

Wentz Post

A Publication of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

Volume XXXX, No. 2

WENTZ POST Summer 2023



PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD COLONIAL KITCHEN GARDEN

by Lori Curtis

A kitchen garden was essential to family life in the 18th Century, since the convenience of supermarkets was unknown during that time. The women of the household were the primary gardeners and plants were selected for their culinary, medicinal, and ornamental value. Gardens during this time were situated close to the main house and a water source – a pump near the Wentz Garden which provides invaluable water during dry periods.

As is traditional in 18th Century Pennsylvania German gardens, the Wentz Garden consists of four large raised beds and is enclosed by a fence made with rough planks that are open enough to promote air circulation while keeping out such animals as deer, chickens, rabbits, and groundhogs. There are beds around the inside of the fence which consist mostly of perennials, such as hops whose flowers were used for making bread and beer, as well as pillow stuffing.

As described in the last newsletter, the Wentz kitchen garden suffered from neglect during the two years that the Covid pandemic prevented planting and maintenance, causing the beds to become totally weed-ridden. Plus, the old wood bordering the beds had rotted and was unsafe. The Peter Wentz Farmstead Society realized that an extreme solution was required and generously provided the funds to totally remove and replace all the soil in the four beds and have new wooden beds built of white oak, known for its durability.

These actions have made an enormous difference, both in the productivity of the garden and for the volunteer gardeners, known as the Wentz Weeders, who could concentrate on planting and maintenance rather than spending hours trying to remove bindweed, purslane, and other weeds.

(Continued on page 3.)

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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WENTZ POST

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PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD IS OPEN.

The Farmstead is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday 10:00am to 4:00pm; Sunday hours are 1:00p to 4:00pm.

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

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.

PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD COLONIAL KITCHEN GARDEN, *(cont.)*

The original kitchen garden had been designed in 1976 by the Norristown Garden Club, who researched what crops would have been in an 18th century garden. The Club has just awarded us additional monies to use for further garden restoration.

Another change this year was the retirement of Donna Armstrong, the longtime coordinator of the Wentz Weeders, whose knowledge and gardening skills helped educate and inspire the volunteers. We have been fortunate that in addition to those Wentz Weeders who have worked in the garden for many years, four new volunteers have joined and their enthusiasm and energy have been greatly appreciated.

We encourage visitors to the farmstead and the historic residence to spend time in the kitchen garden, where you will see an abundance of vegetables, herbs and flowers. Vegetables currently include beans, cucumbers, artichokes, horseradish, currants, ground cherries, kohlrabi, Egyptian onions, tomatoes, radishes, Swiss chard, and lettuce. Herbs include borage, bee balm, garlic chives, parsley, and lemon balm. And you will see calendula, celosia, yarrow, Job's tears, roses, hops, daylilies, spiderwort, and more.

The Wentz Weeders generally meet weekly, and we welcome anyone who is interested in joining us to contact me at lcurtis625@verizon.net.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Kathy Yost

As I write this message it is 93 degrees outside and 90% humidity. Perfect for growing mold! Weather like this on the 4th of July makes me think of what those early days on the farmstead would have been like. I had the good fortune to have family in town for the holiday. My daughter's boyfriend was a New York City firefighter and was at 9/11. He was entering the first building as he saw the second coming down around him. He lost friends in that very moment and still carries scars from the experiences. Having an interest in history and knowing of the Peter Wentz Farmstead, I asked our curator Scott Houting to give the family a personal tour. Michael was overwhelmed. Overwhelmed by the history, Scott's attention to detail, sorting out fact from fictional history he had learned. We talked about the Farmstead and the war for the rest of the day. My daughter Kirsten began to discuss what the role of the women and the slaves would have been like. She discussed in length the immediate challenges she could imagine.... trying to go upstairs with a basket of clean laundry in long dresses and slippers. Trying to garden in those clothes. How grateful the family must have been for the summer kitchen! How did they organize trips to the outhouse? The list goes on.

Visits like this to Peter Wentz are what makes it so special. Certainly, the baby sheep are a serious draw, but to be in one location and surround yourself with that much really important history is mind boggling. The times have changed but many challenges have not. We still are surrounded by veterans who have defended our country in one way or another. We are still battling with other countries that do not share our vision of a nation. We are (in a very real way these days) at the mercy of weather.

The Wentz Farmstead for me is more of a memorial. It shares what went before and endured. It shows what we can do when people from different backgrounds combine hard work, creativity, and resourcefulness. It shows the beauty of the environment in which we live. Before I loved Peter Wentz because of the beauty, now I add the haunting part. It played a role in a series of events that led us to where we are today....as Americans, as residents, as humans. God Bless America. Thank you, Wentz family.



Who am I? See page 7.

IN MEMORIAM*by Linda Snyder*

Anna P. Felty was born December 1, 1927 in Green Point, PA to the late Francis and Pauline Ditzler. She passed away September 11, 2021 at her residence in Cedars.

The time between saw Anna graduate from Jonestown High School and Lebanon Valley Business School. She was a longtime member of Wentz UCC and founded their Annual Christmas Bazaar Cookie Sale. An employee of Leeds and Northrup in North Wales, PA, she rose from executive assistant to plant manager. Anna embodied the Pennsylvania Dutch spirit as a wonderful mother, Christian, and an overall person. A widow, Anna is survived by her children, grandchildren, great-grandsons, nieces, and nephews.

Margaret (Peggy) Gelet was born June 29, 1936 and passed away on November 6, 2021 at the age of 85 years. Daughter of the late Joseph and Margaret May Smith Gelet, she was a longtime member of Lower Providence Baptist Church. A deaconess of the church, she also served on numerous committees.

Graduating in 1955 from Eisenhower Senior High School, Norristown, PA, she was very active in her community. Her community activities were extensive but we will highlight only a couple. She was a lifetime member of the Skippack Historical Society and became a member of the Peter Wentz Historical Society in 2009.

Besides her many volunteer positions, Peggy worked as receptionist and then secretary at Culligan Funk Water Quality Company until retiring in 2007. Peggy loved gardening, tennis, cooking, the beach and nature. She is survived by children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, sisters, a brother, nieces and nephews.

Marion E. Bubeck, 102, of Lansdale, passed away on May 7, 2023. She was the loving wife of 69 years of the late Allen F. Bubeck. Mrs. Bubeck was a child of the late Clarence and Marion Casey. She was an accomplished local artist and was featured by Lydia's Guild. Marion was an avid reader, a member of the Norristown Garden Club, and a member of the Goschenhoppen Historians. She also served for a time as a docent with the Peter Wentz Farmstead. Survivors include her son Robert A. Bubeck, daughter-in-law Judith Bubeck and grandchildren Kathryn Bubeck and James Bubeck.

**MUSEUM SHOP NEWS***by Amy Dinkel*

Did you know that we have a number of items in our museum shop that are colonial reproductions? These items include ink wells, ink powder, quill pens, horn drinking cups, horn gun powder containers, magnifying glasses, compasses, pocket knives, and tape looms. We also have growlers to carry your favorite beer or cider.

Our beautiful redware pottery is not to be missed! We have small pieces such as spoon rests, and larger pieces.

such as bowls. We even have whimsical red ware piggy banks!

And, what child wouldn't proudly wear a tricorne hat? We have those at the museum shop, as well! We have an assortment of colonial games and puzzles to capture the imagination of children who are looking for different toys to enjoy.

The museum shop is open for weekend events at the farmstead.

**IN GRATEFUL APPRECIATION***by Linda Snyder*

Thank you is not a big enough phrase to show our appreciation for the expertise that **Lee Kirk** shared with the Society Board. Serving for fourteen plus years, Lee did much beyond her title of Treasurer. As treasurer, she supervised both cash accounts and C/D renewals, kept the gift shop cash flow in order, processed our tax return, processed bill payments, created and managed the yearly budget, and coordinated with Carol Berardelli to track end-of-year contributions. Is your head spinning? Lee also picked up our mail, kept up with computer updates, changes, and merchants we use, supervised the Society website and responded to inquiries, co-anchored the website development project, and maintained all updates and the actual installation of the new computer. Lee also shared as a traditional docent. These are only some of what Lee did for the Society Board. Lee, thank you is NOT a big enough phrase. We may need a small (or not so small) army to try to take your place.

**THE PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD'S HISTORIC COLLECTIONS RECORDS GO DIGITAL***by Scott Houting, Curator*

In early June, the farmstead's historic collections records moved into the digital age by being posted Online through the farmstead's software provider, Past Perfect. The general public and scholars alike can now study the historic collections of the Peter Wentz Farmstead with the click of a computer mouse.

Museums posting their collections online is not a new concept. The marriage of digital photography and museum collection computer software have provided the tools museums need to share their collections through the internet since the 1990's. Today, it is common for professional museums to have their historic objects records, photographs, and archives available for viewing through the internet. The Peter Wentz Farmstead is delighted to join the other County of Montgomery historic sites in sharing their museum objects online. For security reasons, viewers of the farmstead's collections can view posted objects and their descriptions but cannot change records. These are "view only" images and records.

This first posting includes all of the furnishings and objects seen in the rooms of the 1758 house. The farmstead's curatorial staff have already started phase two of this project which will include all other museum objects currently in storage. The final phase of this project will feature some of the wonderful and unique artifacts excavated from the grounds of the farmstead by archaeologists. This final phase is slated for completion by the end of the year.

To view the farmstead's new Online catalogue, go to the official county website for the Peter Wentz Farmstead and click on the link *Collections*. Clicking on this link will take you to the Peter Wentz Farmstead online catalogue website established by Past Perfect. The software company is currently working on a [google.com](https://www.google.com) search link for the Peter Wentz Farmstead collection.

Self-Guided Site Tour: This spring the Peter Wentz Farmstead launched its first self-guided audio tour! For returning visitors who have already toured the historic house, or for new visitors that just want to check out the grounds, this is a great opportunity to learn more about this land and its history. Just by using your phone, this 30–45-minute audio tour will lead you to numerous spots throughout the property including the historic house, smokehouse, barn, animal pastures, and nature trail.

Visit www.pwfaudiotour.com or scan the QR codes posted at the Farmstead to start your tour and experience the Farmstead in a whole new way!

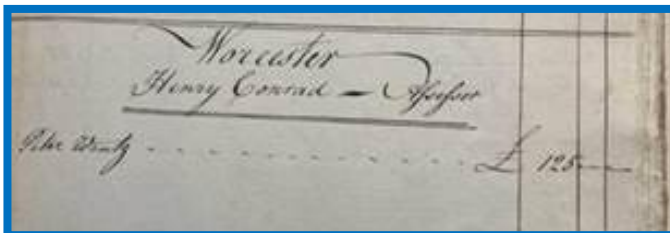
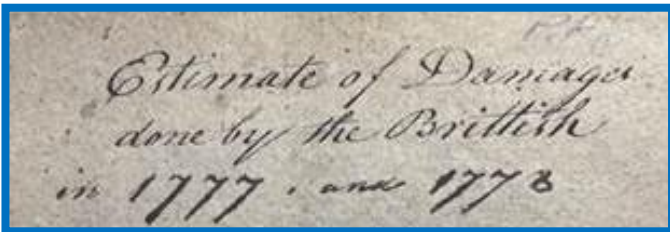
At the end of the tour, please fill out the survey to help us make this great new feature even better.



BRITISH TROOPS ON THE WENTZ FARM?

by Marc Brier, Park Ranger

(Part two continued from the Spring 2023 WENTZ POST)



(Images courtesy of Historical Society of Pennsylvania)

In the first article on British troops being on the Wentz property, I started to make the case that the British

came out to the farmstead during a cattle raid in February of 1778. The loyalist spy who discovered the herd that was headed to Valley Forge apparently posed as a Continental army commissary agent, got the cattle moved closer to British-occupied Philadelphia, and then rode into the city. They then alerted cavalry troops to come out and escort the valuable herd back to Philadelphia. The account of this raid shows up in many of the diaries of British officers stationed in Philadelphia. Many took it as a point of pride that they had outwitted the patriot forces and took the cattle out from under them.

For example, Major Simcoe of the Queens Rangers reported that "Mr. Washington drew his supplies of fat cattle from New England: a drove of this kind was met about thirty miles from Philadelphia, . . . by a friend of Government, who passed himself upon the drivers for a rebel commissary, then billeted them at a neighboring farm, and immediately galloped to Philadelphia, from whence a party of dragoons were sent for the cattle..."

The raiders likely came right past the Wentz property along Skippack Pike on the way out from the city. In an article published by the Montgomery County Historical Society in 1941, entitled "General Lacey's [Lacey was the Pennsylvania militia commander] Campaign in 1778," the author claimed that during the night of February 23, 1778, British cavalry and Loyalist militia left the city and halted in the early morning near Peter Wentz's, and then at daybreak went on to seize the cattle. While this sounds likely, there is no primary source cited to back up this account.

Other sources mention raids on Pawling's Mill in Schwenksville, near Gwynedd Meeting, and at Springhouse. Reverend Muhlenberg in Trappe reported in his journal that he was afraid that the British would capture him. Muhlenberg may have felt especially vulnerable because his son was a Continental Army general and because he had hosted part of the fall militia encampment. It is not a stretch to think that Loyalists wanted to get revenge on their neighbors whom they deemed responsible for putting them out of their houses. Anyone who hosted the Patriot forces or General Washington-as the Wentz's and others did-might be singled out for special retribution. Further research may help us discover more details of the raid. For now, we know that it happened and that it likely occurred during the February cattle raid.



HOLD THE DATE

FALL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD SOCIETY
OCTOBER 26, 2023
6:00 – 8:00

Regular meeting followed by presentation
by Bob Zolad

"The life of a Continental Revolutionary Soldier"
Dinner and dessert included
Please RSVP to Peter Wentz Farmstead
at 610-584-5104
Other details to follow

UPCOMING PHOTOGRAPH CONTEST

by Carly Schmidt

As we approach the commemoration of our nation's 250th birthday and the celebration of all that is yet to come, Montgomery County invites photographers of all skill levels to participate in the inaugural America250PA Montgomery County Photography Contest. This year's theme will be Montgomery County's Historic Sites; to be eligible for the contests, photographs must be taken at a county, state, or national historical site, historical marker, and/or park in Montgomery County. Montco residents participating in this kick-off contest may submit one entry per household in one, two, or all three categories for pictures taken from now until August 7th, 2023.

Youth: Montco residents ages 10-18 are encouraged to get out, explore, and take a picture at a historical site to capture something they find interesting. Entries must be submitted on behalf of the young photographer by a parent or guardian.

Historical Elements: Open to ages 19 and up. Capture a photo of the unique architectural, art, technology, or cultural element from a historical site.

Natural Beauty: Photographers entering this category should be looking to find that perfect shot of anything that captures nature's beauty at one of the historical sites. Open to ages 19 and up.

Entries must be submitted by noon on Monday, **August 7th, 2023**. Use the link A250Photo@MontgomeryCountyPA.gov. Entries must include that completed [form](#) as well as the submitted picture in a .jpeg format.

A panel of **America250PA Montgomery County judges** will convene to identify five images in each category which will then be voted on by the public to determine a winner. Winners will be recognized at a County Board of Commissioners meeting in September 2023.

Possible sites to Photograph (beside Wentz): A great guide for finding out about Montgomery County's historic sites and potential places to take your photos for the America250PA Montgomery County Photography Contest is the story map: ***The Continental Army in Montgomery County***.

Developed by county staff, this story map it a way to trace the movement of General Washington and his army through Montgomery County in 1777-1778. The map is available at: <https://sites.google.com/view/continental-army-in-montco/home>

Most of the county's historic sites and parks are listed, including Wentz.



ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTES

by Meg Bleecker Blades

Spring and early summer brought familiar friends, school classes, summer camp groups, as well as first-time visitors to the regular tours and special programs at the Peter Wentz Farmstead. While introductions to the farm animals, historic games, crafts, and house tours remain popular selections with our younger audiences, it is exciting to also offer regular house tours to the general public that include updated information based on new research.

Interest in Jack, the one enslaved person at the Farmstead we can document being here between 1766-1769, continues to be strong. We can also add information known about the enslaved members of Washington's Military Family who were here in October of 1777. PWF's Educator, Carly Schmidt, has developed a tour drawn from 18th-century period documents that weaves the story of the roles and responsibilities of these people who inhabited the Farmstead between the 1760's and 1770's. This enables us to place the Wentz Farmstead in the context of the national economy that relied on the work of enslaved people.

Detailed examination of the George Washington papers available through Founders Online (<https://founders.archives.gov>) has been a special project of Marc Brier, Park Ranger. Records in the collections of the Library of Congress and the George Washington papers in the US National Archives highlight the importance of the strategic location of the Wentz house to Washington's military actions during October 1777.

Clearly, the Wentz house figured in Washington's strategy during the Philadelphia campaign. Multiple pieces of headquarters correspondence mention the Wentz House by name, providing more evidence of its use by Washington and its strategic importance during the Philadelphia campaign. A letter from Washington while at the Wentz house, dated October 16, 1777 to John Hancock stated, "We moved...and just arrived at the Grounds we occupied before the Action of the 4th (Battle at Germantown). One motive for coming here, is to divert the Enemy's attention and force from the forts. These they seem to consider as Capital objects . . ." The forts referred to are the fortifications along the Delaware River protecting and slowing British fleet up the Delaware into Philadelphia. We now know more about why Washington and his staff "slept here."

The Farmstead is a much-loved focus for enthusiasts of regional and national history, as well as of people who enjoy a dramatic, true story. Put this work together with the projects making information on the collections at the site more readily available that Curator Scott Houting and Museum Assistant LeAnne Sykes are working on, and the Peter Wentz Farmstead continues to broaden our outreach, to use the Wentz house and the Farmstead property to tell a deeper, more evocative story based on historic documents.

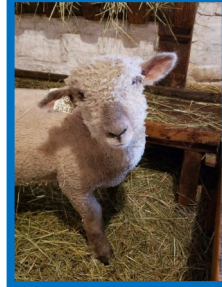
KIDS' FUN PAGE



Hannah



Lizzie



Rosie



Sophie



The Wentz Lambs 2023

Hey, kids! Did you ever see such cute faces? These four adorable lambs are the new residents here at the Farmstead. They got their names from a contest. Come see them. They LOVE visitors.

SHEEP SHIFTING

by the PWF Staff

The Peter Wentz Farmstead is pleased to announce the arrival of four Dorset-mix ewe lambs. The girls are about four months old and took up residence here on the farm on June 2nd. They are settling in well, and are having a splendid adventure exploring their new pasture, eating the clover, thistle, and fresh grass, and running and jumping about, as they choose. They seem to be very pleased to be fed long stands of hay by hand, and are very curious to meet visitors to the Farmstead. Lizzie, Hannah, Rosie and Sophie greet visitors during regular open hours.

The previous flock have moved on to larger pastures. The twins, both with dark fleeces, were adopted by Washington Crossing Park. The park wanted to add darker sheep to their flock to increase the range of natural wool shades available to their knitters and spinners. We keep in touch with the staff and volunteers there who reported that the boys behaved well at sheep shearing, and their fleeces were lovely. The remaining two ewes and the single wether (neutered male) were invited to join the sheep at the Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation. Speckles, Sister, and George are now happy residents of a large flock that roam the Plantation property freely. True to sheep logic, though, they stay with their group and are most often seen in their home field.

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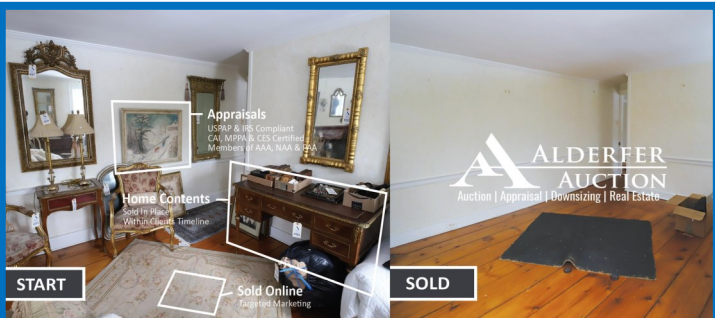
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