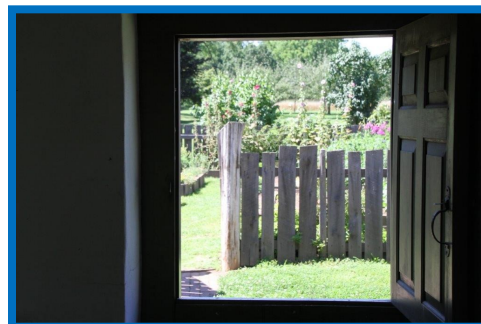
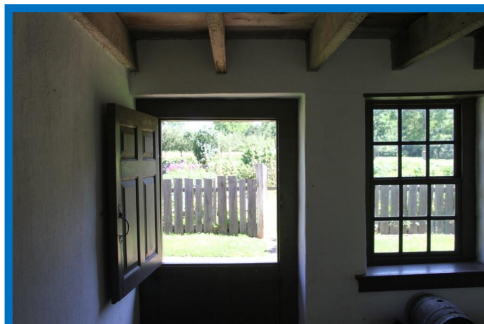
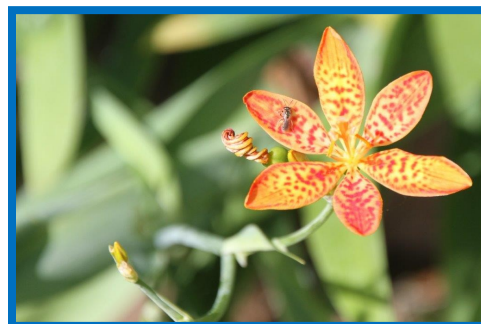
The farm buildings, livestock, and kitchen garden represent early Pennsylvania German farming culture and practices in the region?



**IT IS SPRING**

Bees soon will buzz,  
Rabbits soon will hop,  
Birds soon will sing,  
Frogs soon kerplop.  
Chicks soon will peep,  
Kids soon will play,  
Sun soon will shine,  
A fine spring day!

*Robert McCracken*



*(Photos courtesy of Jack Armstrong.)*

# KIDS' FUN PAGE



## SPOTTY THE PIG

by Pat McDonnell

Hi Kids! My name is Spotty. I am a spotted pig just like my Mom. Do you remember reading about Wilbur the pig in the book *Charlotte's Web*? Wilbur was my great, great, great, great grandfather. That was a very long time ago. Mom has told me the story many times. Wilbur became famous after Charlotte, his friend, the spider, spun the words "SOME PIG" and "TERRIFIC" into the webs. I wished that I could be just like Wilbur when I grow up.

One day when I was in the barn looking for spiders and their webs, I couldn't find any. I looked again and found a spider egg sac lying in a corner. I knew it wasn't safe to leave it there, so I took it home and showed it to my Mom. She was not happy that the beautiful spider webs were gone, as well as the spiders. Mom said we had to find a safe place

for the egg sac. I told her that there was an old, empty shed behind the barn. Later when we entered the shed we looked for the egg sac. There it was with tiny spiders crawling out of the sac. In no time the spiders grew and grew and were soon spinning their webs. Mom and I liked to check on them and admire their beautiful webs. One day we entered the shed and saw a very big spider web; we couldn't believe our eyes. On the web was printed THANK YOU SPOTTY. I was so surprised! Mom told me that the spiders did this because that was their way of telling me how grateful they were that I saved them. Mom gave me a hug and said "Spotty, you are one smart little pig, and your great, great, great, great, grandfather Wilbur would be proud of you." I was so happy. I think my wish came true.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Pigs are very clean and very smart. They are smarter than dogs and can learn their names in two weeks, have excellent memories, can come when called, and can even play some video games! Pigs have their own language. They use 26 different grunts and squeals to call friends or "say" they are hungry. Mother pigs "sing" to their piglets when feeding them. Can you draw a picture of Spotty?

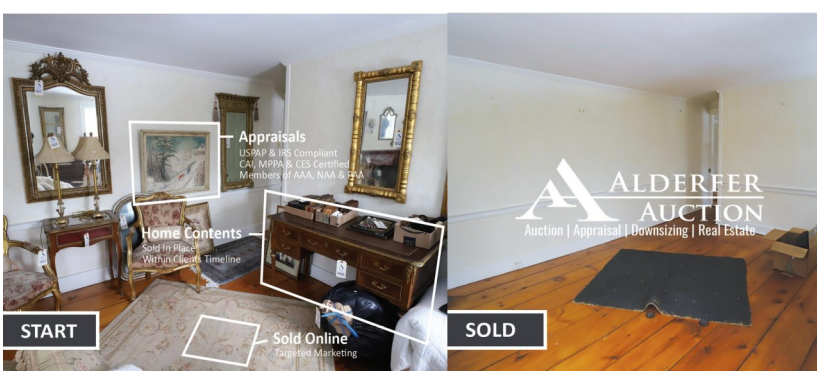


skippack succulent BAR

floral & hardy

floralandhardyofskippack.com

610.584.0797

Appraisals  
USPAP & IRS Compliant  
CA, MPPA & CES Certified  
Members of AAA, NAA & BAA

Home Contents  
Sold in Place  
Within 14 Day Timeline

Sold Online  
Targeted Marketing

ALDERFER AUCTION  
Auction | Appraisal | Downsizing | Real Estate

215.393.3000 | info@alderferauction.com | alderferauction.com | 501 Fairgrounds Rd Hatfield, PA 19440

**STAR PAINTING**  
WALLCOVERING



★ Painting Interior & Exterior ★  
★ Wallcovering ★ Coffered Ceilings ★  
★ Mantels ★ Wainscoting ★ Crown Molding ★

215.628.2331 610.409.7980  
www.starpaintingandwallcovering.com

EPA certification# NA1-30482-1 | PA013243

Please note: Thanks to the businesses who advertise on the back of our WENTZ POST, our expenses for mailings are being supported without any cost to the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society. We ask that, when possible, please patronize these businesses.

Anyone who would like to advertise in the WENTZ POST in the future, please contact Kathy Yost at:  
[ka3na.anne@yahoo.com](mailto:ka3na.anne@yahoo.com).