

Wentz Post

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

Harleysville National Bank Scholarship Donation

By Christine L'Ecuyer

On behalf of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society I would like to take the opportunity to thank Harleysville National Bank for once again making a generous donation of \$2,000.00 to our Scholarship Fund. The Bank's continual generosity allows us to carry our program into the sixth year of providing scholarships to students through the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society Scholarship and the Albert T. and Elizabeth R. Gamon Scholarship.

Christine L'Ecuyer (L) PWFS Director receives check from Anne Condon, Financial Secretary of PWFS and Vice-President of Harleysville National Bank



RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ICEHOUSE *by Dick Clauser & Sally Graybill*

October 18, 2007 marked the beginning date of reconstruction of the Farmstead's ice house. Heavy equipment was brought in by employees of Wesley Sessa's 18th Century Restorations, Inc. A large pile of stone was moved from elsewhere on the Farmstead property to the construction area. Sand was removed from the foundation and the mystery of what was in the ground for more than two hundred years was exposed – all in a day's work!

The floor of the ice house was approximately four feet below grade. Two of the walls were relatively intact while one of the longer walls bowed in and the end wall closer to the barn had deteriorated. Dimensions of the icehouse are 13' by 18'. Repairs were completed on the foundation walls and work has progressed nicely. The project will be completed by mid-January.

Specifications for construction called for six feet of masonry from grade to soffit, extending to ten feet from grade to gable peak. The walls are eighteen inches deep. There will be a single door on the north end (facing the barn.) The masonry walls will be plastered over both inside and outside with a white finish. The white finish reflects the sun and helps to maintain a cooler temperature.

The ice house was most likely constructed by Melchior Schultz circa 1805. The Zacharias creek was probably dammed in a way that would create a shallow pond which would freeze. Blocks of ice would be cut and hauled to the ice house by horse drawn sled. There the large blocks of ice would be covered with straw and/or sawdust for extra insulation. The ice blocks would generally keep through most of the year and be used for cooling food and dairy products.

With the advent of electricity the ice house fell out of use. A three-bay cinder block garage was constructed and part of it was built over the ice house foundation. During reconstruction of the site by Montgomery County the garage was torn down and the foundation of the ice house was filled with sand to preserve it until reconstruction was initiated.

Reconstruction is based on Germanic examples and patterned after an existing ice house located in Fairview Village. This local ice house has a cold chamber and a root cellar under the long portion of the ice house while the Farmstead's ice house has a cold chamber and root cellar at right angles to the ice house. Recent repairs to our root cellar and the completion of the ice house will make a quite nice addition to the Farmstead's interpretive program.

(See page 4 for photos)

Peter Wentz Farmstead Society Board of Directors Officers

President - Sally Graybill
 Vice President - Christine L'Ecuyer
 Treasurer - Lee Leslie
 Recording Sec. - Carol Berardelli
 Corresp. Sec. - Nadine Vigliano
 Financial Sec. - Anne Condon
 Assistant Treasurer - Connie Walsh

Directors

Carol V. Allen
 Richard Clauser
 Ruth Guimond
 Richard L'Ecuyer
 Francis X. Luther
 Janice Muller

PWFS Committees

Executive Committee: Anne Condon, Ruth Guimond, Christine L'Ecuyer

Bylaws.....	Anne Condon
Decorative Arts/Acquisitions.....	Elizabeth Gamon
Development.....	Janice Muller
Finance.....	Anne Condon
Garden.....	Janet Riemer
IT.....	Jim Karcher
Membership.....	Donna Armstrong
Museum Shop.....	Phyllis Yergey Charlotte Herman
New Structures.....	Dick Clauser
Nominating.....	Ruth Guimond
Publicity.....	Christine L'Ecuyer
Scholarship.....	Christine L'Ecuyer
Trip Planning.....	Frank Luther
Wentz Post.....	Dick Anderl Albert Fritz

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.

- New Year's Eve
- New Year's Day
- President's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Good Friday
- Easter Sunday
- Memorial Day
- Flag Day
- Fourth of July
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Election Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas

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.

Wentz Post

Vol. XXVI No. 68 Winter 2007-2008

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

Editor Dick Anderl
 Albert Fritz

Photography Morgan McMillan
 John Schilling

Advisor Dianne Cram
 Sally Graybill

All correspondence should be sent to:
 Peter Wentz Farmstead Society
 P.O. Box 679
 Worcester, PA 19490-0240

Phone: 610-584-5104
 Fax: 610-584-6860
 E-mail: mail@PeterWentzFarmsteadSociety.org
 Web site: www.PeterWentzFarmsteadSociety.org



Inside this issue:

HNB Scholarship Donation.....	1
Reconstruction of the Icehouse.....	1
Organizational Structure.....	2
Scholarship Information.....	3
In Memory.....	3
Chronology of Icehouse Reconstruction.....	4
Trip Planning Committee.....	5
President's Report.....	6
Candlelight - It's Not Just for Decoration.....	7
A Brief History of Icehouses.....	7
Calendar of Events.....	8 & 9
Farmstead in Winter.....	10
A Cool New Structure.....	11

Peter Wentz Farmstead Society
SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

The Society is currently looking for qualified candidates for our 2008 scholarship program. During the last five years the Society has awarded scholarships to qualified high school and college students.

The Albert T. & Elizabeth R. Gamon Scholarship will be awarded to a student currently enrolled in college and pursuing a degree in Pennsylvania German History, Cultural Studies or Decorative Arts and or/related Museum Studies. The Peter Wentz Farmstead Society Scholarship will be awarded to graduating high school seniors who have served as apprentices at the Farmstead.

Both scholarships will be based on the applicant's academic record, activities, leadership qualities and essay content. In addition, applicants for both scholarships must submit letters of recommendation from individuals with whom they have worked such as professors, coaches, or employers with one being a staff member at the Farmstead for those applying for the Society Scholarship.

Copies of both scholarship applications can be picked up at the Farmstead office. The Albert T. & Elizabeth R. Gamon Scholarship application can also be downloaded from the Society's web site at www.peterwentzfarmsteadsociety.org The deadline for both scholarship applications is March 1, 2008.

If there are any questions, please contact:

Christine L'Ecuyer
 Scholarship Chairman
 610-584-8087

Wentz Post Winter 2007

2008 PWFS Board of Directors Officers

During the November 14, 2007 PWFS Board of Directors meeting the following members, in keeping with the Society's newly revised by-laws, agreed to serve as officers for 2008:

President – Sally Graybill
 Vice President – Christine L'Ecuyer
 Secretary – Carol Berardelli
 Treasurer – Lee Kirk
 Assistant Treasurer – Connie Walsh
 Corresponding Secretary – Dini Vigliano

IN MEMORY

The Farmstead staff is saddened by the passing of two long time friends and volunteers:

Austin Schultz, 91, died on September 15th, 2007. Austin and his wife Lettie have been friends and volunteers since the site was restored in 1976. He was a direct descendant of Melchior Schultz who purchased the Farmstead in 1784 and often shared with us his memories of this farm where his father was born and raised. The staff was delighted to have Austin, Lettie and their friends here to celebrate his 91st birthday back in June.

Harry Vila, 85, died on October 31st, 2007. Harry began volunteering as a guide in 1990 and faithfully came every other Tuesday afternoon until he "retired" a little over a year ago. His enthusiasm about the Farmstead and history spilled over to his family and he often brought his grandchildren to visit and participate in events. Harry always had a comment and a way to make the staff laugh.

Chronology of Icehouse Reconstruction



October 17



October 18



November 1



November 16



December 1



December 1

TRIP PLANNING COMMITTEE MOVES AHEAD

By Frank Luther

The Trip Planning Committee of the PWFS has existed from 1976. Over the years, one-day, three day, and five-day trips were planned. Recently, we have found the five-day trips to be of less interest to our members and guests. As a result, the Trip Planning Committee has taken a new approach. We will be concentrating on one-day and three-day trips.

This past year, we had planned the usual four trips: a day in historic Germantown, a day at Pennsbury and Peddlers Village, a five-day trip to Vermont, and a day at Winterthur capped with a holiday buffet at Mendenhall Inn. The day trips proved successful; unfortunately, the planned trip to Vermont had only five participants and was cancelled.

The Trip Planning Committee is an ambitious group. We have scheduled tentative trips for 2008 and into 2009. We do plan ahead! Here is a sneak preview:

- Red Mill Village Museum and Trenton Barracks trip on Thursday, April 24;
- The Daniel Boone and Oley Valley trip on Monday, June 23;
- A three-day trip to the Hudson Valley on September 16, 17, and 18; and
- A Victorian Christmas in Cape May in December.

Time was also given to consideration of trips for 2009. These included:

- A spring trip to Charming Forge;
- A June trip to the Kutztown Heritage Center;
- A three-day trip in September to Mystic, Connecticut and the Native American Museum at Mohegan Sun; and
- A holiday trip to Wheatland/Amish Christmas and the Rainbow Theater in Paradise.

We hope that you and your friends would consider joining us for these outings.

There has been discussion about the economics involved in the trips. Meals tend to be more expensive and you know from your experiences at the gas pumps that fuel plays an important factor in the total costs. We have already been advised about increases in the cost of motor coach rentals. However, consider what the costs would be if you were traveling and driving on your own!

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the members of the committee and the work that they do: Sandy Biddle, Eleanor Bittle, Dianne Cram, Bill Ditter, Sally Graybill, Janice Muller, Margaret Schweitzer, and Frank Luther.



Red Mill Village Museum
In Clinton, NJ



Daniel Boone Homestead in the
Oley Valley

President's Report *By Sally Graybill*

Many thanks to everyone who has helped make the reconstruction of the Farmstead's ice house a success. This project, funded totally by the Society, has been a long time in the making but is now very nearly completed. A special thank you to Dick Clauser and the New Structures Committee for all the time and energy they have devoted to the project.

Welcome to Connie Walsh, newest addition to the Board of Directors. Connie served on the Board previously and has already taken on the newly established position of Assistant Treasurer.

A special welcome is extended to our newest Business Membership, Cy L. Young and Sons of Green Lane.

The Society's Spring Meeting will be held April 16, 2008 when scholarships will be awarded. Plans are being made for a Society Social to be held July 16, 2008. This will be an informal occasion where Society members can just relax and enjoy each other's company. Mark these dates on your calendar, more details will be forthcoming.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to the success of the Society this year and Best Wishes for 2008. Stay warm!



Austin and Lettie Schultz celebrated Austin's 91st Birthday at the Farmstead.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

**If you enjoy history, antiques, historic houses and people –
We need you!**

The Farmstead is recruiting any and all interested in becoming historic house guides – no prior experience necessary.

We will train you!

We have morning and afternoon time slots, both weekdays and weekends available for anyone who wants to help with guiding our visitors through the Farmstead.

Choose the time that best suits you.

Please contact Dianne or Kim at 610-584-5104

This is an opportunity for you to learn and enjoy while helping others appreciate the specialness of the Farmstead.

Candlelight – It's Not Just for Decoration By Morgan McMillan

Thanks to Thomas Edison's invention of the first commercially successful light bulb in 1879, we now have strong, clear light readily available to us, making it possible to play and work at any hour. But what would it have been like in the 18th century when artificial light sources were dim, messy, and often dangerous? People living in early Pennsylvania used candles, rushlights, and various types of oil and fat lamps to illuminate evening activities. Because lighting was limited at night, most activities took place in daylight, especially those requiring clear vision.

Eighteenth century candles were made from a variety of materials, including tallow, beeswax, bayberry, and spermaceti. The most readily available and least expensive of these materials was tallow, which is animal fat. Beef and mutton tallow were preferred for candle making because pork fat made very soft, sticky and smelly candles. Beeswax, extracted from honeycombs, and bayberries from the bayberry or wax myrtle bush, both make a pleasantly scented candle, but they were difficult to come by in enough quantity to be used by most people. Spermaceti candles were advertised in Pennsylvania newspapers as being superior in quality to tallow, but they also came at a higher price. Spermaceti is an oily, waxy substance harvested from the head of the sperm whale and was used in a liquid form for oil lamps and a solid form for candles. In the nineteenth century, developments in candle materials and wicks led to the type of candles we use today. Modern candles are usually made from paraffin (a petroleum product) and have braided wicks which burn more efficiently.

If you are interested in learning more about early lighting, come see the exhibit *A Light Strong and Clear* in the Visitor Center at the Peter Wentz Farmstead. This exhibit features candle holders, rush lights, oil lamps and other lighting related items from the 18th and 19th centuries. You can learn even more on Wednesday Feb. 13 at an evening lecture *By the Light of the Flickering Flame*, presented by Morgan McMillan and Karen Dougherty.



Sketch from Denis Diderot's *L'Encyclopedie*, originally published in the 1750s. The man on the left is cutting wicks to the desired length while the man in the center dips them into hot tallow. The chandler on the right is pouring hot wax into a mold.

A Brief History of Ice Houses By Russell Dorand

Ice houses were buildings used to store ice throughout the year, prior to the invention of the refrigerator. The most common designs involved underground chambers, usually man-made, which were built close to natural sources of winter ice. During the winter, ice and snow would be taken into the ice house and packed with insulation, often straw or sawdust. It would remain frozen for many months, often until the following winter, and could be used for food preservation during summer months.

An inscription from 1700 BC in northwest Iraq, part of ancient Persia, records the construction of an icehouse. In China, archaeologists have found remains of ice pits from the seventh century BC, and references suggest they were in use before 1100 BC. Alexander the Great, stored snow in pits dug for that purpose as early as 300 BC. In Rome in the third century AD, snow was imported from the mountains, stored in straw-covered pits, and sold.

Ice houses were a common sight on the farm and in the village. Commercial icehouses were far larger, and by the mid-nineteenth century were storing ice to be shipped to distant cities. The farmstead icehouse was used to store ice for farm, domestic, and marketing needs. Many extended partly or entirely below the surface of the ground. Some were excavated as many as twenty feet. Permanent icehouses were built entirely of stone or brick or a combination of stone, brick, and timber. The cutting and storage of ice was an important seasonal event on the farm before the days of refrigeration.

James, Peter, and Nick Thorpe. *Ancient Inventions*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1995.

Calendar of Events 2008

-EXHIBIT-

***A Light Strong & Clear:
Lighting in America Before the Age of Electricity***
Ongoing-May 2008

What would it be like to have no electric lights? This exhibit displays some of the implements used to create light before the invention of the electric light bulb.

-PROGRAMS-

Smoking Saturday
Saturday, January 26th
10am-3pm

Stop by to experience the sights and aromas of a working smokehouse and learn how it was used to preserve meats during the 18th and 19th centuries.

By the Light of the Flickering Flame

Guest Speakers: Karen Dougherty & Morgan McMillan
Wednesday, February 13th 7pm

In the era before electricity, people used candles, oil lamps, and other forms of lighting at night. Learn about the various light sources available during the 18th & 19th century during this well-lit evening program. Program held at the Farmer's Union Hall of the Worcester Township Historical Society (Rt.363/Valley Forge Road).

Winter Tactical

Saturday, March 1st 10am-4pm

Revolutionary War reenactors will be conducting their drills and everyday camp life skills in preparation for spring battles elsewhere.

Meet Hannah Till: An Interview with a Veteran of the Revolutionary War

Guest Speaker: Ajena Rogers
Wednesday, March 12th 7pm

Listen as Hannah Till, portrayed by National Park Ranger Ajena Rogers, recalls her life before, during, and after the American Revolution, including her time as a cook for General George Washington. You're sure to walk away with a new perspective on the meaning of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Program held at the Farmers' Union Hall of the Worcester Township Historical Society (Rt.363/Valley Forge Road).

Sheep Shearing Day

Saturday, April 12th 10am-3pm

After you see the shearing of some of our sheep, stay to learn more from the craftspeople who are working to produce wool products. Also, stop by the summer kitchen to experience open-hearth cooking.

Historic Preservation & Restoration Symposium**Date to be Announced 9am-4pm**

To commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the building of the historic Wentz house, we invite you to join us for a day of learning about the proper techniques used to restore historic structures. This all-day program will feature local restoration architects, stone masons, and preservation consultants. The registration fee includes lunch and guided tour of the Peter Wentz Farmstead.

Colonial Treats with Martha Washington: Celebrating 277 Years**Saturday, June 7th 10am-3pm**

Enjoy learning about the preparation of colonial era foods and about the life of First Lady, Martha Washington, celebrating her 277th birthday.

Colonial Day Camp**Monday-Friday, June 23rd-27th 9am-2pm**

Students entering fourth through sixth grade are invited to attend a week-long, hands-on camp to learn about childhood of the colonial period.

Pre-registration required & fee charged.**(Space limited)*****From Birth to Breeches***

Guest Speaker: Clarissa F. Dillon

Sunday, July 13th 2pm

Visit the Farmstead to learn more about childhood during the 18th century from *Past Masters* founder & president and historian, Clarissa F. Dillon.

Wentz Wonder Kids Camp**Monday-Friday,****July 21st-25th 9:30-11:30am**

Geared towards kids aged 4-5 years old, this half-day camp will educate and entertain about topics related to the historic Farmstead. Snacks provided.

Pre-registration required & fee charged.**(Space limited)**

#

Contact:

Kimberly D. Boice, Educational Coordinator

Peter Wentz Farmstead

2100 Shearer Road

P.O. Box 240

Worcester, PA 19490

Phone: 610-584-5104

kpraria@mail.montcopa.org



Farmstead in Winter



Happy Holidays!

A “COOL” NEW STRUCTURE AT THE FARMSTEAD

By Dianne M. Cram

Icehouses were a common feature across the landscape through the 18th and 19th and even into the 20th centuries. Not every farm boasted an additional utility building for the storage of ice, however, many did – both English and German farms. The location of the farm near a lake, pond or flowing stream of water that could be dammed to create a shallow ice pond would have been essential for the farmer to “harvest” ice during the coldest winter months. The cutting of ice became an important seasonal event from December to February. If cut at the right time, when the temperature was low enough to allow the surface to remain frozen, and then stored correctly, the ice would still be available through the summer months. Specially designed ice cutting tools - saws, axes, spike poles and ice planes were used to cut large blocks convenient for handling, generally four feet by two feet and the thickness of the ice could be anywhere between four and twenty four inches or more. It was then hauled by horse drawn sled to the icehouse for storage. Sawdust, wood shavings and straw were layered between ice blocks to help insulate.

We know there was an icehouse at the Wentz/Schultz farm, constructed most likely in the very late 18th or early 19th century. Was it constructed by Peter Wentz? Possibly, but more probably by Melchior Schultz who purchased the farm in 1784. The early building was demolished and a cement block garage built upon the foundations sometime in the mid 20th century. When the garage was removed during the restoration years, the foundation of the icehouse remained intact and filled in with sand and covered in order to protect the walls until reconstruction could begin. The plans to reconstruct the icehouse extend well back to the 1970s, and now thanks to the financial support of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society, we are nearly through with reconstruction.

Quite a bit of research and field trips to see extant icehouses in the region took place before the reconstruction began. Luckily, quite close to home in Fairview Village, we came across an icehouse nearly the same dimensions as our foundation and, what was of even greater importance - this icehouse is built above the root cellar, just as the one here at the Farmstead.

This is a special feature that not all icehouses share. The placement of our icehouse allows for the cold melt from the ice to cool the root cellar chamber directly below the icehouse floor. Also, the icehouse in Fairview Village appears to be of the same era as our original icehouse. Hence, it has become the prototype for our reconstruction. The “new” icehouse is constructed of stone with 18” thick walls with only one door and no windows so to better cut back on the amount of warm air that would enter. As an additional insulating factor, and to better reflect the sun’s light, the exterior and interior of many icehouse were pargeted with white stucco.

A special note of thanks goes out to Norm Glass of Norman T. Glass Restorations and Rich Poole for their help in the research process; to architect John Bowie, stonemason Dennis Boyles and Richard Schaeffer for their advice; and to Gloria Markley for so generously allowing access to her property to view her icehouse.



Fairview Village, Worcester Township icehouse that serves as the prototype for our reconstruction.

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 Sponsorship.....Contact us for details

Additional donation: _____

Total amount enclosed:..... _____

Please contact me concerning volunteer activities

Mail to:
Peter Wentz Farmstead Society
P.O. Box 679
Worcester, Pa. 19490-0679

610-584-5104

WENTZ POST

Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

Route 73 and Shearer Road

P.O. Box 679

Worcester, Pa. 19490-0679