

Wentz Post

A Publication of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

Volume XXXIX, No. 1

WENTZ POST Winter 2022



(1976 Slide of Wentz, courtesy of Jack Armstrong.)

This 1976 picture of the mansion and site as it was being readied for the look we now know. Note the old barn (since rebuilt), "modern" roof shingles and the old garden fence. Also, the then existing hardtop Schultz Road just yards from the house and the telephone pole (with transformer) between the house and the road. The county road was then torn out between the far end of the pastures and the Rothenberger house!

Happy Birthday to us!

Forty-five years! What a milestone achievement for a group of volunteers for having supported the Peter Wentz Farmstead all these years. Many special events and programs could not have been achieved without their support. Pat yourselves on the back for your dedication and perseverance!

Phyllis Yergey fondly remembers several Society bus trips as being always educational and a great opportunity to get to know other members. She and Charlotte Herman volunteered several years coordinating the Museum Gift Shop and represented us at "Museum Shops on the Go".

(Continued on page 3.)

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 archi-

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 Voight
Corr. Secretary-Carol Berardelli

BOARD MEMBERS:

David Carhart
Wayne "Duffy" Grove
Terri Gentile

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 XXXIX, No. 1 Winter 2022

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

Historic site administrator:

Margaret Bleecker Blades

Editor: Donna Armstrong

Layout: Frank Luther

Contributors:

Donna Armstrong, Jack Armstrong,
Carol Berardelli, Margaret Bleecker
Blades, Marc Brier, Scott Houting,
Lee Kirk, Carly Schmidt, Linda
Snyder, Kathy Yost

Photo credits:

Jack Armstrong, Carol Berardelli,
Margaret Bleecker Blades, Lori Curtis
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

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

Happy Birthday to us! , *continued*

Carol Berardelli's thoughts on the early days: When the Farmstead opened in 1976 and I signed up to be a guide, we were required to take a course with Al Gamon on 18th century artifacts and furniture. Since he had written a book on the subject, we were fortunate to have such a great opportunity and took it very seriously. (I still have those notes and treasure them.) Al was an exacting and excellent custodian of the Farmstead and it was an honor to work with him.

As guides we were required to dress in colonial garb. I went to the Souder Store in Souderton, bought my blue checked fabric and after it was approved, sewed it according to the pattern we were given. Over the years after more research was done, the style of dress we used was found to be incorrect for our area and period. (I still have my dress and wish I could fit into it!)

Spending afternoons in those early years waiting for visitors to come along was a special memory. We never knew how many would come, or how busy we would be but we were prepared! Dressed in our outfits, we showed the guests a slide presentation and then gave them a tour of the house. There usually was another guide on duty which gave us the opportunity for some new friendships.

President's Report

by Kathy Yost

Life is flying by. Regardless of who you are or where you have been- this has been quite a ride! The Society has been very busy regardless of the Covid challenges these days have brought us. Our Society continues to be astounding and adventuresome and imaginative. Here are some of the highlights:

The brown lunch bag caper included the minds of maniacs, the logic of geniuses, the energy of a lot of energizer bunnies, and a ton of support from the County. The goal was to leverage what the County had determined the best way to hold a Candlelight event. (Something this site always does well.)

A week later we were chosen to be a destination for the Norristown Garden Club tour. While I will claim ownership for the concept of THE PLAN, execution involved many volunteers led by Commanders Armstrong and Armstrong. The goal was to attract as many visitors to our Gift Shop as possible and help enhance their visit to the site. Our bigger goal? Educate a thousand (yes- I can count) so we can encourage them to return. We wanted to stand out as their best memory.

We are known for serving yummy snacks at Candlelight. This is also our #2 biggest yearly fund-raising event. Then add the Museum Gift Shop being busy and profitable. Then add the Virus. Then add an outside temperature of 15 degrees. Following County suggestions, we filled the bags with bottled water, small jars of apple butter, snacks and an armload of brochures to travel with our guests.

Now the fun part; assembling 500 bags; First- convince the vendors to donate snacks. Thank you, Carol Allen.

bags were given a festive ribbon closure and gathered in a large room at Alvin Rothenberger's house for safe-keeping from the outside weather until they could be transported. Whew!

But the challenges weren't quite over. The night of Candlelight, the museum shop Visa machine wouldn't work--neither would the phone! I had a brainstorm when customers in the shop couldn't use a credit card to pay. I offered to bill them! The customers couldn't believe it and neither did my coworkers. By the time of the garden tour, our electronic devices still weren't working, but my volunteers performed flawlessly and we made tons of money and established lots of goodwill. We received five thank you notes from our events guests! We should all be proud. And we are!

Currently we are refreshing our Museum Gift Shop with a new configuration and merchandise. We are also planning on an overhaul for our website. Members will then be able to read the Wentz Post online.



Looking Back and Looking Ahead

by Margaret Bleecker Blades, Site Administrator

What a wonderful setting to be outside in! In October and November, the Peter Wentz Farmstead hosted public programs with demonstrations of such varied skills as Open-hearth cooking, Campfire cooking, Cider pressing (with apples provided by Bauman Family Fruit Butters & Cider), 18th-century Joinery, Smokehouse demonstrations, Basket weaving, Revolutionary camp life with the 6th PA, Demonstrations by our resident oxen, firing 19th-century Artillery with Battery F, 1st PA Light Artillery, as well as a display of information on the US Sanitary Commission, an organization formally established by Federal legislation in 1861 to support the Union troops with both nursing and logistical assistance. All of these events and activities were certainly elemental to the Wentz, Bieber, and Schultz families when they lived on the Farmstead.

Looking at food and its place in the history of our Farmstead seems to be a theme this holiday season, carried forward as special pies and sweets looked very tasty displayed on the parlor table, drawing attention during our Candlelight Tours in December. Focused on the first floor of the farmhouse, guests were treated to views of baked goods representing the special baking the Wentz family may have done to mark the holiday season. In addition, during the evening event carolers from the Colonial Revelers strolled the grounds delighting us all with music from several centuries; Darius Puff held his audiences in suspense as he told stories from the Eastern Woodland Nations in the barn; Uniformed re-enactors from the 6th PA shared information on historic encampments in the area, and demonstrations by our resident oxen.

We were also delighted to be a part of the Norristown Garden Club's Holiday Historic Homes Tour in early December. About 1,000 guests visited the Farmstead, many for the first time. While the decorations inside the house focused on displays of special foods, the ladies of the Garden Club created whimsical arrangements that ornamented the exteriors of the farm



By contrast, we had cold breezy winter weather during the "Holy Smokehouse!" program in January. Regardless, about sixty very enthusiastic people ventured to the Farmstead to investigate how a smokehouse works, learning how this relatively small stone building without a chimney was a vital tool in the process of preserving food. All were fascinated to watch as red-hot coals from the campfire were piled in the center of the smokehouse dirt floor and then slightly smothered with dampened wood chips. The pheasant, chicken, cheese, and bacon hanging from the metal hooks above were enveloped in the smoke. After a prolonged period, which could vary from several hours to a number of days, a smoky surface encapsulated the foods, adding an extra air-resistant layer. Guests were also invited to take tours of the first floor of the house to see the inside kitchens where the Wentz family's routine cooking and food processing were done. Another highlight of the day was to watch as Farmstead staff and volunteers cooked a meal of sausages, sautéed onions, apples and sauerkraut over the campfire.

In the coming weeks, we are planning Nature Walks, Snowshoeing, Bird Walks, and Maple Sugaring programs to keep us in touch with our region's history and environment. Children's programs on Scherenschnitte, (the art of paper-cutting), natural egg dying, and raising chicks are filling rapidly, again proving that our community is interested in and committed to learning more about history and historic activities. Please check in on our Facebook page (@peterwentzfarmstead), for up-to-the-minute information on activities to participate in at the Peter Wentz Farmstead!

Upcoming events for the spring include Sheep Shearing, when our sheep have plans to put in personal appearances to show off their calm temperament as Farmer Jim and Farmer J a y demonstrate the art and skill of shear- ing a year's worth of wool growth. In addition, c o s - t u m e d reenactors will discuss how fleece is cleaned, combed, and spun, what can be made from the wool. Related textile crafts will be showcased, and historic foodways explained. We are looking forward to greeting our friends and new visitors in person this year!

IN MEMORIAM

compiled by Linda Snyder

Dr. Henry Stauffer Wentz and his wife, Mary

At one time, Dr. Wentz was a member of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society Board of Directors. He and Mary Louise were Honorary Members of the Society.

The couple are survived by two children, four grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.

Fay A. Jakoby passed away on March 22, 2021, after sixty-five years of marriage to William Jakoby. She retired in 2007 after twenty years with Artistic Glass Co. In 2009, Fay joined the Society. An accomplished baker of wedding and special occasion cakes, Fay loved gardening, flowers, and spending time with her family.

She is survived by her husband, three sons, two grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Letitia "Letty" A. Schultz, 95, of Worcester, died on January 28, 2022 at Meadowood in Worcester where she had been a resident since May 2015. She was the beloved wife of the late Austin J. Schultz for over fifty-eight years and was a long-time resident of Worcester. Born on May 18, 1926 in Bristol, PA, she was the daughter of the late Charles and Clara Streichert. She graduated from the former Schwenksville High School.

Letty showed a talent in piano at an early age and began teaching soon after she married. Letty was a member of the Central Schwenkfelder Church of Worcester where she was active in the Ladies Aid. For many years she was a tour guide at the Peter Wentz Homestead, which was the former home of her husband's grandparents.

New Interpretation for the Farmstead

submitted by Scott Houting, Curator

It is probably a safe bet to assume that most readers of the WENTZ POST recall one of the primary reasons why Montgomery County acquired the Peter Wentz Farmstead in 1969: the occupation of the farmstead by General Washington as military headquarters during October of 1777. What some readers may not realize is the effort it took Farmstead staff to furnish the two northwest corner rooms during October of each year to commemorate this fascinating event of the Farmstead's history. Reproduction furniture and other objects were borrowed from Valley Forge National Historical Park to furnish the rooms as they appeared when Washington occupied the Farmstead.

the stove room as Washington's staff office. The purchase will include reproductions of Washington's folding camp stools, an officer's regimental-style coat and various correct 18th century style writing and office furnishings. Also included will be a copy of a 1777 Philadelphia road and waterways map which probably hung on the wall of the Stove Room as it did at Washington's Headquarters at Valley Forge.

A Bit of a Challenge: One object that was difficult to find was a reproduction 18th century sawbuck-style folding table. Randy Gilbert came to the rescue. A volunteer living-history craft demonstrator for the Peter Wentz Farmstead, Randy jumped at the opportunity to build a reproduction sawbuck table for the Peter Wentz Farmstead. Randy's table will be patterned after a reproduction Pennsylvania sawbuck table on display at the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia. As curator of the Farmstead, I am extremely grateful to Randy for offering the farmstead his time and woodworking talents to fill this vital need. It would have been very difficult indeed to interpret the Stove Room as a military staff office without the proper style table.

If the project goes as planned, visitors to the farmstead should enjoy these new interpretive efforts to furnish the Farmstead as Washington's headquarters starting this October.

George Washington's Staff at the Peter Wentz House

by Marc Brier, Museum Assistant

As we know, George Washington had his headquarters at the Peter Wentz house from October 2-4, and October 16-20, 1777. Sometimes we focus on Washington, and forget that he had a support staff. While at the Wentz Farmstead, he was accompanied by his personal body servant William Lee, a cooking staff, a fifty-man security force known as Washington's Life Guard, his personal staff of aides-de-camp, the commander of the Life Guard, and a military secretary. The duties of his personal staff included: composing important correspondence (the number one job), conducting negotiations such as for prisoner exchange, communicating with foreign officers in French, and running special missions for the commander-in-chief where direct communication from headquarters was essential. The staff would also act as couriers during battles, a dangerous duty as evidenced by the fact that two of them were wounded during the war.

sible that most of the staff worked in the office and also stayed in the house. Washington may have also had his field tents or marquees set up at the Wentz house with the largest of these, the dining marquee erected as an outside office. The Museum of the American Revolution has a virtual tour of the headquarters tents on their website that shows just how they might have been set up in the field as at the Wentz property.

The staff at the time of the Wentz house occupation included Military Secretary Richard Hanson Harrison, aides de camp John Fitzgerald, Alexander Hamilton, John Laurens, Richard Kidder Meade, and Tench Tilghman - and commander of the lifeguard, Caleb Gibbs. Their talents varied from being fluent in French (Hamilton and Tilghman) to being an excellent horseman (Meade), to being the best at interpreting Washington's ideas (Harrison). Thanks to Lin Manuel Miranda's play, *Hamilton* and to some extent his sidekick Laurens, are getting their due. If asked though, George Washington might have said that his most valuable aide was Tench Tilghman for his ability to do almost any task well and because he served the general the longest. Perhaps a future Wentz Post article will focus on Tilghman.

CAN YOU HELP US?

by Lee Kirk

Since the establishment of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society in 1977, numerous people have volunteered many hours of their time out of love and support of the historic Farmstead. They have graciously served as board members or participants on specific committees. Unfortunately, many of those people are no longer with us or are unable to devote the time they used to for personal reasons. Too often, many of the same people are performing duties which could be done by new volunteers. We all do it out of love for the Farmstead.

We are looking for people who could fill the vacant volunteer positions and who would like to make a positive difference in the future of the Farmstead. Might you consider being one of those persons? Or do you know someone who might be interested? Here are the positions we need filled:

Mail committee---Committee members meet an average of at least four times a year for the mailing to society members of the WENTZ POST and flyers about Farmstead activities. They meet at a day and time that they agree upon and in compliance with the date we need the

Society Board Members---We are looking for individuals who would like to fulfill the purpose of the Society by assisting Montgomery County in the maintenance, preservation, and improvement of the Farmstead; cooperate with the county in promoting the public's awareness and enjoyment of the facility. Elected board members serve for two terms of three years. Or, a non-voting volunteer may serve for one year.

Society Board President---We are looking for a person who would continue the successful leadership role of the Society Board which many have fulfilled since the establishment of the Society.

If you or someone you know is interested in any of these volunteer activities, please contact Kathy Yost, Society President at 610-405-1516. She will gladly answer any questions you might have or elaborate more on the duties of the position.

As the writer of this article and a participant in various Society activities, I can vouch that we are a group of open-minded people who value the opinions of others and take pride in the continued preservation of the historic Peter Wentz Farmstead. And we have fun while we are doing it!

A BIT OF GARDEN HISTORY

by Donna Armstrong

Prior to the Farmstead opening to the public in 1976, Al Gannon, administrator at that time, requested the Norristown Garden Club to research, establish and maintain



Eleanor Bittle: The Society's First president sports a Statue of Liberty hat from a Society day trip to Manhattan. Eleanor started tape loom weaving as a crafts-person and supported the Farmstead for many years in a variety of capacities. This included being the only

Kids' Corner



CHICKENS ON THE FARM

by Meg

A small flock of chickens, presided over by our resident rooster, live on the Farmstead. They are a blended family and include representatives of a Rhode Island Red cross and Barred Rock breeds. Historically, chickens were raised to lay eggs, to

be a source of meat, and sometimes to be pets.

Our girls, and even our rooster, are all inquisitive and friendly, especially if they suspect you have snacks for them! They are very fond of kitchen scraps, but can certainly peck open whole fruits or vegetables with their small but powerful beaks.

Chickens' abilities and behaviors are well studied. It is known that they can be trained, that they recognize people, and that they can see color. Very unscientific experiments in the Wentz chicken yard confirm that the girls are especially attracted to the color red; they seek cranberries and strawberries first, followed by blueberries before they peck at the other, less colorful vegetables and fruit also offered.



This spring the Farmstead is offering programs AM and 1:00 PM, sessions titled *Nature Explorers* facts about the chickens with events for children and an accompanying adult. Participants will hear a story, go on a walk, create a craft to take home, as well as have an opportunity to meet the flock who lives here. A registration fee of \$3 per child is charged, and pre-registration is required.

Nature Explorers

chickens. On April 27 at 10:00 AM *Chickens* will share interesting facts about the chickens with an accompanying adult. Participants will hear a story, go on a walk, create a craft to take home, as well as have an opportunity to meet the flock who lives here. A registration fee of \$3 per child is charged, and pre-registration is required.

UPCOMING EVENTS

by Carly Schmidt, Museum Curator

Saturday, March 12 from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Kinder Klass: Fraktur Painting

Children will learn about some of the typical patterns and images found in Fraktur and use watercolors to paint their own.

Ages 5 and up; FREE. Limited space; by registration only. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Visit our website at montcopa.org/peterwentzfarmstead for more information about registering for this program.

Saturday April 23rd from 10:00 AM to 3:30 PM

Sheep Shearing Day

Highlights of other historical crafts include open-hearth cooking, farm tours, spinning, and weaving. All ages; suggested donation \$2.

Saturday, May 7th from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM

skippack succulent BAR

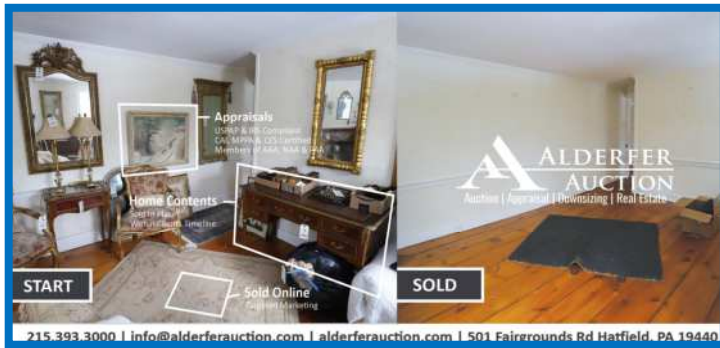
floral & hardy
 floralandhardyofskippack.com
 610.584.0797



Richard S. Yost
ESTATE PURCHASES
 Antiques Bought and Sold

By Chance or Appointment

610-505-7782
 rkyost@yahoo.com




ALDERFER AUCTION
 Auction | Appraisal | Downsizing | Real Estate

START

SOLD

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

610-584-5559



ALLEN ANTIQUES
 &
Artisans

Antiques & Specialty Items
 Fax (610) 584-5226

P.O. Box 505
 3004 Skippack Pike
 Center Point, Worcester, PA 19490



Berardelli Pool Service
 Commercial Service, Chemicals & Supplies




Chrissy Berardelli
 Owner
 chrissy@berardellipools.com

1803 Valley Forge Road
 P.O. Box 968
 Worcester, PA 19490

610.222.4442 (o)
 610.222.0607 (f)

Don't Move, Improve!



HIDDEN VALLEY HVC CARPENTRY

INSURED

**HOME IMPROVEMENTS
 REMODELING
 CABINETRY**

Phil Honsberger
610.473.3151
 PA004058

Email: philshvc@comcast.net

KEVIN O'CONNOR
 President, O'Connor Insurance LLC

Office: 610.222.6038 | Mobile: 215.901.2985 | Fax: 610.862.3808
 Email: Kevin@OConnorInsuranceLLC.com
 Website: www.OConnorInsuranceLLC.com
 Address: 1042 Bridge Road | Collegeville, PA 19426

**STAR PAINTING
 WALLCOVERING**



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

215.628.2331 610.409.7980
 www.starpaintingandwallcovering.com

EST. 1978 License # NJ-30482-1 PA-12345

Thanks to the businesses who advertise on the back of our WENTZ POST,
 our expenses for mailings are being supported without any cost