

Wentz Post

A Publication of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

Volume XXXIV, No. 1

WENTZ POST Spring 2017

PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD SOCIETY CELEBRATES 40 YEARS



The Peter Wentz Farmstead Staff from left to right: Sarah Biehl, Kimberly Boice, Rich Poole, Dianne Cram, Jim Nichols, Jay Ryan, Ted Edgar.

FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR DIANNE M. CRAM

Working at an historic site gives me a constant awareness of the past and, of course, the Farmstead's story that we tell reaches back to the 18th century. The year 2016 marked the 40th anniversary of the site being open to the public, and in 2017 the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society marks forty years since it was established with the sole purpose to support this historic site. These anniversaries have made me realize that the site's history is not only in the distant past, it is our past as well. We now celebrate the efforts of those, who more than forty years ago, worked to acquire this farm and preserve it for all. Also, we applaud the Society who for forty years has consistently provided educational programs, purchased decorative arts to furnish the house, reconstructed buildings, and continued the job of preservation. Those past forty years have become an integral part of the history of Peter Wentz Farmstead. We can go back and measure in dollar amounts what the Society has contributed over that time, but what is immeasurable is the dedication of so many volunteers who made it all possible. We could not have done all this without you. So to all the Society volunteers who were visionaries in 1977 and to the many who followed and still continue to give us such constant support, we give our unending gratitude. Congratulations to the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society on reaching your 40th year!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FROM KATHY YOST

Greetings from the Peter Wentz Farmstead Board of Trustees!

We are happy to send to you the latest edition of the WENTZ POST. We apologize for the delay but think you will find this a very interesting update edition. We find ourselves very busy at the Farm with many new and different things happening. This issue will give you a sneak peek at our plans for celebrating the Society's 40th anniversary, so have your calendars handy to mark some important dates.

This issue includes: a letter from Dianne Cram; an introduction to Sarah Biehl, our new curator who joined us in December; an all-inclusive report from the farmers on changes and improvements at the Farmstead; an update on the Farmstead calendar of events; new gifts from the Museum Shop; information on Board activities.

Please note the exciting reminders of upcoming events such as Sheep Shearing Day, the Spring Meeting and our 40th Anniversary plans.

(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 architecture, crafts, customs, and furnishings of the period.

**Peter Wentz Farmstead Society
Board of Directors**

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PWFS COMMITTEES

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Finance-Lee Kirk
Garden-Donna Armstrong
IT-Jim Karcher
Membership-Carole Berardelli
Museum Shop-Susan Bishop
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.

WENTZ POST

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SOCIETY 'WANT ADS'

Are you interested in being more involved with the Society? Have some extra time and want to feel useful? Do you have an interest in sharing your skills and thoughts with a very dedicated group of people? The Society is looking for potential additions to join us on the Board and for specific projects we are working on. Are you creative? Do you have computer skills? Have an interest in helping in the Museum Shop? I invite those interested to give me a call at 610-405-1516 to find out more information.

**PWFS Annual Spring Meeting
Thursday, April 20th at 6:30pm**

The public is invited to attend the Annual Spring Meeting of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society (PWFS), the friends group that helps support the Farmstead. Join them for a potluck dessert followed by a lively and engaging presentation from Matthew Dodd on the "Songs and Stories of the American Revolution." Program to be held in The Founder's Hall of the Central Schwenkfelder Church, located at 2111 Valley Forge Road. Call the Farmstead to RSVP.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FROM KATHY YOST,
(Continued from page 1.)

Thanks for your support and interest throughout the years. We will be celebrating many of our contributions both in the WENTZ POST and at our events. We have accomplished great things!

Please hold the dates: Spring Meeting and Dessert Pot Luck---YUM---on April 20; the Society's 40TH Anniversary Celebration and our Member/Volunteer Picnic on September 9 (Rain Date on September 10); the Fall Meeting and Pot Luck Supper on OCTOBER 19.



WELCOME, SARAH!

The Society would like to welcome Sarah Biehl to her new role as Curator for the Farmstead. Sarah has accepted the role recently vacated by Mark Turdo, who has moved on to a new challenge as curator with the American Revolution Museum in Philadelphia.

Sarah comes to us with a very interesting story. She has her Bachelor of Arts from Temple University and will be receiving her Master's degree in Museum Studies from Johns Hopkins University in May.

Sarah has rich and varied stories of her experiences in the curatorial world. For 6 months she interned at the Pennsbury Manor and joined that site as a staff member for 3 years. There she served as a museum assistant- a jack of all trades- covering a range of responsibilities such as site assistant, and event coordinator. She assisted with huge educational programs such as Holly Night and Halloween. She also currently serves as Secretary of the Board for the Bolton Mansion in Levittown. This Mansion is celebrating its 330th anniversary. And we thought we were old!!!

She was motivated to apply for this job after attending Night Life with us with some of her co-workers from Pennsbury. They had heard of our great success and wanted to understand what we had done as they were interested in developing programs on folklore and superstition at Pennsbury. Those programs should roll out next year at that site.

Sarah's strong suits include public speaking skills and great organizational skills. She loves the hunt in research that allows her to find the missing piece in a story and explain it to the audience. That moment of discovery is really exciting for her. The most challenging part of this new role for her will be to make the transition from Pennsbury to here. Pennsbury's story (based on its age) was written when the major theme was escaping religious intolerance. With us it includes that part of history that saw a government being built. Quite a transition---Sort of like historical time travel! Her words, not mine!!

Sarah lives in Levittown with her two rescue greyhounds and has an intense interest in animal activism. While finishing up graduate school is consuming her now, she looks forward to the opportunity to become involved in local politics! Go, Sarah, and welcome to our very special world!



UPDATES FROM THE FARMERS

Jay, Rich and Jim were kind enough to update us on progress and changes around the Farmstead. There have been remarkable upgrades and some interesting additions to our Farmstead family.

Farming equipment:

Our haying equipment has been updated for the first time in almost ten years. This upgraded John Deere tractor and baler have made a huge change in manpower required to harvest our crops. This equipment is so much more efficient that 1 person can now 'make hay'! The new tractor has more power which allows the farmers to easily move the bales to the wagon, but just as important, the new hay wagons have sides on them. This allows the farmer to move a bale to the wagon and the sides prevent it from falling---what a difference! Our crops typically provide 1,600 to 2,000 bales of first cut with an additional 300 coming from the second cut later in the season. Plenty to cover the needs of the Farmstead animals!

The farmers continue to support the County with snow removal both at the Farmstead and also at the Norristown Library.

Site improvements:

Our new barn doors have been installed and further examination revealed that repairs were also needed for both the barn door surrounds (hinge posts) with new brackets needed to hold the entire entry together. They are under construction and due to be installed soon.

(Continued on page 4.)

UPDATES FROM THE FARMERS, *continued*

The Peter Wentz Farmstead Farmers pictured with Diane Cram from left to right: Rich Poole, Jim Nichols, Jay Ryan.

The Farmers are now moving on to rebuilding the existing chicken coop. These chickens don't know how good they will have it with a new roof and enclosure. These 18 chickens are producing about a dozen eggs a day. Feel free to stop by and purchase the freshest eggs in Worcester!

Kre-Belle Farm will get a replacement of the barn roof shortly. This is a huge undertaking and we are thrilled that the County approved this capital expense. The farmers have removed the wood shed from the Kriebel farmhouse. There was once a beehive oven at this location. The wood shed was built in the mid-20th century when the oven was removed. This will allow for repairs to the plaster walls thus decreasing the effect of moisture in the house.

The wagon shed next to Farmstead barn was built around 1900. Three years ago, it was renovated to allow fenced space for our pigs. This year a concrete floor was completed and two pens have been built for the steers as well.

Animals:

People always ask us how many animals we have here. So, our current census is two steers, two cows (the cows have been bred and we are awaiting news of impending pregnancies), two horses, five ewes, one ram, two baby lambs (with the hope that there might be more on the way), the three brand new pigs and seventeen hens and a rooster. This sounds like a great start for a reenactment of the Bremontown Musicians. If you do not recall that story, you should look it up---a totally charming children's story.

Upcoming learning events:

A new learning opportunity *From Field to Flour* will be offered to campers and apprentices. This is a unique project that will allow campers to harvest and thresh the wheat and rye crops. They will then be able to have a local mill grind the crops and return the flour to the Farmstead for cooking and baking. What a terrific way to learn the entire story of our early food cycle!

Grounds maintenance: The farmers continue to re-seed and plow the hay fields, applying lime as needed to sweeten the soil. Much of the parking lot and some of the driveways have been paved. We have a new pavilion located up near the parking lot- great place for a weekend picnic!

The Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy will begin to use the greenhouse and grounds at the Alvin Rothenberger home to grow and sell native plants. Check out the calendar for those dates.

Fruit orchard pruning should start soon, as spring is right around the corner. Our mowed walking trails are open and marked. There are some benches along the way should you need to rest. The trail officially starts across from the Schultz Road entrance to the parking lot and runs for 1.25 miles. There is a kiosk there with maps to help you along.

As you can see, they are plenty busy over here and we so appreciate all that they do. The visitors say thank you, the animals say thank you and so does the Society!!





THE WENTZ GARDEN AND ITS STORY

Wentz Weeders: Melanie Kilgannon, Paul Menard, Pat Wolbach, Sandra Sweeney, Wayne Brunt, and Coordinator, Donna Armstrong.

In 1976 Director Al Gamon approached the Society and the Norristown Garden Club. He asked if they were willing to undertake the research, construction, and maintenance of a Colonial Garden. This was no small challenge for those who donated time, thoughtfulness, energy, and ideas.

In a lecture in May of 2007, Jenny Rose Carey described the Colonial Garden in the following way: "These gardens were utilitarian in nature. The plants grown were vegetables and herbs. The arrangement of the garden would have been in a simple pattern, often right outside the kitchen door. The early gardens would contain plants that had been brought from the country of emigration, American native plants, and those that the Native Americans passed on to them. Early accounts suggest that plants were often grown in raised beds much as plants had been grown for centuries in Europe."

In the 1970's the Garden Club under the guidance of Janet Riemer and the newly-formed Wentz 'Garden Group' did a noble job of making that image of a Colonial Garden come to life. Through the years this group sought to adhere to the historical accuracy of the garden through the support of 30-40 volunteers. Following the research directives, raised beds were constructed and a fence was built to surround the garden.

While the exact mix of plants may have varied from decade to decade, there has always been a dedication to getting it right. Plants were eaten, used for medicine, dying wool and for creating everlasting flowers that could be used to brighten one's spirits in the dead of winter. This team was prepared to follow history with their plant selections and soil preparation, but were open to new plants that may have been discovered in later research.

There is always an interest in not only historic accuracy but also taking into account the 'net effect' of a garden. Proper combinations with companion planting result in a better harvest and less insect and animal damage---all produce is consumed or donated with little to no waste. Cultivating flowers and herbs in the outside beds adds an element of aromatherapy and made good medicine.

This group has produced a visual garden so well cared for that it recently was featured in a book on Heritage Gardens---actually it featured three pictures, one of which was a full page! That is quite an accomplishment.



The Weeders contribute over 180 hours of labor each year and now there are only eight of them! When asked what is the best benefit of volunteering, Coordinator Donna Armstrong immediately cites the camaraderie, the information and the goods shared among them, the sense of satisfaction, and their pride in a job well done.

We can all agree! Please stop at the garden and take advantage of one of their brochures that will lead you through your own garden tour. If you are interested, please contact Donna for volunteer opportunities. Thanks to our many donors who have supported this venture over the years. Most recently, thank you to the Kratzingers who in 2015 donated our new fence. There are many ways to support the Farmstead and this is an excellent one!





Janet Reimer (above) and Paul Menard (below).



THE PETER WENTZ MUSEUM SHOP

The Peter Wentz Museum Shop is becoming a go to spot to shop. We still carry the authentic Box Looms in both wood and cardboard, children's colonial toys, musical instruments, quill pens and sealing wax; but we have also added product lines that are definitely of this century!

Spring will bring fresh fun products as well. Need a Peter Wentz coffee mug, pen box, ornament or magnet? Winter season brought into the shop finely crafted, funky jewelry, hand-made felted wool and silk scarfs, hats, fingerless gloves, socks that really are fun...the list goes on. Hungry for a bite of Chocolate-and why not--- Valentine's Day will be here soon. We carry Asher's products and delicious caramels that will make you want more! Stop in and discover what we offer.



WENTZ SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Board of Directors of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society invites applications every year for two distinct scholarships.

The first scholarship is the Gamon Scholarship presented in honor of Albert T. and Elizabeth R. Gamon. This academic award is available to an outstanding undergraduate student pursuing a degree in Pennsylvania German History. This five-thousand-dollar scholarship, available on a one-time basis, is awarded for general excellence to include academic achievement, participation in extra-curricular activities and volunteerism in the area of Pennsylvania German history, cultural studies, decorative arts and/or related museum studies. Students who continue on to complete their Master's Degree in these areas of study are also invited to apply.

The second scholarship is the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society Scholarship Award. This academic scholarship of one thousand dollars each is awarded to graduating high school seniors who have served at least forty hours as a volunteer at the Farmstead the year prior to the scholarship award. Additional criteria for consideration include academic excellence and leadership qualities.

For more information regarding our Scholarship Program, please visit our web site at www.peterwentzfarmsteadsociety.org



Matthew Dodd

Presents

Songs and Stories of the American Revolution



Appearing Live for

Peter Wentz Farmstead Society
at Central Schwenkfelder Church

Thursday, April 20

at 7 p.m.

WENTZ EVENTS: PROGRAMS & EVENTS AT THE FARMSTEAD**Child's Play Series: Meet the Sheep-** Wednesday, April 5th at 10AM & 1PM

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. Pre-registration required.

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

PWFS Annual Spring Meeting- Thursday, April 20th at 6:30pm

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Sheep Shearing Day 2017-Saturday, April 22nd from 10AM to 3PM

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.

Child's Play Series: Meet the Sheep- Wednesday, May 3rd at 10AM & 1PM

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. Pre-registration required.

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

Night Life- Friday, May 5th- tours begin at 7:30pm

What happened at the Wentz House after the sun went down? Come to explore night time in the 1700s and what it meant for residents of a home like the Wentz family's.

Tours offered at 7:30 / 7:50 / 8:10 / 8:30 / 8:50; Preregistration required. Ages: 12 & up.

Native Plant Sale with the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy- May 13th from 10am-4pm

Don't miss the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy's inaugural Native Plant Sale at the Peter Wentz Farmstead! Natives use less water, require less work, and provide year-round interest AND benefit to wildlife. The 2017 PWC Native Plant Sale boasts expert advice, free native gardening information, and a great variety of native vines, ferns, shrubs, trees, flowers, and grasses for sale. Park in the main lot and then follow the signs to the sale location: 2020 Schultz Road in Lansdale (19446).

Laerenswaert Series-Sunday, June 18th at 2PM**"They ought to be men of abilities": General Washington's Staff**

"Worth Learning" Join us on Father's Day to learn about the important duties and responsibilities of the General's "military household." 32 men held the title of Aide-de-Camp to the Commander-in-Chief during the 8 years of the war. Who were these men? What were their roles in the headquarters? What happened to them after the war?

Colonial Camp 2017- Monday to Friday, June 26th-30th from 9:30am-3:30pm

Students entering 4th through 6th grade in fall 2017 will experience childhood activities and crafts of the colonial period. Pre-registration required.

Fee: \$175 per child. Includes a one-year family membership with the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society.

Mitte Camp 2017- Monday to Friday, July 10th-14th from 9:30AM-1:30PM

Students entering 1st through 3rd grade in fall 2017 will learn about life during the 1700s at this hands-on camp. Pre-registration required.

Fee: \$125 per child. Includes a one-year family membership with the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society.

Wentz Wonder Kids Camp 2017-Monday to Friday, July 24th-28th from 9:30-11:30AM

Kids ages 4-5 years old will enjoy a half-day camp with hands-on activities related to the historic Farmstead. Snacks provided. Pre-registration required.

Fee: \$60 per child.

Please call the Farmstead to register for these events.



PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD SOCIETY CELEBRATES 40 YEARS



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR
PRESIDENT'S REPORT
SOCIETY UPDATES
WELCOME SARAH
UPDATE FROM THE FARMERS
SHEEP SHEARING
THE WENTZ GARDEN
MUSEUM SHOP
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
WENTZ EVENTS**

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