

Wentz Post

A Publication of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

Volume XXXIX, No. 3

WENTZ POST Fall/Winter 2022



(Wentz Headquarters Room)

RECREATING AN HISTORIC SETTING

prepared by Scott Houting, Curator

The farmstead staff recently completed the new interpretive exhibit, "From Home to Headquarters: Washington in Worcester." This is not the first year the Peter Wentz Farmstead has changed the first floor Stove Room into Washington's aide-de-camp office to commemorate the Continental Army's stay at the farmstead in October of 1777. It is, however, the first year the exhibit was produced completely in-house by farmstead staff.

This year's exhibit was made possible by a grant from the Spring House Questers who awarded the farmstead a monetary grant to purchase furnishings and reproduction 18th century military style objects to complete the room exhibit. After securing the quester's grant, the farmstead staff actively worked with reputable vendors of living-history supplies to purchase the needed 18th century reproductions to interpret the room.

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 ar-

PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Garden-Lori Curtis
IT-Andrew Rothenberger
Membership-Carol Berardelli
Museum Shop-Amy Dinkel, Carla Chagaris
New Structures-All Members
Nominating-OPEN

WENTZ POST

Volume XXXIX, No. 3 Fall/Winter 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:

RECREATING AN HISTORIC SETTING, *(cont.)*

The highlight of the project are the excellent hand-crafted copies of General Washington's campaign camp stools and two folding sawbuck style tables, the product of the wood-working talents of farmstead volunteer, Randy Gilbert. As the reproduction objects were purchased and arrived at the farmstead, the farmstead curator, Scott Houting, catalogued each item into the farmstead's museum education collection to document their identity and purchase history. The objects chosen for the exhibition were based on their historical accuracy as reproductions of objects known to have travelled with Washington and his aide-de-camp staff officers. This also includes a reproduction Continental Army regimental coat complete with the accurate blue and buff colors worn by Washington's staff officers.

Now, instead of relying on borrowed objects every year to produce the October exhibition, the farmstead now owns the objects needed to make this exhibit an annual com-



memorative event. Special thanks to Mr. Randy Gilbert for both his unwavering project enthusiasm and his wood-working talents.

LETTERS OF WAR

by Marc Brier, Museum Assistant

George Washington's wartime papers are a valuable set of records of Continental army business; they offer a direct look into how the war was conducted. The papers include financial accounts, letters to and from officers and politicians, and general orders specifying all manner of instructions to the troops on discipline, health, morale, and plans for battles.

Washington entrusted his papers to his Life Guard company of hand-picked soldiers under the command of Captain Caleb Gibbs. The papers were extremely sensitive. If battle plans, troop strength or intelligence reports fell into the wrong hands, it would have been catastrophic to the cause. During the war the general had his Life Guards transport the entire set of letters, orders and financial documents including copies of everything with the army in the field. Each year of the eight-year-long war, the volume of papers increased and extra wagons in the headquarters baggage train would have to be allotted for them.

cavalry commander Casimir Pulaski, letters to the President of Congress John Hancock, and a personal letter from Washington to his brother John Augustine Washington in which he lamented: "when my last to you was dated I know not, for truly I can say, that my whole time is so much engross'd that I have scarce a moment (but sleeping ones) for relaxation, or to indulge myself in writing to a friend."

Washington was very conscious of how his writings would be part of history and wanted them preserved for posterity, so he had the loosely organized papers copied and curated at the close of the war. The project took three years under the care of a Captain Varick, and when finished were delivered to Washington at Mount Vernon. We owe much to the well-ordered Varick transcriptions now preserved at the Library of Congress as they are a ready guide to historical research of the American Revolution.

Today most of Washington's wartime papers can be viewed online at the websites of the aforementioned Library of Congress, where one can view original handwritten documents and at Founders Online, a clearinghouse of the Founding Fathers' papers where researchers can see transcribed letters and orders with helpful notations.



<https://www.loc.gov/collections/george-washington-papers/about-this-collection/>
<https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Project%3A%22Washington%20Papers%22&s=1511211111&r=1>

TRIBUTE TO SPECIAL VOLUNTEERS

by Meg Bleecker Blades

There are several heroes among the volunteers who have helped the Farmstead keep moving, especially during the recent shut-down and re-opening. And two of them are retiring from their current responsibilities after many years of loving attention to the site.

As the long-time President of the Farmstead Society, Kathy Yost has personified the amazingly energetic, always attentive leader who organizes everything from annual meetings to work projects, to meals and refreshments, as well as encouragement and support for Farmstead programs and activities. She has been a

drought, and you have a fair description of the conditions Donna has—with her sense of humor still in place—guided the Weeders through these past few years. Whether nurturing the heirloom tomatoes or trying to exterminate the bindweed, she has worked heroically to keep the foursquare garden green and growing under almost absurdly challenging conditions. Both visitors and staff appreciate your dedication to the cause, Donna!

Thanks are also due to Carol Allen, incoming President of the Board of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society and to Lori Curtis, who is stepping in to guide the Wentz Weeders. The Farmstead is so very fortunate that we have such ac-



complished and experienced volunteers who can take up the reins of these two important functions of the site.

A TRIBUTE TO KATHY

by Frank Luther

During the past twenty plus years I have had the opportunity to work with all of the Society's Presidents. Without a doubt, every President worked diligently, tirelessly, and effectively to aid the Farmstead, to have the Society prosper, and to make the Farmstead a gem of Montgomery County. Kathy Yost was no exception.

When Kathy first approached me to take on the responsibilities of layout editor for the WENTZ POST, I was impressed by her enthusiasm and determination to make the Society a daunting entity. One can go to the Society's website to read the President's Messages from past issues of the WENTZ POST. Here one can find evidence of events and situations that made Kathy an outstanding President.

The President's Report in the Spring/Summer 2022 issue of the POST gives us a perfect snapshot of Kathy's being an innovative and creative leader. One can get a real glimpse of her dedication to the Farmstead and the Society. She asked, "What new improvements have we made?" Reporting that the website had not been updated in years, the Board decided to make a change to move us into the current century! She pointed out the overall positive effects of this move: general updates, the WENTZ POST, the Museum Shop, and Membership. Other changes would include: up-to-date information on members, meetings, events, and 'good to knows'; event information that on usually would have seen in a letter; the WENTZ POST and past issues will appear on the website. Great strides from an outstanding leader!

Certainly, the "brown bag caper" further illustrates Kathy's leadership! She noted that this included the minds of maniacs, the logic of geniuses, the energy of a lot of energizer bunnies, and a ton of support from the County. The goal was to leverage what the County had determined the best way to hold a Candlelight event. A week later we were chosen to be a destination for the Norristown Garden Club tour. While Kathy noted that she can claim ownership for the concept of THE PLAN, execution involved many volunteers led by Commanders Armstrong and Armstrong. The goal was to attract as many visitors to our Gift Shop as possible and help enhance their visit to the site. Our bigger goal? Educate a thousand so we can encourage them to return. We wanted to stand out as their best memory. Positivity!

Steve Jobs wrote that the most important qualities of a good leader include integrity, accountability, empathy, humility, resilience, vision, influence, and positivity. He went on to note that management is about persuading people to do things they do not want to do, while leadership is about inspiring people to do things they never thought they could. Did Steve Jobs know Kathy Yost?

One could go on and on, but you get the point. Truly, Kathy Yost was a great asset to the Farmstead and to the Society. We wish her well.

IN MEMORIAM

compiled by Linda Snyder

Farewell to an original: Emily Kriebel Clemens was a Life Member of the Historical Society and a guide when the Farmstead opened to visitors. She passed away on June 21, 2022 at the age of ninety-four years young. A devoted wife of her late husband, John, for fifty-seven years, she was also a patient matriarch to her family of four children, ten grandchildren and thirteen great-grandchildren. Born in Norristown, she graduated from Norristown High School. A longtime member of Central Schwenkfelder Church, Emily sewed quilts, arranged

CANDLELIGHT TOUR

Saturday December 3,

flowers, served in the choir, and was in many other



GARDEN NEWS

by Donna Armstrong

A gardener can often expect the unexpected, and that holds true for a wonderful surprise that appeared in the Wentz Garden this year. Two stands of majestic hollyhocks (althea rosea) appeared in the raised beds, apparently hopping from their former home along the fence. Over six feet tall, the brilliant, colorful blooms caught everyone’s eye, as you can see from the photos.

We weren’t so excited about the other “guests” – persistent bindweeds! Dry conditions and several heat waves



didn't help our eradication of them, but there was a plentiful harvest of what we planted on purpose! (The Wentz Weeders)

FARMSTEAD SAFETY

from Meg Bleecker Blades

Active shooter. These two words instantly get our attention. To help us answer the question “What would I

options for you to think about now, that may help you decide how to respond if you are ever confronted with an active shooter incident.

Situational Awareness is recommended as the best initial preparation for any potential emergency situation. Although it is unsettling to “size up” a familiar, friendly space and evaluate it as a potential hazard, working through the exercise is very useful. Anyone interested in a printed information sheet and/or watching the video prepared by the County Sheriffs, please contact the Farmstead office at 610-584-5104 and we can help you access these re-sources.

TWO NEW VOLUNTEERS

by Linda Snyder

Introducing our Gift Shoppe Ladies who go together like Tea and Biscuits, complimenting and enhancing each other:

Amy Dinkel was born in Hamburg, PA and has a love for the Pennsylvania German traditions and history. Attending Penn State, Amy earned her major in English with her minor degree in French. A love for Jane Austen had her planning for a year to be able to attend the Jane Austen Festival in Bath, England this year. Amy enjoys playing Chinese Mah-Jong and reading about history. One of her more adventurous activities was being in a dragon boat club in Norristown, Amy and her husband live in Colledgeville and have two grown sons. We are glad she heard of our need for volunteers and checked us out.

Carla Chagaris was born at Fort Sam Houston near San Antonio, Texas into a military family. Her schooling took place from early elementary in Texas and California to undergraduate in Rhode Island and graduate back to Texas. Her degree is in physical anthropology. Carla is involved in lineal societies since her mother's side traces back to Jamestown (1619) and her father's side to Connecticut



WEBSITE OVERVIEW

compiled by Kathy Yost

It is important that the membership be aware of the changes we have made to the website. It is AWESOME:

- It gives viewers a current view of the site and the activities going on there---great pictures;
- It works in sync with the County website reinforcing events;
- It provides current pictures of recent events and reasons to visit;
- It provides information on our two scholarship opportunities;
- It allows visitors to join the Society online and renew their current membership;
- It will send out correspondence to members concerning their membership;
- It provides copies of current and past WENTZ POST issues. We continue to build that resource for purposes of maintenance safety of our history and research;
- It allows people to purchase items from the Museum Shop and ship right to them;
- It allows people to make donations online-including end of year contributions;
- It allows for a conversation online with our Society officers with questions you have;
- It provides information on the Wentz Garden and plant information as well;
- It saves us money on our greatest expense- postage and supplies for the Wentz Post.

Content can be increased or updated at any time:

- It allows us the track interest in the Society- it provides data on visitors to the site;
- It allows for a way to communicate with membership should there be a change in the schedule.

This project started in January. It has taken nearly a year with weekly meetings to bring it to its current status. A huge thank you goes to both Lee Kirk and Carol Berardelli for their relentless pursuit of quality. Tom Knobel deserves a round of applause for development of the site. He will be our 'guru' going forward and we value not only his technical skill but his thoughtfulness around the mission we sought to accomplish.

We need to remind everyone that this is your last paper copy of the WENTZ POST unless you have called the Farmstead to add your name to our 'paper preferred' list. Carol B is sending emails to many of us to test email addresses so we have the most current ad- dresses. We ask that you respond to us to let us know that we have the correct address.

With great respect for all involved, this project is com-

Concluding our celebration of the Society's 45th Birthday we are sharing thoughts of yesteryear...

VOLUNTEERISM AT ITS BEST

by Dianne M. Cram, Retired Administrator

Congratulations to all the volunteers at PWF for achieving forty-five years of dedicated service to the Farmstead. On my very first visit to the Farmstead, we were guided through the house by a gracious and knowledgeable volunteer, Hazel Biddle. Hazel was among the first to volunteer soon after the Farmstead opened in 1976, her enthusiasm delighted me (and certainly many other visitors), and she made me want to visit again, long before I realized I would one day be working there. Through my years working at the Farmstead, I will readily say that we would never have been able to achieve all we did without the volunteers who stood by the staff supporting us in every way possible, from fund raising to guiding visitors, organizing events, managing the gift shop and helping with all the details a small staff would never have been able to manage alone. But of all your achievements over the decades I think that your greatest accomplishment was organizing and managing the summer Colonial Camp for children. That camp became the best avenue to reach the youngsters and instilled in them an appreciation for history, an understanding of life in early America, and an enthusiasm for the preservation of our historic sites. Those campers of decades ago grew up and brought their own children back to Colonial Camp!

The volunteers of Peter Wentz Farmstead have touched the lives of so many over generations and have truly made a difference



for the Farmstead, the staff members who had the pleasure of working with them, and countless visitors whose visits they enriched. Thanks to all who continue the great tradition of volunteer service to the Farmstead now after forty-five years!

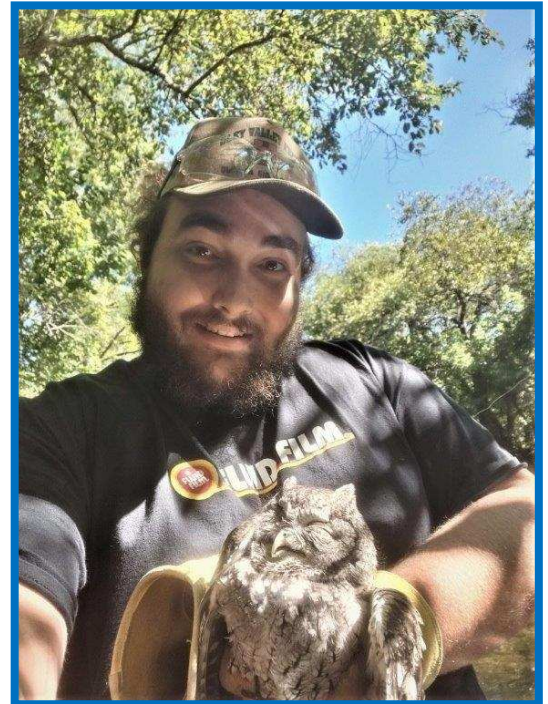
Kids' Corner

WHOOO'S IN TROUBLE?

Recently, PWF Assistant Farmer AJ Kissinger was mowing the trail along the edge of the Wissahickon Creek. Several visitors who were walking the trail called to him for help---they had spotted a small Screech Owl tangled in fishing line that was stretched across the water and snarled in trees. The owl's wing tip was ensnared, and everyone in the immediate area could hear it frantically calling and struggling unsuccessfully to free itself.

After safely parking the large mower, AJ climbed down into the (very cold) waist-high water, and with his gloved hands reached up to hold the frantic owl and calm it, so he could clip the fishing line. Once freed, the owl settled down and allowed AJ to snap a quick selfie, and then carry him/her to a small crevice along the bank where the owl could sit, and get ready to fly away.

Congratulations to AJ for so carefully rescuing the small animal from such a dire situation. This was a good reminder---it is dangerous to abandon tangled line of any type in the water or woods. Anyone who carries it in, please be sure to carry it back out to avoid creating a deadly situation for wildlife.



CANDLELIGHT TOUR

Saturday December 3, from 4:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Come spend a lovely winter's eve with us here at the Farmstead! The soft glow of candles will light your way as you explore this historic property.

Meet the Belsnickel, the forefather of the modern Santa. Dressed in his heavy fur coat, carrying his bag of treats? Or maybe tricks? The traditional Belsnickel himself is sometimes naughty, and sometimes nice. (Though our Belsnickel will have sweet treats for the children!) See the sheep nestled into their straw for the evening. Visit with living historians to learn how a family like the Wentzes would have passed their time during the cold winter days and nights of the 18th century.

self is sometimes naughty, and sometimes nice. (Though our Belsnickel will have sweet treats for the children!) See the sheep nestled into their straw for the evening. Visit with living historians to learn how a family like the Wentzes would have passed their time during the cold winter days and nights of the 18th century.

Celebrate the beginning of the holiday season with this picturesque look at a quiet winter's night in colonial Pennsylvania.

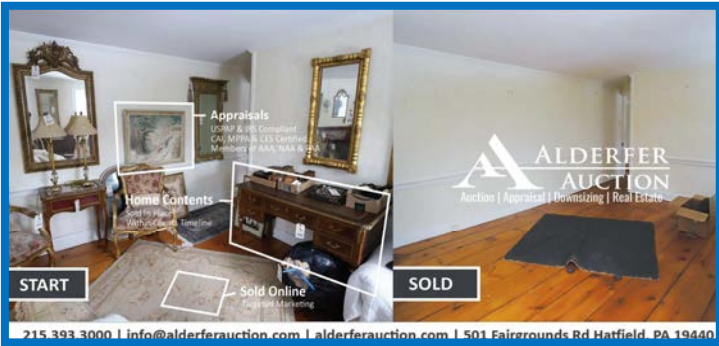
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