

Wentz Post

A Publication of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

Volume XXXIX, No. 2

Spring/Summer 2022



(Wentz Farmstead from the Attic Window)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US

Continuing shining the spotlight on the Society's 45th anniversary, reminisce with two devoted members.

One of our long-time Society couples are Gary and Darlene Bentley. Darlene actually gets the prize for being one of the first visitors to the Farmstead when it opened to the public in June, 1976. She was touring the Philadelphia area with a group from Ithaca, New York. When she and Gary were married in 1982 and moved to Hatfield, they got reacquainted with the Farmstead. Being apartment dwellers, our property became a retreat where they visited often to enjoy the animals and garden. Gary remembers being outfitted for his docent tours, and oh yes, winning those trivia games at the Society picnics! 🌸 We're so glad they're 🌸 still around to share 🌸 their stories.

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

**PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD SOCIETY
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 Garden-Donna Armstrong
 IT-Andrew Rothenberger
 Membership-Carol Berardelli
 Museum Shop-Kathy Yost
 New Structures-All Members
 Nominating-OPEN
 Scholarships-Terri Gentile

WENTZ POST

Volume XXXIX, No. 2 Spring 2022

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 in the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society.

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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:

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Kathy Yost

Happy Spring and Summer. Two weeks ago it was Winter and Spring. The weather has been so unpredictable that it should be clear to us all who is really in control! The Society has been really busy regardless of conditions. We continue to support the Farmstead in all sorts of ways. I am getting a lot of the same questions from folks, so I decided to have this column dedicated to those questions and the answers. Well, at least my answers! Meg's article will provide more answers and updates.

How can I volunteer and what jobs would I have? You name it and we got it! English teachers, please forgive the jargon. We always need folks to help cover events. Carly has been doing a terrific job of generating interest in visits to the site. I offered to cover fraktur painting with twenty-five school children and was thrilled to see Amy Dinkel and Carla Chagaris (our newest volunteers) jump right in. The Society can always use help with Museum Shop coverage. We are open more hours these days and the account balance shows it is working. Give us a call at the Farmstead for more information.

What happened to our Spring Meeting and 45th anniversary party? In an effort to make the event more comfortable we chose the Worcester Golf Club. It allowed for easy mobility, bathroom access, and proper conditions for the music and speakers presentation, good food-everything we could think of. We had exceptionally low RSVPs, probably in part due to Covid, etc... The cost of the event far outweighed our 'per person' guidelines. It was our only responsible option. We raise money to support the Farmstead. While it is OK to provide our members with the promise of two general meetings a year, we cannot ignore both health and financial conditions. We are searching for the right place and time to reschedule to the fall.

What new improvements have we made? The website has not been updated in years. The Board decided to make a change to move us into the current century! This will affect general updates, the Wentz Post, the Museum Shop and Membership. We have included an article by Tom Knoble who is helping us with design and updates. His information will explain the technical side of things. Changes include:

- Up to date information on members, meetings, events and 'good to knows'

- Event information that you usually would have seen in a letter.

- The WENTZ POST AND PAST ISSUES will appear here. You can print a copy on your printer should you want to read paper.

The Museum Shop will provide information on days we will

we mail out your Wentz Post or an announcement of an upcoming event. I am sure we all agree we are not raising money to benefit the United States Postal System! Mr. Wentz would be shaking his head at that. So would George. By the way, this does not alter the great work the Wentz Wizards demonstrate every time they put together an issue. Read about a wizard named Frank Luther in this issue.

Wishing you the best of summers. Feel free to reach us at the Farmstead with any questions you might have.

Questers  in  late  September. Stay Tuned!

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

by Margaret Bleecker Blades

We have two signs of spring: the scent of mowed grass is in the air, and the increased number of bookings for field trips from schools and homeschool groups. Although we are not back to the number of large programs we typically saw before the pandemic, schools seem to be taking groups of students on trips again. Farm programs, house tours, craft projects, and historic skill programs have been shared with over 200 students and Scout groups during the month of May alone.

And although we haven't yet conclusively answered that age-old question "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" we were treated to witnessing the incubation and hatching of eleven chicken eggs in the Visitor Center at the Farmstead this spring. An electric incubator kept the eggs at the ideal temperature and humidity for three weeks, allowing us to witness several of the chicks their to dom; majority them









peck way free-the of ap-



In late April, Sheep Shearing took place as a public program for the first time in three years. Our two ewes allowed Farmer Jim to shear them using historically correct steel hand shears. Both girls looked very pink after receiving their trims, and seemed very pleased to be back with their lambs in the field by day's end. The fleeces will be washed and processed by a PWF volunteer, so we can look forward to seeing what garments—hats, mitts, scarves? —are produced in the coming months.

Award-winning cinematographer Buddy Squires visited the Farmstead in May. An Oscar-nominated filmmaker, Emmy-winning director of photography, and, with Ken Burns, a founding member of Florentine Films, Squires and his crew were on site to film house exteriors for an upcoming film on the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. It's not quite time to start popping the popcorn for the preview yet—the 250th is still four years away -- but we will share updates on the project as they become available.










We were all happy to discover that the attendance numbers for the Peter Wentz Farmstead are actually even larger than we were aware. While we can accurately count the number of guests who tour the house, it hasn't been possible to keep a precise count of the visitors who might not talk with a staff member. Guests who are on site to walk the Nature Trail, or who visit to see the grounds, farmyard and buildings from the exterior only— or who use our paths to walk, jog, or exercise their dogs, or who come to visit the farm animals--have been undercounted. A mechanical traffic counter was installed at



To keep the Farmstead in the public eye, we hope to be able to continue offering programs and events. We are inviting the public to attend Juneteenth programs the weekend of June 18 and 19th; to register their children to our all-day Summer Camp the week of July 11 through 15th; and to celebrate the anniversary of Washington's two stays at the Peter Wentz Farmstead with several programs the weekends of October 1 and 2 as well as  Octo-  b e r  15th and 16th.  Please  p l a n  to join us!

IN MEMORIAM

compiled by Linda Snyder

Deanna Hansen Ditter who passed away on December 19, 2020 at age seventy-one. She and the late John William Ditter III were married for forty-one years. "Bill" for many years took on the task of cleaning the Peter Wentz house to make it ready for visitors. Deanna was a member of the Gamma Phi Beta Sorority at Gettysburg College. After graduating from Gettysburg, she later attended Widener University for her Master's degree in Social Work. She retired from her social worker duties in 2020. She played piano and taught children and neighbors. She had many interests including traveling, gardening, visiting her grandchildren and many others. Deanna joined the Historical Society in 1999. She is survived by four sons, seven grandchildren, one sister, two half-siblings, and her stepmother.

Edward Buchanan who died on March 1, 2022 at age ninety-one is survived by his wife, two sons, three daughters, and a brother and eleven grandchildren. Growing up in Philadelphia, he graduated from West Catholic High School and LaSalle College. He retired from Merck, Sharp & Dohme in 1993. Relaxing in his comfortable recliner would have been a perfect day, but he was more likely to be found at a soccer field, music recital  o r  p l a y,  s w i m  m e e t,  o r  a n  a w a r d  c e r e -  m o n y. He

enjoyed  h i s  g r a n d k i d s. Summers from 1970 to the present meant a beach vacation to Ocean City, NJ. Other travel with his wife and friends took them to Ireland, Alaska, Greece and Notre Dame football games. Ed was a loyal supporter of all things Philadelphia from sports teams to food. He was also a veteran, having served during the Korean War. He will be greatly missed by family and friends.

CURATOR'S CORNER

by Scott Houting

CURATOR'S CORNER, *continued*

other wood pieces were sent to the Denver Cold Storage facility in Denver, Pennsylvania, to receive freeze treatment for preventive conservation against wood-boring insect damage. The freezing treatment is a common procedure for the conservation of wood subjected to insect infestation issues.

The returned wood pieces were placed over at Alvin's in isolated storage for six months of observation. After the observation period revealed no further deterioration of the wood, the collection was ready for processing and storage with the rest of the architectural objects. The cataloguing of these wood objects has been completed and data has been entered into the farmstead's Past-Perfect collection database. A few of the wood pieces are going to receive a second in-house freeze treatment as an extra conservative measure.

In other collections news, the Farmstead's collection of architectural drawings and blueprints received processing. Dating back to the 1970's house restoration and other planned events, the drawings were recently catalogued and moved to flat storage over at Alvin's house. A printed Finding Aid was created to help researchers working with the prints and to have a hardcopy of the collection records. A special thank-you goes to our sister site, Millgrove, for providing three gently used museum-quality map cases for storing these drawings.

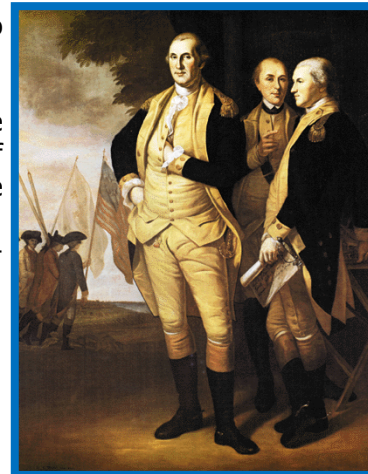
As we move into the second half of 2022, we are planning the first steps of tackling the huge collection storage project awaiting Farmstead staff at the Norristown Farm Park. The Farmstead plans to evaluate and assess these objects, generally oversize agricultural and transportation objects, during the first phase of this project. We need to update the list of what we have and what attention each object needs. Once this initial assessment is complete, we will move into cleaning, arrangement of new storage, and evaluate the collections for possible deaccession or retention based on each object's contribution to the Farmstead's interpretive goals and needs. The farm park project is expected to take the staff into 2023.

On the front, the received from the Spring House group has been used to purchase reproduction military furnishings for the Stove Room. When installed this coming October, the furnishings will help Farmstead visitors better understand the occupation of the Wentz house by General Washington and his staff during the Fall of 1777. A preview reception is being planned for members of the

Tench Tilghman (1744–1786): Tilghman was born into a well-to-do gentry family in Talbot County, Maryland. His maternal grandmother wanted him to come to Philadelphia and so he did and eventually attended the College of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania). After graduation in 1761, he entered into business with his uncle. When British trade policies began to hurt his saddlery business, his anti-British sentiment grew. Accordingly, Tilghman joined the Philadelphia militia, rising to the rank of captain.

In the summer of 1776, Washington sought him out, and he became a volunteer aide-de-camp to the general ---serving without pay. Tilghman was Washington's longest serving and perhaps best all-around aide. He may have not have been as fluent in French as Hamilton, or as good a specialist as the other aides in their way, but he could do many tasks well. He enjoyed the respect and friendship of Washington and was close to Washington's Military Secretary Robert Hanson Harrison. During the time that Washington was headquartered at Peter Wentz, five of the letters that Washington dictated are in Tench's hand.

It was no General selected carry the news of over the Yorktown the Conti-



surprise that Washington Tilghman to momentous the victory British at in 1781 to nental Con-

(Washington, Lafayette and Tilghman at Yorktown, Charles Wilson Peale, 1784, Courtesy of Maryland State Art Collection)

In the painting, *Washington, Lafayette and Tilghman at*

GENERAL WASHINGTON’S STAFF

Maryland Center for History and Culture as well. The Center currently has a high-quality reproduction of the coat on display. <https://www.mdhistory.org/exhibitions/inventing-a-nation/>

Tilghman returned to business after the war in the City of Baltimore and continued to correspond with Washington. Ill health plagued him, however, and he died at the young age of forty-two.

When Washington found out from Tench’s brother Thomas that Tilghman had died, he wrote the brother back saying, “As there were few men for whom I had a warmer friendship, or greater regard than for your Brother---

Tilghman---
with much
you, that,
(re) none
death I
more sin-
have regret-

Colonel
when I liv- ing; so,
truth I can assure
there a
whose
could
cerely
ted ...”



WENTZ GARDEN UPDATE

by Donna Armstrong

After a long winter’s nap, our garden has come alive again with several plants that bring welcome color.

One of the first to appear is a sweet, low plant called “The Star of Bethlehem”. Easily recognized by the white stripe running down the center of the narrow leaves, the “star” bloom lives up to its name with 5 petals.

By the end of April, another star in our garden is a fragrant, yellow, tulip-like flower commonly known as the

WELCOME TO THE NEW PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD SOCIETY WEBSITE

by Tom Knoble

If you haven’t visited the new website yet, please take a moment to share your thoughts on the new website and the website sections that have been recreated to operate better with mobile devices. As you’re all aware, everyone lives by their smartphones these days. One of the motivations for the new site is that it will display correctly on smartphone and desktop computers equally well.

There are two major new additions to the website which will help our members:

1. Online Store. Shopping online in the gift shop will be available for everyone.
2. Membership Signup. Members can sign up to begin their membership account or renew an existing membership. The membership program will now remind members when the renewal is coming due.

We hope that you enjoy all of the new information and new photos that have been added to the website. Our hope is that the general public will also find the website while they are looking for local attractions. Please share your feedback and we look forward to making the website serve the mission of our society.

Check us out at: <https://peterwentzfarmsteadsociety.org/>

CHANGES IN THE MUSEUM SHOP

by Kathy Yost

The shop has gone through a Spring metamorphosis (bet you didn’t know I could spell that!). Changes include: Total redesign of shop, new arrangement of merchandise and new thinking. Kudos to Amy, Carla and special thanks to Sandy White for pitching in.

The closet doors have been removed which gave us about 30% more display area. We ordered new inventory for the first time in almost three years. That was fun! Sandy’s knowledge of what sells there was huge. With Carla’s research, Lee Kirk, Pat McDonnell and Meg’s staff hunting for new books and other suggestions, we are in great shape!

Thanks to Meg and her staff, we knew when all these tours and workshops were happening, we have been able to provide the appropriate merchandise (books,

BEHIND THE SCENE

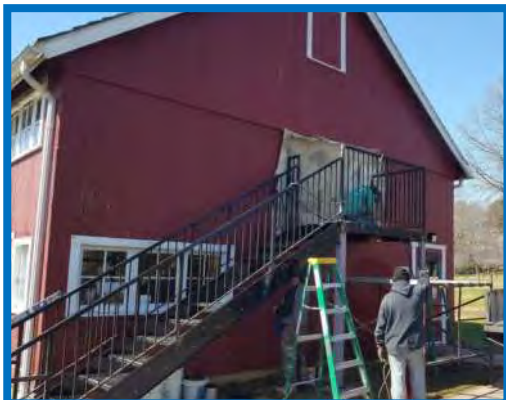
By Linda Snyder

If you enjoy the WENTZ POST and its beautiful layout, give a big "Thank You" to Frank Luther. Frank has formatted the WENTZ POST for the last fifteen years. He began by assisting the previous layout organizer, Al Fritz, and took over full responsibility when Al retired.

But let's turn the clock back and see the path that brought Frank here. Receiving a Bachelor's Degree from Villanova as an English major, Frank taught for five years at Stewart Junior High in Norristown, PA. Pursuing his Master's Degree at Villanova, he moved to Upper Merion Area Junior High for six years. Next step: courses for a Pennsylvania Principal's Certificate, also at Villanova, which led to an Assistant Principalship at the same Upper Merion Area Junior High for six additional years. Then the Assistant Principalship transitioned into Director of Secondary Education while schools changed from Junior/Senior High Schools to Middle School/High School. Then, Principal of the High School which completed thirty years in education and on to retirement.

Retiring as Czechoslovakia was separating into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Frank was invited to teach English in Slovakia for one year. Ten years later, Frank returned to the United States and visited a spring Colonial Day at the Peter Wentz Farmstead. His sister was looking for ideas for a Colonial Fair which the staff at the Upper Merion Area Middle School sponsored at the end of the school year. Mentioning there was a history fair at a place in Worcester called the Peter Wentz Farmstead, she asked, "Would Frank like to go?"

The rest of the story: Frank came, enjoyed, and joined the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society. He loved the planned trips and helped coordinate some with the Trip Planning Committee, and eventually took over the work of Betty Gamon and Eleanor Bittles coordinators.



nator. He served on the Society board and served on the

GIFT SHOP CHILDREN'S BOOKS

compiled by Carla Chagaris

Dear America. The Diary of Abigail Jane Stewart. *The Winter of Red Snow*. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 1777

Colonial Kids, An Activity Guide to Life in the New World

Cut and Assemble-An Early New England Village, 12 Full Color Buildings in H-O Scale

Paul Revere's Ride

Noah's Ark

Penny Olive, Pennsylvania Dutch Children's Book

Davey Applebutter, Pennsylvania Dutch Childrens Book

Explore Colonial America, 25 Great Projects, Activities and Experiments

Tales From Woodfields, Cederk Bear, Paper Doll

Tales From Woodfields, Lou-Lou Rabbit, Paper Doll

Guide to Paper Cutting

Theorems Today-The Art of Stencil Painting on Velvet

Nature Cuts-A Collection of Over 20 Beautiful Papercutting Projects and Templates

Coloring Books

Life in Colonial America

Story of the Civil War

Valley Forge

Jacob's Colonial Family History Penn-



sylvania German Tutorial and Coloring Book

Tales From Woodfield

A LOOK BACK

From the **PETER WENTZ GUIDEPOST**, NUMBER 12, July 19, 1979 (precursor to the **WENTZ POST**):

The big news at this time is that WE HAVE THE WASHINGTON LETTER! After almost a year in negotiation, it is finally ours!

On the off-chance that there is someone who does not know what we are talking about:

The letter in question (which was found in an estate in Mifflintown., Pennsylvania) was written by Washington on October 19, 1777, WHILE AT THE PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD, to General Potter in Chester, Pennsylvania. Entirely written by Washington (not just signed by him, as was customary), this hitherto unknown. and unpublished letter thus becomes the first object to return to the Farmstead that we know was here in the Fall of 1777. Let's hope that it is just the first of many. The letter is currently in a bank vault, but it will. be displayed at the Farmstead as soon as adequate security can be arranged.

To answer the inevitable questions:

1. The letter was purchased primarily by donations to the Farmstead, with a sizeable assist from the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society. No public or tax money was used to acquire it.
2. Its purchase price was substantial, but not so exorbitant.

Check out this one page newsletter and other past newsletters at:



On June 7, the Farmstead posted: No, they're not spacemen; they're beekeepers! There was quite the buzz around the Farmstead last week as a large honey bee hive was removed from the roof of the historic house. Slab upon slab of honeycomb was pulled out as the beekeepers safely collected the Queen and the rest of the colony to be relocated. Check out the incredibly intricate structures these busy bees left behind for us!



intricate structures these busy bees left behind for us!





Happy Birthday to us! On this date in 1976, the Peter Wentz Farmstead was officially opened to the public. The celebration featured a performance from the Methacton High School Warrior Band, an invocation by Rev. Sheldon M. Smith of the Washington Memorial Chapel, and speeches from County Commissioners, members of the Montgomery County Historical Advisory Board, and Albert T. Gamon, the Farmstead's first director.

The Peter Wentz Farmstead has been proud to serve our community these past forty-six years, and we plan to do so for many years to come!

(From the Peter Wentz Farmstead Facebook page, June 5, 2022.)



KIDS' FUN PAGE



LLAMAS ARE WELCOME GUESTS!

by Pat McDonnell

Today llamas are very popular and seen everywhere. There are wonderful books, games and toys all about llamas. Llamas are new to our country. While they have lived in the Andean mountains of South America for thousands of years, they came here only about eighty years ago.

Llamas were very important to the people who owned them. These villagers used their wool for yarn and clothing. Llamas served as pack animals too and could carry about 200 pounds. To show their love and appreciation for their llamas, the villagers often held festivals for them, played their flutes for the llamas and decorated them with ribbons and bells.

Let's see what we know about these special animals: Llamas and alpacas belong to the camelid family. Llamas are smart, very friendly and are able to understand and do what they are told to do. Llamas live in herds. If there isn't a herd nearby, they will adopt sheep or goats. Llama babies are called crias (cree uz). Llamas hum. It's their own way of "talking". We have much to learn about the hum and are not sure yet if this means that the llama is OK or not. Llamas also have an alarm

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

prepared by Carly Schmidt

Saturday, July 30 from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Kinder Klass: Furniture Painting

Ages 4 and up. \$5 materials fee. Limited space, pre-registration required.

Saturday, August 6 Time TBD

Homesteading 101: *An Introduction to Home Canning*

Come learn how to preserve summer's bounty and help to pack and process a batch of Dilly Beans. Adults only. \$10 materials fee, pre-registration required.

Friday, September 16 to Sunday, September 18

All for the Union: How Society Wove Itself into the Fabric of the Civil War***The Civil War comes to the Peter Wentz Farmstead on September 17-18.***

Witness artillery demonstrations and learn how soldiers camped in the field. Discover fascinating stories about the exodus of Enslaved people on their journeys to freedom during the war. All ages, free. No registration required.

Saturday, September 24 at 10:00 am

Scarecrow Contest

Come show off your artistic skills at our Scarecrow Contest! We will provide the hay and the frame, you bring your own clothes and other accessories. Photos of each scarecrow will be posted on our Facebook page, where users can vote for their favorite. All ages, suggested donation \$5 per group. Must pre-register to receive materials.

Friday, September 30 to Tuesday, November 29

From Home to Headquarters: Washington in Worcester

This fall, the Peter Wentz Farmstead is beginning a new annual tradition! This yearly interpretive event will see the Wentz family's home transformed into Washington's headquarters as it was in October of 1777. This exhibit will be included in all regular tours between September 30th and November 29th. All ages, free.

Saturday, October 1 from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Exhibit Opening - From Home to Headquarters: Washington in Worcester

We know that Washington slept here, but what else did he do? Join us for the grand opening of our new exhibit – From Home to Headquarters: Washington in Worcester – to find out! All ages; free.

Saturday, October 8 at 7:30 pm

They Passed This Way (Campfire Program)

Did you know that George Washington and the Continental army traveled along the same routes in Montgomery County that we often drive on today? Come to this campfire program and hear about the places that Washington and his men passed. All ages; free.

