

Wentz Post

A Periodic Publication Of The Peter Wentz Farmstead Society Featuring News, Views And Activities...

Eleanor Bittle: 1st President of PWFS & *The Tape Lady*

By Dianne M. Cram



Eleanor Bittle

Eleanor Bittle has been a constant presence at the Farmstead since 1976 when she first visited the Farmstead during a Candlelight Tour and shortly thereafter offered her services as a volunteer. Eleanor became one of the first history interpreters to give guided house tours to visitors. One year later the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society was incorporated and the nominating committee chose Eleanor to be placed on the ballot for president. She served as the Society's first president for approximately three years along with James Kilgannon as vice president. During those early years Eleanor also served as coordinator for the Colonial Craft Camp, a task that paved the way towards her appointment in 1989 as Educational Coordinator with the county staff.

Eleanor has an interesting history prior to her involvement with the

Farmstead. She began life as Eleanor Harley on her parent's farm in Northern Chester County. She will proudly tell you that she can trace her family back to Christopher Sauer, the 18th century printer from Germantown who produced German bibles, among other books. Eleanor's family moved to Pottstown when she was a young girl. Eleanor has been giving of her time and talents as a volunteer nearly her entire life. During World War II she served in the Navy WAVES (Women's Auxiliary Volunteer Emergency Service) from 1944 to 1946 as Petty Officer 2nd Class - Storekeeper in Disbursement. After the war Eleanor married Bob Bittle and eventually settled in Gilbertsville. She spent many years involved with Girl Scouts of America directing programs and activities for scouts before turning her educational skills towards historical interpretation and the Farmstead.

Of all Eleanor's many interests and abilities, one topic has become her trademark - the process of weaving linen tape on various types of tape looms. She first became interested in tape weaving in 1977, and since then she has pursued many years of research that has made her a leading expert on this early craft. Eleanor's first tape loom was one that her husband Bob made for her, a replica of an early loom. Bob continued to make both standing looms and box looms as Eleanor honed her skills as a weaver. Eventually she began acquiring antique looms from dealers and local auction sales. Over the years she has traveled extensively in search of looms and has acquired them from many different states. Eleanor tells one story about

winning the bid on a loom at an auction where the auctioneer didn't have any idea what that contraption he was selling was. Eleanor knew!

She has amassed a collection of nearly 100 tape looms, box looms, standing looms, lap or knee looms, all shapes and sizes, some finely crafted, others just made from rough planks nailed together. Each one has a story and is lovingly preserved in her home, which has turned into somewhat of a museum. Eleanor, a.k.a., *The Tape Lady*, weaves beautiful tapes that have been used in many museum exhibits and can be found for sale in various museum shops.

Throughout the years Eleanor worked at the Farmstead she touched many lives in such a positive way, particularly those of thousands of school children who benefited from her tireless efforts to bring the past alive. Many of those children, now adults, continued on with a special

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Peter Wentz Farmstead Hours of Operation

Tuesday - Saturday 10:00-4:00 PM

Sunday 1:00-4:00 PM

Last Tour 3:30 PM

Closed Mondays and major holidays.
Reservations required for group tours.

Admission: FREE!

The Farmstead is located on Shearer
Road in Worcester, PA, near the inter-
section of Routes 73 and 363 in
Montgomery County.

Calling All Gardeners!

by Janet Riemer

After a long snowy winter, spring is now here. Now is the time to think about the garden at the Peter Wentz Farmstead - deciding what to plant, shopping for plants and flowers, and getting the beds ready. Last year we had a faithful five who worked in the garden, but we can always use more hands. If you are interested in helping in the garden, just call the Farmstead office, (610) 584-5104, and I'll get in touch with you.

Welcome New PWFS Members

Charles A. Miller
Ritva Rauhala

Eleanor Bittle: 1st PWFS President

(Continued from page 1)

interest in history thanks to the time Eleanor spent with them.

And many children and adults learned the skill of weaving and gained a wonderful insight into the production of linen from her patient instruction. Eleanor decided to "retire" in 2000, but that hardly slowed her down. She has continued her costumed demonstrations of tape weaving for both school groups and adult groups and she is still actively involved as a volunteer at the Farmstead. Her research on tape weaving and linen production continues. She has turned two rooms of her house into a showcase for her collection and enthusiastically provides "guided tours" to individuals and small groups.*

Eleanor has tremendous

knowledge and skills and amazing stories that she so willingly shares along with that wonderful twinkle in her eyes. Thank you, Eleanor, for the many years of devotion to the Farmstead and for all that you have given.

***Note:** Eleanor's collection can be seen upon appointment. If you are interested, please contact the Farmstead for further information.

Historic Preservation Student at Work



Connie Walsh in the PWF attic.

Volunteer Connie Walsh has recently embarked on a project to catalog the architectural elements stored in the attic of the Peter Wentz house. Architectural elements are pieces of buildings, like bricks, beams, and plaster. In this case, many of these pieces came from the nineteenth-

century grist-mill that used to stand between the house and the Zacharias Creek. Ms. Walsh is completing the Historic Preservation program at Bucks County Community College, and this project helps to fulfill her course requirements.

The PWFS Museum Shop

By Charlotte Herman & Phyllis Yergey



Charlotte Herman and Phyllis Yergey sometime take

Charlotte Herman: My friend gave me a birthday gift of membership in the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society. The following year she urged me to be a helper for craft persons at Colonial Craft Camp. I enjoyed myself so much that I wanted to become involved. Eventually, I was drafted as Treasurer. When Lib Dewey retired from the Museum Shop, my friend and I were encouraged to take over the shop. My job is to purchase books, a task I really enjoy. I'm so glad my friend started me on this truly wonderful adventure.

Phyllis Yergey: If you haven't already guessed, I'm the friend. Becoming involved in the Society is similar for me. I had been active in scouting and a friend, Eleanor Bittle, approached me to join the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society. I have to thank her for a very enjoyable volunteer experience. Membership, Colonial Craft Camp, and serving on the Board have been some of my previous activities with the Society.

Presently I'm serving as Co-Chairperson of the Museum Shop. I enjoy meeting our visitors and giving tours of our site as a docent. I made many new friends and enjoy the time

we share together on trips and events at the Farmstead. The staff makes you feel special. I urge others to become involved, as it is fun and rewarding.

Tree Programs

by Jim Nichols

Starting as an attempt to replace many of the trees that had died out over time and to help preserve and stabilize erosion on the farm, our tree program has expanded and grown in new and exciting ways each year since its inception.

This year we are offering the chance to make donations for the purchase of conservation grade stock, planted to control stream bank erosion along the Zacharias watershed. Each donation of \$50.00 will purchase five young trees planted along the stream bank with protection from the deer. You will also receive a "green leaf" on the plaque in the visitor center. The overwhelming response to last year's Orchard Program has left us with only seventeen trees to plant to finish the orchard!

Anyone interested in donating orchard trees is encouraged to do so before the chance disappears. We will continue to offer the choice of a hardwood Memorial Tree, planted where it will most benefit the restoration and stabilization of the watershed. It's a pleasure to know that we all can have a part in leaving such a long-term and meaningful legacy for the future of the farm.

New Items in the Shop!

Spring is here! Our shop has patchwork bunnies; felted chicks and bunnies, and more. Need a small gift? Check out the lavender filled pillows or an angel wreath. Our cat lovers' corner has many feline items. You must see the collectible cat gourd named Katie. A new line of pewter is in the shop! On display you'll find an oval plate and a porringer.

Do you want to carry on a German Christmas tradition? Pickle ornaments are available now. They were placed last on the tree, but well hidden among the branches. The child who found it first was rewarded with an extra present by St. Nicholas for being so observant. We are proud of the fact that approximately ninety percent of our items in the shop are made in the U.S.A.

There is an interesting and informative selection of books. Back in stock is Eric Sloane's "Reverence for Wood." For the chefs, there's "A Quaker Woman's Cookbook," a revision done by William Woys Weaver. With warmer weather in mind, there's "Butterflies in the Backyard" by Scott Shalaway. Scott lives in the hills of West Virginia and writes a column on the outdoors for many newspapers.

Calendar of Events

- Jan.-July Farmstead Exhibit: Legacy of the Schultz Family.
- Apr.-Oct. Millbrook Society Archeological Digs at PWF. 10:00-4:00 on the following Saturdays: 5/8, 5/22, 6/5, 6/26, 7/17, 7/31, 8/14, 8/28, 9/11, 9/25, 10/16
- Apr. 17 Sheep Shearing Day, 10:00-3:00.
- Apr. 19 Day Trip to Philadelphia Antiques Show and National Constitution Center
- Apr. 21 Spring Meeting at Schwenkfelder Church, 7:00 p.m.
- May 2 Arbor Day Memorial Tree Dedication, 1:30-3:00.
- May 8 Pennsylvania as a Horticultural Melting Pot. Guest speaker Jeannine Vannais, 1:00 p.m.
- May 12 Pennsylvania Dutch & Hessian Soldiers of the Revolutionary War. Guest speaker Dr. David Valuska. 7:00 p.m. at the Farmer's Union Hall in Worcester.
- June 5 Colonial Market Fair Day, 10:00-4:00.
- June 21-25 Colonial Day Camp, 9:00 to 2:00. Pre-registration required.
- June 30 Day Trip to Dellicot City, MD.
- July-Dec. Farmstead Exhibit: From Moo to Ewe -Meat Preparation & Preservation in the 18th Century.
- Sept. Millbrook Society Benefit Play. Details to be announced.
- Sept. 13-17 Trip to Boston Massachusetts Area
- Oct. 16 Laerenswaert Colonial Crafts Festival 10:00-4:00.
- Oct. 20 Fall Dinner Meeting at Schwenkfelder Church, 6:00 p.m.
- Oct. 30 Colonial Pretzel Making, 10:00-3:00.
- Nov. Day Trip to Wheaton Village, NJ. Details to be announced.
- Nov. 20 Mincemeat for the Season, 10:00-3:00.
- Dec. 4 Candlelight Tour.

All events are at the Farmstead unless otherwise noted.

Continuing Education

By Kimberly D. Praria

As everything finally began to settle down after the holiday season, the staff and I started to look ahead to the forthcoming months with the anticipation of finally beginning those projects we had wanted to initiate earlier in the season. In particular, Morgan and I hoped to work on the relatively long list of research topics during this so-called *quiet time* that usually occurs during the cooler months. However, time proved our adversary and continued to speed ahead at full force.

Before I even had time to blink, I tore January from my desk calendar and stared anxiously at February. I suddenly found myself with a number of events to oversee and more in the foreground. I had to contact various speakers, attend a number of meetings, and still find time for my other duties.

Now that March has reared its rainy head, I find myself thinking many of the same thoughts, especially since camp looms on the horizon. Thanks to the support of the PWFS and the Farmstead staff, I have begun planning summer camp for this year and am truly excited about the endeavor. A number of craftspeople have already put us on their schedule for the week of June 21st and I am waiting to hear from some of the others. As I write this article, seventeen children have signed-up to participate in camp, which will prove a fun, yet educational venture for everyone involved. I only hope that I will be as successful as those that ran the camp in the past.

As you can see, I have managed to keep myself busy. You will always find a stack of folders and other papers piled high on my desk that I anticipate "attacking" as I arrive to the site each morning. But time stops for no one and therefore the planning process continues for all of the interesting and informative events yet to come; I look forward to working with and seeing you on those dates.

The Value of Native Plants in Today's Landscapes

Please join us on Saturday, June 26th from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Gary Schwetz, Manager and Director of Greening Programs at the Delaware Center for Horticulture, will provide a presentation on native plants in our cultured and wild landscapes and then lead a walk along the Zacharias Creek Watershed at the Peter Wentz Farmstead.

This talk and walk will feature a glimpse of the rich heritage of native plants of the region, their indispensable value for use in today's landscape, and an in-depth peek at the current restoration efforts and native plants at the Peter Wentz Farmstead. For further information, please call the Farmstead Office at 610 584-5104.

A Sweet Time of Year

by Jay Ryan

Recently I was given the chance to volunteer for Juniata College's Sapsucker Club at Raystown Lake in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania. Besides helping them clear snow from the lane down the mountain with their 1949 Ford 9N tractor, I assisted in the tapping of 350 trees. Sap lines were run down hill to a 350 gallon holding tank. I felt blessed to have been given the opportunity to experience an established maple sugaring program.

On the long road home from Juniata, I sat wondering why our Farmstead couldn't do a similar program. Last year I tapped eight trees and tried to use propane gas to boil down the sap. It worked quite well until my tanks ran out of fuel and I was faced with having to fill them again. I decided there must be a more economical source of fuel. So as I was cruising down the turnpike, I decided to have another go at sugaring.

On February 25th, Jim and I tapped nine sugar maples. As soon as the drill bit was pulled from the trunk, the sweet sap started running. The next day I tapped three more trees. Three days later, we had collected fifty gallons of sap and decided to start the boiling process. Since the Farmstead has a proliferation of dead pine trees and retired fence rails, we decided to use this as our fuel source. Over a span of four days,

volunteer Robin Forbes and I camped out and tended the fire. Ultimately, we collected 105 gallons of sap. The ratio for sap to syrup is 40:1. We obtained close to three gallons of sweet maple syrup. The experiment was a huge success!

Next spring the Farmstead will be offering its First Annual Maple Sugaring Weekend. Our goal will be to incorporate the apprentices and educate them about this great North American tradition. We hope to make this a unique program by demonstrating the maple sugaring process in its entirety. We need feedback from our apprentices to find out if there is motivation to carry out this program. Apprentices will be given the option to camp out either in a tent or in the office (heat) and will be directly involved with tending the fire and monitoring the sap.

I would like to thank Jim Nichols, Rick and Wendy Bourne (musical entertainment), Rich and Jayne Poole, Joe, Bonny, Tina and Robin Forbes, Morgan, Dianne, John and Kim for donating the mason jars, and everyone else who helped to make this experiment a huge success.



Our sap boiling station.

Scholarships

by Carol Berardelli

The Peter Wentz Farmstead Society is again pleased to announce the **Albert T. and Elizabeth R. Gamon Annual Scholarship Program** for 2004 and would like to invite you or a family member to apply for an award.

The scholarships, which will be available in amounts up to \$1,000.00, will be given to high school seniors and/or undergraduate college students who are interested in pursuing a degree in American History and/or American Decorative Arts History, Archaeology, Pennsylvania German Culture, Museum Studies or Anthropology.

The awards will also be based on the student's academic records, activities and leadership qualities. Stop by the Farmstead to pick up an application or visit our Web site at www.PeterWentzFarmsteadSociety.org. All applications must be on file by May 1st, 2004. Call the Farmstead at 610-584-5104 for more information.



PWF Staff Wish List

- Vacuum Cleaner for Exhibit Area (\$150 - or a used one in good condition)
- Five Faux Food Items for House Exhibits (\$30/each)
- One Pair of Child's Wool Hand Cards (\$40/pair)
- 12 Plastic Storage Tubs (\$7/each)
- "The Best Poor Man's Country: Early Southeastern PA." Book (\$20)
- Two Pairs of Kneepads for Curatorial Cleaning (\$10/pair)
- Five Brass Candlesticks (\$30 each)
- Cast Iron Cookware for the Kitchen:
 - Spatula (\$30)
 - Strainer (\$30)
 - Spider (\$150)

Familiar Faces

By Sally Graybill



Irene Ferguson

Irene Ferguson, a small woman with a sparkle in her eye and a quick smile, is well known to many of us. She was born in Philadelphia and has resided in Cedars since 1956. Irene was employed by the Penn State Extension Center in Norristown, working in the cooking and food preparation area. She belongs to several quilting groups, a home economics group, and is active in Wentz U.C.C. One of Irene's current interests is impersonating Martha Washington, utilizing her abundant knowledge of 18th century history to entertain and educate groups. She is also researching 18th century tea drinking and service.

Irene began her volunteer career at the Salvation Army Headquarters in Philadelphia. She fried eggs and, along with three friends, served Sunday morning breakfast for returning WWII servicemen. Irene began as an interpreter in 1976 at Valley Forge Park, serving there for fourteen years. In 1980 she assumed interpretive duties at the Morgan Log House where she continues to be active. Irene has given over 2300 hours of volunteer time to the Peter Wentz Farmstead. In addition to her guiding duties, Irene has taught classes in band box construction, reverse glass painting, and lucet at Wentz Colonial Camp.

If there was one thing Irene could change at the Farmstead, there would be monthly meetings of staff and volunteers to update information and increase the knowledge and his-



Harry Snyder

torical appreciation of interpreters.

Irene's love of telling people about 18th century history, especially General and Mrs. Washington, is well received and respected by all who have had the privilege of hearing her. Thank you, Irene, for all you have given us.

Harry Snyder is a pleasant man who loves talking to people and who has volunteered at the Farmstead since 1987. Harry is a familiar face to many members and visitors. He and his wife, Doris, moved from Philadelphia to Upper Gwynned twenty seven years ago.

When Harry retired from Moore Products, an industrial instrument maker, he began a new career, volunteering. He has been involved with Meals on Wheels, the Wissahickon Watershed, the local AARP chapter, Lions Club, and a neighborhood book club. Along with home maintenance chores, Harry and Doris enjoy traveling. They frequently visit with family in California and Florida, and especially enjoy their great granddaughter, Emily.

In addition to interpreting duties, Harry has been an enthusiastic volunteer at Colonial Camp, cheerfully tackling any project asked of him. He especially enjoys teaching campers to marblize paper. One summer Harry served as the camp "town crier." He has taught campers paper

Peter Wentz Farmstead Society Board

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Museum Shop	Phyllis Yergey
Scholarship	Carol Berardelli
Ways & Means	Elizabeth Gamon

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.

making and woodworking, tasks that could test the patience of a saint!

Harry continues to lobby for a working flag pole on the Farmstead. In addition, he would like to see the completion of an adequate education center, a long term goal of the Society. We are all indebted to Harry for his generous gifts of time and talent. Thank you so much, Harry.

Membership in the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

Our Society continues to grow, and if you are not already a member, please join us. There are two meetings a year which feature speakers and/or slides and movies on subjects of historical interest. Your membership fee entitles you to discounts on our day trips and overnight excursions to historical sites, discounts on selected museum shop purchases, and a subscription to our newsletter. Join us in the worthwhile project of preserving the 18th century way of life at the Farmstead. The PWFS is registered as a 501(c)(3), not for profit organization. Donations are tax deductible.

Please Print:

Date _____

Name _____ Phone _____

(Company, if applicable)

Address _____ E-mail _____

(Street)

(Town and State)

(Zip)

Check if: Wentz descendant Schultz descendant

Check one: New member Please renew my membership

Check one:

- Student \$10.00
- Individual \$20.00
- Senior Family (both over 65) . \$25.00
- Family Membership \$30.00
- Life Member \$500.00
- Business \$100.00

Additional donation: _____

Total amount enclosed: _____

Please contact me concerning volunteer activities

Apply my additional donation to the fund checked below:

- Special Projects
- Scholarship (for students and interns)
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- _____



Drawing by Rick Moraux

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