

Wentz Post

A Publication of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

Vol. XXXXII, No. 21

Spring 2025

A Labor of Love:

(See story on page 3.)

This reproduction camp mess chest offers a fascinating twist on interpreting Washington's stay at the Wentz house in October of 1777, an interpretive plus few other historic sites can offer.



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 SOCIETY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President – Joy Dolan

Vice President- Carol Allen

Secretary-Laura Danoff

Treasurer- Joe Hanrahan

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Wendy Aughe Laney Landis

Carol Berardelli Pat McDonnell

David Carhart Andy Rothenberger

Lori Curtis Linda Snyder

Amy Dinkel Dini Vigliano

PWFS COMMITTEES AND CHAIRS

Finance- Joe Hanrahan, Amy Dinkel, David Carhart,
Wendy Aughe

Garden- Lori Curtis, Laura Danoff, Wendy Aughe

IT- Andrew Rothenberger, Tom Knoble

Membership– Amy Dinkel, Wendy Aughe,
Donna Armstrong

Joe Hanrahan, Melissa Jay

Museum Shop- Carla Beckwith, Joy Dolan, Amy Dinkel

Scholarships– Carol Allen, Joy Dolan, Melissa Jay

Special Events- David Carhart

Wentz Post- Donna Armstrong

WENTZ POST

Volume XXXXII, No. 1

Spring 2025

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

Historic Site Director-Meg Bleecker Blades

Editor-Donna Armstrong, Layout-Frank Luther

CONTRIBUTORS—Lori Curtis, Amy Dinkel, Joy Dolan,

Pat McDonnell, Linda Snyder, PWF Staff

PHOTOS—Lori Curtis, Amy Dinkel, Joy Dolan,

PWF staff

All correspondence should be sent to:

Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

P.O. Box 679

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.

The articles and advertisements contained in the WENTZ POST express the views of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society (PWFS). The PWFS makes every effort to ensure articles and advertisements are factual; however, our statements do not express the views of the County-owned and operated Peter Wentz Farmstead (PWF), or its management or staff. The PWFS is an independent, non-profit organization that was established "to preserve and interpret an 18th century Pennsylvania German farmstead, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, by stimulating public interest and support of the site's heritage through educational programs and public events focusing on the architecture, crafts, customs and furnishings of the period." The PWFS does not operate the PWF and is not affiliated with PWF management other than as an independent organization.



A LABOR OF LOVE

REPRODUCING GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON'S 1776 TRAVEL DINING CAMP CHEST

by Scott Houting, Curator

A digital online account compiled by historian John Rees states that when General George Washington and his aide-de-camp staff travelled during the 1777 Philadelphia Campaign his personal baggage train consisted of 7 wagons and 28 wagon horses. This baggage train moved with Washington to the Peter Wentz house on 2 October 1777. Carried among these wagons was his camp Dining Mess Chest made in Philadelphia in 1776. While records do not state he actually used the camp chest at the Wentz house, since it was more commonly used in the field, the mess chest was certainly at the Wentz house, albeit possibly left in the general's baggage.

Thanks to a 2024 grant from the Springhouse Questers, the Peter Wentz Farmstead now owns an exact reproduction of Washington's 1776 Camp mess chest. The chest is one of very few reproductions known to exist.

The project started in December of 2023 when the farmstead's curator made a research trip to the Smithsonian Institution to measure, photograph and inspect the original mess chest on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. The trip was made possible by an invitation from the Smithsonian's curator of Armed Forces History, Dr. Ken Cohen, who approved the project and made the original chest accessible to the farmstead's curator, Scott Houting.

A year later, the farmstead now uses the reproduction camp chest to further interpret Washington's use of the Wentz house as his headquarters, helping to illustrate the tools Washington's staff used in the main kitchen of the house.

The Peter Wentz Farmstead's version of Washington's 1776 Camp chest is an exact reproduction of the original. The measurements of the chest are within 1/8 of an inch to the original. The chest's interior and its various compartments are also exact in arrangement, and are lined in green baize wool purchased from Burnley & Trowbridge Textiles from their store in Williamsburg, Virginia.

To complete the chest, the farmstead curator worked with various living-history vendors who were able to reproduce the chest's tin ware, utensils, and cooking wares based on measurements provided by the original chest. A couple glass objects are actually period antiques found at a New Jersey antique store months ago.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Joy A. Dolan

Support for our organization comes in many ways. Giving of one's time as a volunteer, promoting public awareness and enjoyment of the site and assisting financially with projects to further provide education, interpretation and preservation of The Peter Wentz Farmstead.

As we eagerly move into the season of warmth, new life and growth, once again enjoying the outdoors, our Colonial Garden and the many sounds of our contented livestock at the Farmstead, I encourage everyone to stop by for a visit. Listen, stroll and step back in time.

As PWFS members, we have played an important role in assisting with preservation through our individual memberships, corporate donations and Museum Shop revenue. Through time we have supported the restoration of structures, rejuvenation of the Colonial Garden and provided educational programming materials and volunteers.

One very recent example is PWFS's financial support for the purchase of Irish Tin Whistles to facilitate a new hands-on music project for this year's *Colonial Camp* to be held July 7 – 11. The yearly camp program is attended by 30 young participants. This year, each camper will receive a Tin Whistle and be taught the Art of the Instrument by Jay Ryan, a PWF Farming staff. The PWF Farming staff plays an integral role in the site and in the education of visitors and campers. Our campers' newly acquired musical skills will be presented when the group performs on the final day of camp at the Vendue, a colonial auction attended by friends and family.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, cont.

Community support comes in many forms. I would like to thank Chef Colleen Kriebel, Baking and Pastry Instructor and her talented students from Central Montco Technical High School for donating 300 cookies for our *Holiday Open House* in December. They were beautifully done and appreciated by the many visitors to the Farmstead event.

Thank you to all our members and supporters who help PWFS fulfill its Mission in support of the Peter Wentz Farmstead. There are many upcoming events in 2025. Stop by, bring your friends, volunteer...it's a great group of people!

**IN MEMORIAM**

by Linda Snyder

A sad farewell to Kathrina Anne (DeWitt) Yost. Kathy was born June 1949 to Bishop Robert L. and Barbara DeWitt of Pontiac, Michigan. She passed away December 1, 2024 in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

A graduate of Wissahickon High and Temple University, Kathy was very interested in history and the items from the past. President of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Historical Society for more than seven years, Kathy was instrumental in campaigning for the collection, which enhances the telling of the Farmstead story, to be preserved and protected by more modern techniques.

An avid gardener, Kathy was also partial to her chickens.

Kathy is survived by her husband, four children, five grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.

She will be sorely missed by family and friends.

REMEMBRANCE...

If you are interested in giving a gift in Kathy Yost's memory to the Peter Wentz Farmstead Historical Society, the funds will be used to purchase appropriate plantings for the PWF Kitchen Garden. Kathy was an avid gardener - a fitting way to honor her memory.

Address for the Society is PO Box 679, Worcester, PA 19494-0679

**FOLLOW THE PWF ON-LINE**

For regular updates about activities at the Farmstead, you can find timely information on our website: <https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/929/Peter-Wentz-Farmstead>; The Farmstead's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com>; or to our Instagram posts: <https://www.instagram.com/peterwentzfarmstead>

**SHEEP SHEARING DAY**

Saturday, April 26 from 10:00 am to 3:30 pm

Experience springtime on a colonial farm! Watch our farmers shear our sheep to get them ready for the warm weather. Then, follow the "wool to wardrobe" process as our living historians demonstrate spinning, weaving, and other textile crafts. Hear about all the various activities that went into running an 18th century farm as you tour the historic house. Check out the sights and smells of an open-hearth cooking demonstration in the Out Kitchen. Stop by our demonstrators' stalls to learn about important crafts like woodworking, sewing, candle-dipping, and more. Visit our Museum Shop for historically-inspired gifts for all ages. We can't wait to see "ewe" there!

**GRAPE TRELLIS REPAIRS UNDERWAY**

Spring has arrived, and it is very exciting to see the Wentz Weeders again, preparing the garden for another busy season! The first projects, to prune the dead wood off the grape vines and to repair trellis supporting them, is well underway. If all goes well, we may have a crop of grapes late this summer or early fall and may be able to experiment with early recipes for baking with fruit and making "conserve" (an early word for jam).



THE PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD KITCHEN GARDEN

by Lori Curtis

The Wentz Weeders are the volunteers who tend the Farmstead’s kitchen garden. After enjoying a winter break, we are getting an early start this year at the beginning of March by pruning the grapevines, which had been neglected for years. The farmers will be rebuilding the arbors for the grapevines, as they are in an advanced state of disrepair. In mid-April, the Wentz Weeders will start coming weekly and we expect to have onions, cabbage, lettuce, chard and other cold-tolerant vegetables planted by Sheep Shearing Day on April 26th.

Since we strive to maintain the authenticity of the garden as it would be during the 18th century when the Wentz family lived there, we continually need to assess what is growing and whether there are any crops that need to be replaced. For example, last Fall we planted asparagus, a versatile vegetable that had been absent from the garden for some time. Along with peas and onions, asparagus would be harvested by May, cooked and served salted and covered with brown butter.

Rhubarb, another of the perennial crops in the garden, made its way to Europe from Asia via trade routes and was cultivated for both medicinal and culinary purposes. When German immigrants settled in Pennsylvania in the 18th and 19th centuries, they planted rhubarb in their gardens, and its tart flavor made it a staple in springtime desserts, including pies, preserves and sauces. Rhubarb leaves are poisonous if eaten, and it is the stalk that is used in cooking and baking, often sweetened with sugar or combined with strawberries.

We hope you will visit the kitchen garden whenever you visit the Farmstead. Don’t let a closed gate deter you from entering and wandering around. When warmer weather comes, you will see cucumbers, peppers, beans, tomatoes, squash, herbs, annuals and more. The crops are all identified on small wooden stakes, and you can find seeds for some of them in the Museum Shop.

MUSEUM SHOP NEWS

by Amy Dinkel

Peter Wentz Farmstead is a destination for people who enjoy nature. Visitors can walk the grounds, see the animals, and have a picnic under our pavilion when the weather is nice. In the museum shop, we stock books that are related to our beautiful 18th-century garden, birds, trees, the seasons, and insects. Our children’s books are extremely popular, and we have them for preschool readers through teen nature enthusiasts.

Some of our most popular items in the museum shop are our bird ornaments. Visitors love to see our growing collection of birds, especially owls. We try to include birds seen on the farmstead property.

We have heirloom seeds sourced from the Roughwood Center for Heritage Seedways in the Museum Shop. And, speaking of seeds, we at the Farmstead are excited about a new nature event this year: Project Pawpaw, A Habitat Story. This new event will celebrate the largest edible fruit in North America—the pawpaw. This tree is just one of the many native species planted at the Farmstead. Mark your calendar for Saturday, September 20, from 1to3 pm. The event is free and is for all ages.



FAMILY FUN PAGE



BAA BAA - WE ARE VERY SMART

By Pat McDonnell

April will soon be here and with it comes the sheep shearing event at the Peter Wentz Farmstead. It is well attended by families, young, old, and children who want to see how the shearers skillfully shave their wool and leave them looking quite different without their coats of wool. In the past, sheep were believed to be "stupid", "dumb" showing no signs of intelligence. Nasty jokes were made up about the character of the sheep and were passed on and used by humans. The time for the nasty jokes is over. In order to gain more information about sheep behavior and answer the question about being smart scientists did research and sheep owners and humans who worked with sheep gave their testimony that, yes, they were smart. May we say first that George Washington's favorite farm animals were sheep. At one time, he had 1000 sheep on his farm.

Sheep have a long history having lived in the world for thousands of years. There are at least a billion sheep in the world today. America has about 5 million. Read the amazing story of Shrek who was a sheep who survived on his own for about 6 years while having grown a 60 pound "coat" of wool. There are at least one thousand different breeds of sheep with wool of the merino sheep being the finest. It is prized for being the softest of wools. Sheep choose their friends and will stay away from ones they do not like. They also show different forms of emotion. They remain closely in flocks (sheep groups) and have keen eyesight which gives them warnings when predators are near. Sheep are smart but have a different way of thinking than humans. It is estimated that sheep were domesticated (trained to be useful to humans) about 11,000 years ago. Once this happened sheep could never go back into the wild. Everything they needed to survive was supplied by humans. It is agreed that sheep were central to the survival of mankind. Thank you to Sheep. Yes you are smart and some would say, 'very smart'.

skippack succulent BAR

floral & hardy

floralandhardyofskippack.com
610.584.0797




610-584-5559





ALLEN ANTIQUES
&
Artisans

Antiques & Specialty Items
Fax (610) 584-5226

P.O. Box 505
3004 Skippack Pike
Center Point, Worcester, PA 19490



Berardelli Pool Service
Commercial Service, Chemicals & Supplies

Chrissy Berardelli
Owner
chrissy@berardellipools.com

1803 Valley Forge Road
P.O. Box 968
Worcester, PA 19490

610.222.4442 (o)
610.222.0607 (f)

Don't Move, Improve!




INSURED

HOME IMPROVEMENTS
REMODELING
CABINETRY

Phil Honsberger
610.473.3151
PA004058

Email: philshvc@comcast.net



ALDERFER AUCTION

Auction | Appraisal | Estate Sales | Real Estate

alderferauction.com

Complimentary Valuations: Call 215.393.3000



CARPET CRAFT
INC.

Carpet • Hardwood • Vinyl

Sales • Service • Installation • Repair

"Making Your House a Home Since 1987"

Joe Patrylak
Office: 610-454-0470
Cell#: 610-283-9531



THE DUTCH TAVERN
"BEST WINGS IN SKIPPACK!"

OPEN DAILY NOON - 1:30 A.M.
1264 Bridge Road, Skippack, PA
610-584-9961
THEDUTHCOTTAGETAVERN.COM

COME WATCH THE GAME ON OUR
13 BIG SCREEN TV'S.



Skippack Beverage

Find a large selection of craft & domestic beers.

Now selling Stateside, Surfside and High Noon.

Open Daily
1120 Bridge Road, Creamery, PA
610-489-9444

Thanks to the businesses who advertise
on the back of our WENTZ POST;
our expenses for mailings are being supported
without any cost
to the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society.




starpaintingandwallcovering.com
(610) 409-7980
info@starpaintingandwallcovering.com

PETER WENTZ FARMSTEAD

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday, April 26 10:00 am to 4:00 pm *Sheep Shearing Day* Experience springtime on a colonial farm! Watch our farmers shear our sheep. Then, follow the "wool to wardrobe" process as our living historians demonstrate spinning, weaving, and other textile crafts. Tour the historic house, watch an open hearth cooking demo, and more! All ages; Free.

Saturday, May 10 Time TBD *All For the Union Civil War Event* Take a break from the 18th century to learn all about the life of a Union Army soldier from our amazing living historians. See the military in action with tactical infantry and artillery demonstrations, then meet the ladies of the US Sanitary Commission to see how civilians aided the cause. All ages; Free.

Saturday, June 21 10:00 am to 3:30 pm *Juneteenth Tours* Join the Peter Wentz Farmstead in observation of Juneteenth for special tours focusing on the lives of the people enslaved by the Wentz family and their guests within the larger history of slavery in early Pennsylvania. This program is free, but visitors must register for timed tickets. Space is limited. Suggested for visitors 13 and older; Free.

July 7th - July 11th, 8:30 am to 12:30 pm, *Peter Wentz Farmstead's Colonial Camp*. Have you ever dreamed of traveling into the past? Well, we may not have a time machine, but we have the next best thing! Join us this summer for the Peter Wentz Farmstead's Colonial Camp, where you can step back into the 18th century and live like a colonial farmer for a week! This year our living historians will lead campers through hands-on demonstrations of a wide range historical crafts. You don't have to be a history buff to have a good time! We'll be exploring art, nature, agriculture, and technology. Colonial Camp is for kids going into 4th-6th grade. The **cost** for the week is \$125 per child. Space is limited. Email leannesykes@montgomerycountypa.gov to pre-register.

Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

P.O. Box 679

Worcester, PA 19490-0679