

Wentz Post

A periodic publication of The Peter Wentz Farmstead Society in conjunction with The Farmstead Staff featuring news, views and activities.....

PUSHED BY CIRCUMSTANCE - PULLED BY HOPE (PART II) *By Karen Dougherty and Ruth Konrad*

EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is the continuation from Part I that appeared in the Wentz Post, Spring 2011. The Bibliography is available upon request. Previously printed in the News of Past Masters in Early American Domestic Arts.

Through letters written by a fictional character named Johannes Bauer to his brother Friedrich, still in Germany, we will tell the story of his coming to the colony of Pennsylvania and the life and times he found there.

The tenth day of November, 1683

Dear Brother Friedrich,

When last I wrote I had just arrived in Philadelphia. Upon leaving the ship, the other passengers and I were want[ing] for a place to live. "There are about four Score Houses and Cottages, such as they are, where Merchants and Handicrafts, are following their Vocations as fast as they can, while the Country-men are close at their farms." As the dwellings are all occupied by the English, Dutch, Swedes and Finns who came before, there is a shortage of housing so many of us are forced to live in caves along the Delaware River. The Indians, who are the original residents, tell of enlarging muskrat holes and using them as temporary shelters. The Quakers first made real homes of the caves. They were enlarged to a depth and breadth of four or more feet, and then a high earthen wall around part of the excavation that extended out from the side of the bluff was built. The open part of the roof was covered with layers of tree limbs and topped with sod, bark, or thatched with straw or river rushes. In the front there was a chimney made of stones mortared with a mixture of clay, reeds, and pebbles.

Among the cave dwellers is Daniel Francis Pastorius who pleased Mr. Penn with the inscription he wrote on



the oiled-paper over the door. It reads "*Parva domus sed amica bonis, procul este profani.* (A Little House, but a friend to the good; remain at a distance, ye profane)". It is from his cave that Mr. Pastorius greets the settlers and lets them cast lots for plots of land in a tract he says will be our Germantown.

The condition of the land is such that the soil lacks nothing in fertility and will reward the labor of our hand. Farmers and laborers are much needed here, for there are massive oak trees to be felled. There is everywhere only forest and little open space to be found. Fruits of the forest are many, most notably white and black mulberry, chestnut, walnut, plumbs, strawberries, cranberries,

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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
Hours of Operation**

Tuesday - Saturday 10:00 AM-4:00 PM
 Sunday 1:00-4:00 PM
 Last Tour 3:30 PM

Closed Mondays and holidays.

Reservations required for group tours.
 Admission: FREE!

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

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hurtleberries and grapes of many sorts. Wild game is plentiful for the hunting or as in trade for modest rates there is venison, turkey, wild goose, pheasant, pigeons, partridge, and ducks. Equally bountiful are the rivers and bay in which are sturgeon, herring, catshead, eel, smelt, perch, shad, and rockfish. Oysters are monstrous for bigness.

There are plenty of cow-cattle and some sheep. People plow mostly with oxen. Horses are shipped in from Barbados for the rivers are such that great ships can navigate them. The city lieth between two such rivers, the Delaware and the Schuykill.

This fine city is governed in the English manner. "...Courts of Justice are establisht in every County, with proper Officers, as Justices, Sheriffs, Clerks, Constables, etc., which Courts are held every two Months, Spring and Fall there is an Orphan's Court in each County, to inspect and regulate the Affairs of Orphans and Widdows."

Work begins in Germantown as we live in our river-side dwellings. Those who have no monies are bound to work for others while earning that which will be used in their own building. The trek of seven miles to the city of Philadelphia to do service and to procure supplies has established well the road. It is so much time spent in travel for goods, however reasonable, that one would have been better served by bringing what we would need for half a year than to spend such time in going back and forth.

I have more to write but am shortened in time.

Your Brother,

Johannes

The twelfth day of March, 1684

Dear Brother Friedrich,

Much progress has been made since my last letter, the least of which is having survived a most challenging winter during which we cleared the land on which to build our homes. Our main road is now sixty feet wide and our cross road is forty feet wide. Many of us are unable to take up our trades until we have houses in which to live and work.

Mr. Pastorius has had many conversations with Mr. Penn concerning the fifteen thousand acres that had been promised to us. Mr. Penn did not wish to give them "all together in one piece in order that so large a space in the land might not be uncultivated and empty. Mr. Pastorius felt it would be very prejudicial to us and our German successors to be so "completely wedged in by the English". At the end Mr. Penn gave warrant to have the land in one tract, provided that we would settle thirty families within a year's time.

Mr. Penn had also promised us ground on which to build a brick kiln. This has not been accomplished yet so we are unable to burn bricks. Therefore, we must build our houses from log or stone which abounds in this area. Then, as we have the right materials we can build more substantial and finer houses of brick.

Our first houses are made of "log frames and the insterstices filled with wattles, river rushes and clay inter-mixed. They are of but one story, so that a man of six feet high can easily touch the roof. Their gable ends are to the street. The ground story is of stone or of log - or sometimes the front room is of stone, and the back room is of logs, and thus they have generally one room behind the other. The roof is high and mostly hipped, forms a low bed chamber; the ends of the houses above the first story are of boards or sometimes of shingles with a small chamber window at each end. Many roofs were then tiled...the doors all divide in the middle, so as to have an upper and a lower: and in some houses the door folds. The windows are two doors, opening inwards, and were at first set in leaden frames with outside frames of wood." Our hearths are built of stone with a log lintel.

The people here are townsmen and we desire to establish our old world traditions in the new. We are millers, weavers, shoemakers, papermakers, cabinetmakers, shopkeepers. Mr. Pastorius notes that we townspeople are "not too well skilled in the culture of the ground." We do, however, "know enough to plant gardens and

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orchards, grain, and flax, to establish meadows, and to maintain our wood lots.”

I am most comfortably settled here now. It has been difficult to adjust to these unfamiliar surroundings and start a new community, but we Germans have a disposition to hard work so we have undertaken the challenge and the fruit of our labor will be success. We live in peace and work together for the good of all. Our lives in the old country are in the past yet remain in our minds. We must be sure this better way of life is passed on to our children and the generations that follow.

Dear Brother how I wish that you and your family would come to join me to experience this freedom of religion and self- government. Your life of farming would serve you and the community well. The raising of flax is needed to supply the spinners and weavers. Mr. Pastorius credits the weavers as the “town’s most prominent external prosperity”.

If you do come I would hope that you would take heed of my advice. See that you set sail on a ship that is bound directly for Philadelphia. I have heard that those who dock at Upland suffer many hardships in finishing their journey to Philadelphia. Be sure to set sail in the spring to avoid the harsh weather. Remember my experience with the ship’s food and supply yourself with nourishment.

There is very little money here as we have few return-goods to send to England. Please bring with you some good vines as the vines I had were destroyed by salt water. Also bring all sorts of field and garden seeds, especially of lentils, millet, etc. We are in great need of iron cooking pots and nests of kettles. The winter here is as cold as with you and the rough north winds much harsher so an iron stove would be of good use. I long to learn of your decision and I wish for you and your family all God’s blessings and remain your devoted brother,

Johannes

PRESIDENT'S REPORT *By Anne Condon*

In an effort to avoid a repeat of last year’s extreme heat (Ha! Ha!), the Society picnic was held on Wednesday, June 22, a beautiful but very hot early summer evening. Approximately forty Society members attended the annual event at The Old Mill House in Central Perkiomen Valley Park. Directors Carol Allen and Dini Vigliano assisted by Phyllis Yerkey provided a delicious meal of fried chicken, hot dogs and salads with all the trimmings, along with a myriad of amazing desserts. Although Director Sandy White could not attend this year’s event, she provided flowers in pretty blue bags as table favors for all who attended. Pleasant chatter along with Carol Allen’s now famous games, with prizes for the winners, topped off the evening.

PLEASE NOTE: To assure that a picnic will be held in 2012, a flyer will go out to all active members in early March requesting volunteers to form a picnic committee. More hands are needed to do a good job.

Some of you may have already seen it...the new cedar shake roof on the Wentz house is complete and looks beautiful. It’s like a beacon as you look ahead while driving down the lane to the farm.

The new well pump was installed in August and looks great. It was ready in June but was held off with the anticipation of the new roof being installed.

A camp picnic was held on Friday, July 1, 2011, sponsored jointly by the Farmstead and the Society. The campers and their families were invited to enjoy a picnic on the last day of camp and 130 people attended. Everyone had a grand time enjoying the usual picnic fare. We heard many wonderful comments about how great the camp was from parents and children alike. The picnic was held in an effort to attract additional members to the Society. The results...12 new adult family memberships and 1 student membership. Dianne Cram and I agreed that next year’s campers must be Society members in order to attend the Peter Wentz Farmstead camp.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS *By June Morse*

We are excited to announce that many new members have joined the Society, as of July 31, 2011!

A Warm Welcome to: The Cherry, Clune, Dale, Gardner, Hoban, Ladson, Lucente, Michini, and Thiriote families, the Wenners and Ms. Eidman.

You have joined our loyal returning membership in recognizing the importance of preserving this unique site, the Peter Wentz Farmstead. We encourage all of our members to “recruit” new members to join the Society. Tell us on the form who recommended you (or who you recommended) so this can be noted. Some of you have included tidbits of information with your renewals: local geographical facts, which members you are related to, why you joined, etc. We love hearing from and about you!

OH, WHAT A PICNIC !! By Dianne M. Cram



Once again, the weather played havoc with a Wentz event. Each year the Farmstead staff throws a picnic party for all our volunteers. This year, on July 29, Mother Nature threw a "party" back at us with not one, but two wind-driven, torrential downpour thunderstorms. The first storm blew through at 6:30pm, just as everyone was settling down to eat. Paper plates, laden with food, went flying and the large tents threatened to do the same. In minutes, everyone was soaked, especially the volunteers and Farmstead staff who were hanging onto tent poles attempting to hold the tents down.

I am thankful that lightning never came close to hitting the tents or anyone holding onto the metal poles could have been as fried as the chicken we were serving! The first storm blew for about ten minutes and stopped long enough for us to mop up wet tables and put the dessert out. Then the heavens opened up again with another blast of wind and rain. At that point, it was hopeless to go on. Thankfully, no one was hurt just very wet.

It was so bad, that it was actually funny! The situation was fraught with humor, such as seeing Adrienne with her head wrapped in a dish towel, and watching our musicians Ric and Wendi Bourne bravely playing a lively reel as everyone was running for cover. So, THANK YOU, Volunteers, for all you do for the Farmstead. We will host another picnic next year, and try to pick a better day!

UPCOMING EVENTS By Kim Boice

- Fall Harvest on the Farm* on Saturday, October 8th from 10am-3pm
Explore the traditional chores performed during the autumn harvest on a colonial farm. Visit the garden for a tour, spend time in the summer kitchen to experience food preservation & open-hearth cooking, and join the farmers in the barn as they shell corn and press apples for cider.
- Workshop: Market Basket* on Saturday, November 5th from 9am-3pm
Local basket makers Sara Robbins and Fran Daley will instruct you on how to make an 18th century-style market basket. Light refreshments served; lunch *not* provided.
Ages 12 + and limited to 10 participants. Fee: \$40/person with registration due by Friday, October 14th.
- Candlelight Tours* on Saturday, December 3rd from 2-8pm
The soft glow of candlelight will guide you throughout the decorated Farmstead for tours showcasing period music, seasonal decorations, holiday foodways, and a visit from Belsnickel, a Pennsylvania German St. Nicholas in furs.

"FACHWERK" DISCOVERED AT THE FARMSTEAD

By Dianne M. Cram

Thanks to the efforts of the restoration carpenters from Montgomery County's Department of Public Property, the walls of the loft, above the summer kitchen, have been cleaned, replastered and whitewashed. During the process of removing loose, crumbling plaster they uncovered areas of the stone wall and discovered that at least one portion of the summer kitchen was constructed using the half-timber frame method. This method uses heavy wood timbers of horizontal sill plates and vertical posts that are joined together with mortise-and-tenon joints to form a skeletal frame. The spaces between the timbers are traditionally filled with brick or stone and a thick mortar or "daub". The German's referred to this as "fachwerk" and used this construction method during the 18th century. Some examples of fachwerk in this region were clad on the exterior with clapboard and left exposed on the interior. In our summer kitchen, the outer wall of the timber framing is finished in stone, and plaster hides the framing on the interior wall. Apparently, forty years ago when the restoration began, this timber framing in the summer kitchen went unnoticed. We are



not sure if the entire summer kitchen, or if only a portion, is timber framed. In order to determine that, a lot more of the plaster from the interior walls would have to be removed. Our carpenters left an area above the stairs uncovered so that it can be seen. We now have more of the story of this old house to tell!

WHAT'S HAPPENING...

The historic Wentz House has a lovely **new roof**, and just in the nick of time. The entire roofing project, which included repair, cleaning and painting of the eaves and soffit trim, was completed prior to the arrival of Hurricane Irene.

The next major project at the house will be the installation of a **geothermal HVAC system** for both heating and cooling. The work is scheduled for this fall. There may be a short period when the house will be closed for tours while the contractors are putting in the system.

Rich Poole completed some **archaeological test digs** around the area of the house where the wells and trenching for the new geothermal system will be dug. He discovered that the cobbled stone turnaround at the front of the house extends farther than we knew from previous archaeology. The test pits also yielded many shards of pottery, glass, bone, bits of coal, all relative to the early years of the Farmstead.

A reconstructed **pumpstock** is now in place above the well next to the Wentz House. Dave Hoffman, historic restoration carpenter fabricated the new pump.

OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS *By Anne Condon*



David M. Carhart

Owner/President, Star Painting & Wallcovering of Skippack, Inc. Former Merchant Marine; Dave and his wife Amy reside in Colledgeville with their daughter, Megan and son, Danny.



Sandra L. White

Former owner, Floral & Hardy, Ltd., Skippack. Horticulturist, Gardener; Birdwatcher; Bee Keeper; and Falconer.



Wayne "Duffy" Grove

Retired telephone company employee where he did marketing and media work. Pioneer in Consumer Affairs; Degree in accounting, Bucknell University; Director, Telephone Pioneers of America with 25,000 members and Treasurer of boating group for 10 years.



Sherwood Yergey

Bloomsburg University graduate followed by Dickinson School of Law. Recently retired from practicing law in the Pottstown area. Did municipal work, serving as solicitor of 3 townships. Served on Advisory Board of the Salvation Army – 1968 to present. Member of PWFS for many years.

WENTZ FAMILY BURIAL GROUND from a Meadowood brochure

The Wentz Family Burial Ground is a family cemetery, the final resting place of Peter Wentz, Sr., Peter Wentz, Jr., and many of their descendants. The earliest grave marker dates to 1744.

The cemetery is located on the property of Meadowood on a tract of land purchased by Peter Wentz, Sr. in the early 1700's. Throughout the years, the land was divided into several parcels. One parcel of the original land grant sits behind the burial ground and encompasses the home of Peter Wentz, Sr. Another parcel is now known as the Peter Wentz Farmstead and contains the home built by Peter Wentz, Jr.

The burial ground was created near the home built by Peter Wentz, Sr. It is fifty by fifty feet and is enclosed by a four-foot high stone wall. One can imagine that the Wentz family wanted it close to their homestead so family members could stop by to meditate or to remember their loved ones. Records reveal that in the past, a cart road originating from the Wentz, Sr. home passed alongside the cemetery and wound its way across Skippack Pike to a mill the Wentz's built on the Zacharias Creek.

Today, the burial ground provides a peaceful respite.

The Meadowood Fall Festival was held this year on Saturday, October 1. Festival attendees were invited to a tour of the Wentz Family Burial Grounds during this event.

Meadowood at Worcester (a retirement community) is located at 3205 Skippack Pike in Worcester, PA 19490.

Wentz Burial Ground at Meadowood



CONGRATULATIONS, TYLER! By Dianne Cram



We are always proud of the accomplishments of the student volunteers in our Apprentice program, especially when they enter careers in history and/or museum studies. Now we are delighted to congratulate Tyler Bamford for receiving the Beinecke Scholarship that will enable him to continue post graduate studies in American history. Tyler has been volunteering with us since high school. He is now a senior at Lehigh University and plans to pursue a doctorate degree.

CONGRATULATIONS, TYLER!

GARDEN UPDATE *By Donna Armstrong*

Gardening season is in full swing at the farmstead as the Wentz Weeders tackle the task of encouraging the good plants to grow while eradicating the bad ones---a.k.a.weeds.

We have had a couple new enthusiastic gardeners join us, and we welcome the extra helping hands.

The garden itself got a facelift with inner bed boards being replaced, allowing for wider paths to make the garden wheelchair accessible. Now if we could just air condition the garden. ...

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL WEDDING!



Morgan McMillan, our former Curator, was married to Brian Clinton on July 18th during a beautiful wedding ceremony followed by a lively reception where all danced and cheered for the newlyweds. Morgan has resigned from her position at the Farmstead and has moved to Sullivan County, Pennsylvania where Brian is a high school music teacher. Although we all miss Morgan, we wish her and Brian all the best in their new life together.

CALL FOR ARTICLES *By Frank Luther*

Our plan is to publish the WENTZ POST three times a year with a Winter Edition available in February, a Spring Edition in May, and a Summer/Fall Edition in October.

We are seeking articles, photos, and pictures for the Winter Edition and hope to receive them by November 11. Any material you have regarding the Peter Wentz Farmstead or the Pennsylvania Germans will be considered for publication. Articles and photos can be submitted to fxluther@verizon.net or they can be mailed to me at 612 General Scott Road, King of Prussia, PA 19406.

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 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.

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