

Wentz Post

A Publication of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

Vol. XXXX, No. 3

Fall 2023



WHAT A CELEBRATION!

On a lovely Fall October day, forty-five members of the Society met to celebrate their 45th Birthday. In addition to a delicious buffet, a visit from a Continental Army soldier, and a photo tour of the Wentz Garden, there were many smiles and chatter as we greeted one another. We have so many accomplishments to be proud of and are looking to the future of many more.



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.

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Museum Shop-Carla Beckwith-Chagaris, Amy Dinkel,
Joy Dolan
New Structures-All Members
Nominating-Wayne "Duffy" Grove, Kathy Yost
Scholarships-Carol Allen, Amy Dolan, Terri Gentile,
Kathy Yost
WENTZ POST-Donna Armstrong

WENTZ POST**Volume XXXX,****No. 3 Fall 2023**

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PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD IS OPEN.

The Farmstead is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM; Sunday hours are from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Tours are given each hour, beginning at 10:00 AM, and the last tour begins at 3:00 PM.

Reservations are requested for groups larger than six people.

To make a reservation, or for additional information, please call the Farmstead office at 610 584-5104.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Kathy Yost

Some things are better staying the same. Others are better with change. Thus is the story of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society. Here are my votes:

Staying the same

The story of the Farmstead and an important part of American history; the lessons of early American life (struggles and victories) on a Pennsylvania farm; the degree of curiosity of both staff and visitors to find the real answers; the variety of the experience when being at Peter Wentz---especially children; well established events like Candlelight.

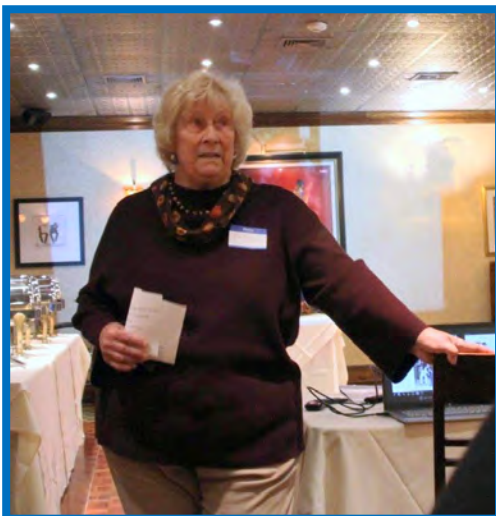
Positive change

The interest of Society members to support the County site and get it right; understanding progress as needed--thus new computers, software programs; acknowledging we all bring different skills and interests to the table; moving with current museum trends to offer information and topics.

This Society is celebrating its 46th year. When we started, there were no cell phones, word processors, post-it notes, disposable cameras, the artificial heart, the space shuttle, DNA fingerprinting---even chicken McNuggets! I bet that last one got you!

The point is that change is often difficult but necessary. The Society faces this dilemma every year as we try to help preserve the past and encourage the future. This is why we have been successful. We have been able to (sometimes with difficulty) embrace change. This Society will stay vibrant and important if we can continue to open our minds to what can be, not just what was. I plan to.

This is my last President's message. Carol Allen will continue on as Interim President while the Board searches for new candidates for the role. I have enjoyed my time in this position and thank you all for your support along the way.



SOCIETY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

by Kathy Yost

Animals - \$1,372.33 includes calves, heifer, two heifer calves and other farm animals. Camp - \$4,809.13 includes supplies, presenters and food.

Community - \$65 includes donation for Post Prom Party. Furniture - \$9071.20 includes miscellaneous furnishings, chairs, Windsor chairs.

Miscellaneous - \$29,528.68 includes Millbrook Ground Penetrating Study, Glass showcases, Schwenkfelder sampler, three spinning wheels, Flag Pole ceremony, washing machine, wash tubs.

Programs - \$17,470.00 includes individual presentations and later one lump sum annual amount for Peter Wentz Farmstead programs.

Restoration - \$6,357.00 includes Settee (twice), sampler, frakturs, pump.

Scholarship - \$64,050.00 (for fourteen years condensed) ranges from \$800 - \$11,000.

Structures - \$95,366.03 includes Ice house, smoke-house, privy, barn doors.

Trees - \$4,672.93 includes trees for farmstead orchards and trees for Memorial Tree Program.

Total of above \$232,762.30

Here is a list of some expensive items that were purchased prior to 2001; these items are jointly owned by the Society and the county: Wardrobe - Total cost was \$26,000. The Society paid \$1,000 and the county paid \$25,000.

Punchbowl - Total cost was \$15,500. The Society paid \$12,750 and the county paid \$2,750.

Tall case clock - total cost was \$14,000. The Society paid \$7,600, the county \$3,500 and the remainder of \$2,900 came from donations the visitors gave.

Total cost for the Society - \$21,350.

Items owned by the Society: Highboy - cost \$15,500, Washington letter - \$8,000, Rattle/Teether - \$1,450

In more recent years there have been two more major projects that we have underwritten. The museum shop has been revitalized with renovations and restocking. The kitchen garden got a much-needed facelift this spring.



A NOTE FROM THE SUPERVISOR

by Meg Bleecker Blades

As the season changes and the leaves turn, we are as busy as ever with visitors. Some tours include more than fifty guests, and we are seeing these groups several days each week. Guests are fascinated by living history demonstrations of routines that were once just part of daily life on an 18th-century farm. Watching our oxen-in-training Peg and Sam plowing a former hay field, preparing it for a crop of flax, or learning about the activities of General Washington's troops while they resided here as guests of the Wentz family--as presented by a group of about forty impeccably-researched and outfitted reenactors from as far away as Michigan, Illinois, South Carolina--visitors are treated to very well presented historical information. This is a very different way to learn.

Upcoming events, including Candlelight on December 2nd, will include additional opportunities to see how the Farmstead was lived in, and to experience the sights and scents of a traditional 18th-century household at the end of the day by the light of the fireplace, the campfire, and candles. Come join us!



MILESTONE BIRTHDAY FOR ELEANOR

by Linda Snyder

Eleanor Bittle was born on December 8th, 1923.

Growing up in the Pottstown area, Eleanor was driven to school by one of her older sisters who was the teacher and school bus driver. She graduated from Pottstown High School in 1942 and went to work in the office of the Pottstown location of Doehler-Jarvis, a die casting manufacturer.

Two years later in 1944, Eleanor joined the United States Navy and became a WAVE. Transported to Bronx, New York for boot camp, she later was sent to Georgia for further training. Eleanor returned to New York. This time to Brooklyn where she served in the payroll department of the armed guards. These were contingents of a Lieutenant j.g. and ten sailors put on merchant ships as a protection unit.

Two years, two months, and fourteen days later, Eleanor was discharged. Robert Bittle and Eleanor Harley were married on April 12th, 1947. They had no children and he passed away in 1988.

Eleanor was a charter member of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Historical Society and first president in the spring of 1977. Along with Betty Gamon, she held Summer Camp at the Farmstead. Betty was Camp Director and Eleanor was Assistant Camp Director.

Eleanor is well known in historical circles as: "The Tape Loom Lady." Seeing a demonstration in 1979 at a Goschenhoppen Festival, Eleanor was loaned a loom and the rest is history. She has held numerous workshops and instructed many in this art. Lower shed, shuttle left; raise shed, shuttle right.

Recently selling her car, she is no longer involved in past organizations and depends on others for transportation.

Happy 100th Birthday, Eleanor!!!

Thank you for your service to your country and for encouraging many tape loom weavers.



CANDLELIGHT EVENT

by Carly Schmidt

Saturday, December 2nd from 3:00 PM to 8:00 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. Celebrate the beginning of the holiday season with this picturesque look at a quiet winter's night in colonial Pennsylvania. Watch a cooking demonstration, enjoy holiday entertainment, and find out if the Belsnickel has deemed you naughty or nice!

Free for all ages, *no registration required.*



MUSEUM SHOP REPORT

by Amy Dinkel

We had some special, uniformed visitors to the PWF Museum Shop in October during the PA State Regiment reenactment weekend, which commemorated the events of October 1777 and General Washington's stay on the property. Some of the reenactors enjoyed perusing the museum shop's book selection, which includes a history of Worcester, books about slavery and abolition in Pennsylvania, a book about Washington's secretaries and confidantes, and books about colonial furniture making, revolutionary medicine, and the art of colonial cookery, among many others. We were thrilled to have the reenactors visit the shop!

As I write, we are looking forward to the PWF Fall Fest on November 4. This event is sure to please visitors to the site, as it will include demonstrations of traditional farming practices, such as cider pressing and corn shelling. Talented craftspeople will also be on site. The museum shop has donned its own fall colors inside with beautiful wreaths and decorated pumpkins made by the crafty museum shop staff. Joy Dolan, a gift shop volunteer, has a special eye for creating crafts that bring the beauty of the season into your home.

We also anticipate our annual PWF Candlelight Event on December 2. Because we have our very own Belsnickel who will make a repeat appearance at this year's event. We added a locally crafted Belsnickel figurine to the shop inventory. Your very own Belsnickel will add some PA German flair to your home Christmas display.



AAA: ARCHIVAL ACCESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

by Scott Houting, Curator

During the past several months, the Peter Wentz Farmstead Museum staff completed the processing and cataloguing of the farmstead's archival collections. Begun years ago by former curators, the archival papers were nicely organized but not formally catalogued and processed into the farmstead's Past Perfect collections database. Now completed, the archives material is accessible for staff and researchers. A future finding aide book will help to research the collections.

While ninety per cent of the archival material is photocopies of original material, the collections hold the informational value most researchers are looking for. The collection is rich in genealogical information of the families who owned the Wentz house. Other records include farmstead restoration and preservation information, Wentz and Schultz family last will and testaments records, local township landmarks and historic structures, and various other topics. The project included new storage boxes and archival folder storage and updating all records on the farmstead's museum database. For additional information on the archive collection and research use, please contact the farmstead curator.

In other news, the front Stove Room has again been furnished to interpret General Washington's use of the front room as his aide-de-camp office. New for this year is a reproduction of General Washington's black leather travel trunk now displayed upstairs in the Washington bedroom. A very good copy of the original trunk down at Mount Vernon, this reproduction trunk is the result of hard work and the great woodworking talents of farmstead volunteer, Randy Gilbert. The trunk will most likely remain in the second-floor bedroom all year to help explain the Washington bedroom to visitors.



RECREATING A MEAL IN WASHINGTON'S KITCHEN AT THE PETER WENTZ HOUSE

by Marc Brier, Park Ranger

The meals that General Washington and his staff ate would have been prepared by enslaved cooks Hannah and Isaac Till from the foodstuffs recently purchased from local civilians. Using these items found in Washington's expense accounts and informed by research done by 18th-century food way expert Clarissa Dillion, I will attempt to show what might have been prepared here.

During his stay from October 2-3, 1777 the cooks would have prepared meals from the following supplies of ham, veal, chicken, potatoes, cabbages, milk, and eggs purchased from residents and his previous host, Jacob Smith of Skippack. A recreated meal would also draw from the list supplied by Mathias Wentz of bake oven bread, and more milk, potatoes, and cabbages.

(continued on page 6.)

RECREATING A MEAL, *(Continued from page 5.)*

Dinner at the general's table for those two days may well have included roast chicken, ham and cabbage, perhaps veal and or potato pies, potted meat, pickled cabbage, and some side dishes of potatoes. Bread would have certainly been on the menu.

For the second stay, from October 16-20, 1777, the supplies available would have included onions, mutton, fowl, potatoes, cabbage, butter, milk, and honey purchased from residents in Towamencin including Washington's host from October 8-16, Frederick Wampole. In addition to these items, at this second stay with the Wentz's, Washington purchased the following from Mathias: more cabbages, onions, milk, and butter as well as cream, some fowls and a pie.

The dinner menu during Washington's second stay would have likely been similar to that of October 2-3 with the substitution of mutton for ham, perhaps an onion pie, the addition of honey for sweetening and baking, and the pie of unknown ingredients supplied by the Wentz household.



PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD COLONIAL KITCHEN GARDEN

by Lori Curtis, Volunteer Coordinator

As I write this article, we are putting the garden to rest for the year. As reported in the last issue of the WENTZ POST, the four garden beds were completely redone in early Spring with new wood borders and soil. This resulted in a very productive season and proved to be an extremely worthwhile investment by the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society.

This was the kitchen garden's first year without Donna Armstrong, who had worked in the garden from its very beginnings in the 1970's, and Wayne Brunt, another longtime Wentz Weeder who also retired. With the addition of several new volunteers, we had an enthusiastic and energetic group that planted, weeded, maintained, and harvested this year's crops. I want to recognize Wendy Cusack, Fred Gockley, Linda Hoade, Sue Holliday, Paul Menard, Debbie Schirk and Nancy Weiman for their many hours of work.

While volunteers were able to take home vegetables and herbs that were harvested, the majority of the produce was donated to several local food pantries. As of the end of September, this amounted to over 425 pounds.

We are already looking forward to next year. We are committed to maintaining the historical accuracy of an 18th century Pennsylvania German kitchen garden with appropriate vegetables, herbs and flowers. We are also planning to schedule guided tours of the garden so the public becomes more aware of this very special feature of the Peter Wentz Farmstead.



Pumpkin Decorating: Decorating centerpieces for the lovely Fall October day when forty-five members of the Society met to celebrate their 45th Birthday. In addition to a delicious buffet, a visit from a Continental Army soldier, and a photo tour of the Wentz Garden, there were many smiles and chatter as we greeted one another.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR! CANDLELIGHT EVENT
Saturday, December 2nd from 3:00 PM to 8:00 PM

KIDS' FUN PAGE



DON'T FORGET THE ELEPHANTS

by Pat McDonnell

Of all the animals in the world which ones do you think are the most lovable? It probably is that gentle giant who also happens to be the world's largest mammal, the elephant. There are hundreds of books in which the elephant is the chief character. These characters pass on to young readers' valuable life lessons such as kindness, friendship, loyalty, family bonds, courage and more. We know that elephants are incredibly intelligent and have great memories. Sadly, they are endangered. What can we do to help? A group of concerned people wanted everyone to know how much danger the elephants faced every day, and that they are on their way to disappearing forever. This is called extinction. Every year August 12 is now celebrated as World Elephant Day to let people worldwide know what is happening to our elephants. We have learned that at least 100 elephants are killed each day, and over 100,000 have been killed over the past three years. Most of them are killed by poachers (a poacher is a person who takes something which doesn't legally belong to him). The poacher takes the tusks which are made of ivory and very valuable and trades them for money or goods. This "ivory trade" is probably the greatest threat to the elephants at this time. The spread of guns and the big game hunters add to the threats. Another rea-

son for the disappearance of elephants is that their living space grows smaller every year caused by human activities.

There is good news about helping elephants survive and thrive. When people all around the world learned more about the dangers faced by the elephants, they found ways to help. They formed over fifty different kinds of organizations or groups based on which goal they set for themselves. Here are some of the ways they are helping to reach their goals; finding and rescuing abused and neglected elephants and getting them into safe places like havens and sanctuaries, developing local school programs that educate humans about elephant behavior, conservation programs, foster/adopt an elephant programs, create orphanages for elephant calves who have lost their mothers, wildlife protection teams (one anti-poaching team has destroyed over 7,000 elephant traps and snares so far,) helping people who are living with elephants, finding jobs for people in order to stop them from poaching for a living, increasing the number of rangers who safeguard the elephants, local school programs that include respect for wildlife. These groups are growing all over the world. We can only continue to believe that our ongoing care will help elephants as to their growing numbers and ability to live better, peaceful lives. We hope that we will never have to say goodbye to our beloved friends.

FACTS ABOUT ELEPHANTS

Their trunks are very important. They use them to pick up objects, give trumpet-like warnings, they also have the strongest sense of smell of any other creatures. Their trunks can hold two gallons of water in their trunks and drink on the average of twenty-six gallons a day or more. They cannot live without their trunks. Elephants eat mainly grasses, fruits, and roots. They may eat as much as 220 pounds of this food or more in one day.

Are good swimmers and can swim for miles. They paddle the water with their feet, and use their trunks as snorkels when in deep water.

They can live sixty to seventy years. The oldest known was eighty-nine years old. Average weight four to six tons and height eighteen to twenty-four feet.

Have the largest brain of any land mammal. After many years they can remember friends, recall water holes and paths to food. They can listen to human language, voices, and tell the difference among male, female, or child. A male voice threatens them, while that of women and children do not.

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