

Peter Wentz Farmstead Calendar of Events

Project Pawpaw; A Habitat Story - Saturday, September 20th 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Join us to celebrate the Pawpaw, the largest edible native fruit in North America and one of the many native species planted at the Farmstead to help combat the threat of habitat loss in Southeastern PA! Explore our native artifacts table, take a guided walk through the restored creek habitat, make a craft and receive some Pawpaw seeds to take home! All ages; Free.

Fall 2025 Bird Walks - Tuesday, September 30th at 8:30 am & Tuesday October 28th at 8:30 am

Join environmental educator Rebecca Blacketter for a morning bird walk at the Farmstead. Come observe some of the amazing birds who call our area home. Bring binoculars if you have them. Wear sturdy shoes for hiking. All ages; Free

Harvest Festival - Saturday, November 8th 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

For a colonial farm family like the Wentzes, the fall harvest was the most important time of year. Join the Peter Wentz Farmstead for our third annual Harvest Festival. Meet our farm animals, watch demonstrations of typical fall farm chores, and put your family to work with hands-on activities. All ages; Free.

Candlelight - Saturday, December 6th 3:00 pm - 7:00pm

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! All ages; Free.

Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

PO Box 679

Worcester, PA 19490-0679

Wentz Post

A Publication of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

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Summer 2025

The Peter Wentz Farmstead is very pleased to be able to include these elegant examples of Henzey's craftsmanship in our collection of 18th-century Philadelphia area furniture, thanks to the generosity of the Reed family. (See story on page 4)



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

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Museum Shop - Carla Beckworth, Joy Dolan and Amy Dinkel
Special Events - David Carhart
Wentz Post - Donna Armstrong and Amy Dinkel

Wentz Post

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Photos - Lori Curtis, Amy Dinkel, Joy Dolan and PWF Staff

All correspondence should be sent to:

**Peter Wentz Farmstead Society
PO Box 679
Worcester, PA 19490-0679**

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.

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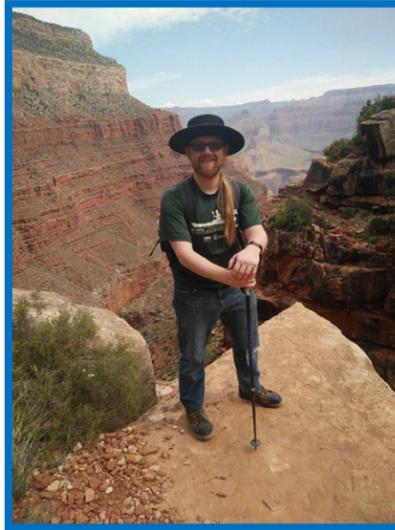
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Thanks to the businesses who advertise in the WENTZ POST; our expenses for mailings are being supported without any cost to the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society.

Meet PWF New Educator, Alan Schulze

My name is Alan Schulze and I'm the new museum educator here at the Peter Wentz Farmstead. I grew up in a PA Dutch family near Reading and first started doing historical tours at



Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site when I was 9 years old. I've spent the last 16 years as a Ranger with the National Park Service at Hopewell Furnace, Independence National Historical Park, and most recently Steamtown National Historic Site. I've also done programming at the Cumberland County Historical Society, Pine Grove Furnace State Park, and Historic Bethlehem Museums and Sites. My main interest is the history of the iron and steel industry, but I'm also fascinated

with PA Dutch culture and all things southeastern PA, as well as railroads and mining. I'm excited to meet all the volunteers and museum guides, to learn the stories of the Wentz farmstead, and to get to know more about Montgomery

Heavy Rain Leads to Cancellation of this Year's Sheep-Shearing Day

By : Amy Dinkel

Heavy rain led to the unfortunate cancellation of this year's sheep-shearing event. However, our four sister sheep—Lizzie, Sophie, Hannah, and Rosie—still needed their winter fleeces shorn. So, farmer Jim Nichols decided to have a "pop-up" shearing event on the Tuesday morning following the would-be event, and the staff were able to alert the public on the web site



and social media. There were about 40 people who showed up to see the sheep being shorn. While shearing the first sheep, the electric shearer gave its final gasp, putting the shearing on a brief hold. Jim had to switch to manual clipper shears, which, although more historically accurate, are difficult to use when trying to hold a squirmy sheep. A little extra patience was required on the part of Sophie—the first sheep up to bat, so to speak. The farm staff were able to obtain another electric shearer later in the week, and the sheep were all wearing their spring jackets by the end of the week.

Family Fun & Education

A Stroll Through Time: Using Herbs in Colonial America

By : Melissa Jay

How did families use herbs from their kitchen garden to help them stay healthy and cure illnesses and ailments?

Herbs and botanicals have been used as medicine for thousands of years, and are, in fact, still used today. Herbal medicine is the world's oldest form of healthcare known to humankind.

Anthropologists believe that people began making healing ointments out of plants they combined with olive oil and sesame oil as early as 7000 B.C. The European colonists who settled North America in the 1600s and 1700s carried seeds from their most useful plants to the New World.

In Colonial America herbs were essential. During this time, many family illnesses were treated at home. They kept the kitchen garden filled with herbs to be used as medicine.

Herbs were important as medicine throughout American History, but in the colonial period herbs were essential.

Herbs helped lessen symptoms of diseases and illnesses and helped in the recovery from those illnesses and diseases. The most widely read material were the "herbals" catalogues, which explained where and how healing herbs grew. In addition, these materials explained their uses.

Mark Catesby, an English naturalist who studied the flora and fauna of the colonies, discovered various therapeutic plants, including the May apple, snake-root, ginseng, and witch-hazel. He created a great resource for settlers when he wrote his *Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahamas Islands*.

Today you will find that most medicines (25%) used by pharmacies have at least one active ingredient from an herb plant.

The Peter Wentz Farmstead's 18th-century kitchen garden was specifically designed to replicate what would have been planted in Colonial America. As you visit the garden, you are taking a stroll through time, witnessing a wide variety of raised beds with boards to provide easier maintenance. Families today can have their very own kitchen garden.

To get more information on how to begin your colonial kitchen garden project, speak to the Wentz weeders volunteers.



Leaves of Hamamelis virginiana (common witch hazel)

President's Message

By: Joy A. Dolan

I would like to share with you a few highlights from our May 17, 2025 Peter Wentz Farmstead Society membership meeting and luncheon, which was held at St. James Episcopal Church, Colledgeville, PA.

We were welcomed by Rev. Dr. William Sowards, Rector, who shared with us some history of the church and cemetery. St. James has a rich heritage dating back to 1700. On the north side of Germantown Pike surrounded by a low stone wall and across from the present church sits the St. James' Cemetery. The cemetery has been in continuous use since the 1700s. Over 150 Continental soldiers who died following the Battle of Germantown are buried there. Many of these soldiers are interred in a mass burial mound for those whose names will remain forever unknown. There also is the grave of Captain Vachel D. Howard, a soldier in the Maryland Light Dragoon, who died in March 1778 at the age of 32. George Washington is said to have visited the churchyard and remarked on his acquaintance with this soldier.

The Membership meeting was called to order. The President's and Treasurer's reports were presented, as well as updates from the Membership Chairman and the Wentz Weeders committee. Discussion was encouraged, and upcoming Farmstead events were announced.

Our buffet luncheon was followed by an informative presentation by Scott Houting, PWF Museum Curator. Scott shared with us a fascinating look into the research and fabrication of an authentic reproduction of George Washington's Mess Chest that was with him during his stay at Peter Wentz Farmstead and beyond. Scott's extraordinary amount of research and craftsmanship that went into creating this important addition to the interpretation and educational programming of the Peter Wentz Farmstead was showcased. Following his presentation, Scott invited members to examine the contents of the Mess Chest while answering questions about the project.

It was a lovely afternoon of conversation, friendship, and learning. Thank you to all who attended and to all those who were not able to join us. We appreciate your support and involvement in our Mission to support the Peter Wentz Farmstead.

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-WentzFarmstead](https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/929/Peter-WentzFarmstead); The Farmstead's Facebook page: [https:// www.facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com); or to our Instagram posts: [https:// www.instagram.com/peterwentzfarmstead](https://www.instagram.com/peterwentzfarmstead)

In Memorium...

By: Linda Snyder

Sandra Highhouse was born in Phoenixville, PA in November

1945 to William O. Highhouse and Helen (Zawislak) Highhouse. She passed away in Harleysville, PA on March 8, 2025.

A 1963 Graduate of Souderton High School, Sandra was employed by Merck, Sharpe & Dohme. She attended Old Goshenhoppen Church and Perkiomenville Mennonite Church.

Sandra was heavily involved with the Goshenhoppen Historians and the Goschenhoppen Folk Festival. These connections aligned with her interest in sewing, especially historical needlepoint, and historical items related to Dutch and German groups that settled in the Franconia area. She also enjoyed gardening and Fraktur. Sandra was dedicated to historical restorations, preservations and accurate recreations.

A devoted daughter and sister, Sandra is survived by a nephew, two grandnieces and numerous cousins.

Sadly, we must report the passing of our dear "Tape Loom Lady", Eleanor Bittle, on April 23, 2025 at Amity Place in Douglassville, PA. Born on December 8, 1923, Eleanor grew up in the Pottstown area and was actually driven to school by one of her older sisters who was the teacher and school bus driver.

Eleanor graduated from Pottstown High School in 1942 and went to work in the Pottstown office of Doehler-Jarvis. In 1944, Eleanor joined the United States Navy and became a WAVE. Transported to Bronx, NY for boot camp and later to Georgia for training, she returned to Brooklyn, NY where she served in the payroll department of the armed guards. Two years, two months and fourteen days later, Eleanor was discharged. Eleanor and Robert Bittle married on April 12, 1947. Robert passed away in 1988.

Eleanor was a charter member of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society and the first President in the Spring of 1977. She was involved in the Peter Wentz Farmstead Summer Camp program as the Assistant Camp Director.

Eleanor saw a demonstration of tape loom weaving at a Goschenhoppen Festival in 1979, borrowed a loom, and the rest is history. She shared her love of this craft with many through numerous workshops.

Eleanor served her country and the community of tape loom weavers. She will be missed.

News & Notes

*Marc Brier, former MontCo Park Ranger and PW Farmstead staffer, is a skilled researcher and excellent writer. He recently completed an illustrated guide titled *For the Trouble of the House: The American Revolution and the Peter Wentz Farmstead 1777-1778*, which explores the first-person narratives and original accounts preserved in the letters, documents, maps and records of the soldiers and civilians "Near Philadelphia" and around the Peter Wentz Farmstead. The narrative focuses on events between October 2, 1777, and into the summer of 1778. Copies will be available in the Farmstead Museum Shop this Fall.

*All buildings need regular maintenance and repairs. At 1758 Wentz farmhouse, Keith Childs, stone mason, is working on a project to repoint the areas below the pent roof down to the ground line. This is needed to remove the early 1970's mortar whose mix includes a high proportion of Portland cement. This cement makes the mortar very durable and hard but does not allow moisture to escape the walls through the mortar. Instead, the damp pushes out through the softer, more porous red sandstone of the walls, weakening the stones and damaging the walls.

*As Keith removed several areas of the 1970's mortar, he uncovered earlier, possibly 18th-century mortar. It was fascinating to see the evidence of the work of the earliest masons.



*Henzey Chairs Donated to the Peter Wentz Farmstead

Joseph Henzey, Sr. (1743-1796) was one of fourteen known Windsor chair makers in Philadelphia during the second half of the 18th century. Henzey was well-known and well respected by the founding fathers, and he counted the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Carpenter's Company, Carpenter's Hall among his many clients.

The two fan-back armchairs are a recent gift to the Farmstead from Carol Reed, formerly from this area. The chairs descended in her family from the original owner, either Benjamin Gilbert (1711-1780) or his father Joseph Gilbert (1675-1765) of Byberry, PA. Family history supplied by family member Wayne Reed states that the chairs remained in the family home in Byberry for several generations, traditionally passing from mother to daughter. In 1930 the chairs moved to Norristown, eventually descending to Dorothy Cloud Reed, and then to her daughter, Carol Reed, who donated them to the Farmstead.

*Family history, supplied by Wayne Reed, cites one source (*Type of the Times*, Cincinnati OH, 1855) that states that Benjamin Gilbert and Benjamin Franklin were friends and stayed at each other's houses for half-weeks at a time discussing the tensions with England. When Benjamin Franklin became convinced that war was necessary, Benjamin Gilbert's Quaker pacifism ended their friendship. Therefore, it is possible that Benjamin Franklin may have used the Henzey chairs during his visits.

The Peter Wentz Farmstead is very pleased to be able to include these elegant examples of Henzey's craftsmanship in our collection of 18th-century Philadelphia area furniture, thanks to the generosity of the Reed family.



Less Common Vegetables in The Kitchen Garden

By: Lori Curtis

The kitchen garden at the Peter Wentz Farmstead is thriving, due to the efforts of the Wentz Weeder volunteers who meet weekly to plant, tend, and harvest the crops. So far, lettuce, string beans, peas, radishes, turnips, and rhubarb have been harvested, and cabbage, chard, cucumbers, squash, beets, carrots, tomatoes, ground cherries, and more will be ready over the weeks ahead. Most of the produce harvested has gone to local food banks.

We are looking forward to our first Farmstead-sponsored public tour of the Kitchen Garden, scheduled for Saturday, July 26th from 10:00 to 11:30 AM. Visitors will learn about 18th-century Pennsylvania German gardens, the plants grown, and their culinary, ornamental, and/or medicinal purposes. The crops in the 18th-century garden were not grown for pleasure, as is the case for many of our gardens today, but as essential sources of fiber, vitamin C, antioxidants, and other nutrients for the household.

Some of the less common plants that are in the garden include rutabagas, turnips, and parsnips. These crops were often among the first to be planted, and while some might be harvested in early to mid-summer, others were left in the ground to be harvested later. Rutabagas have been described as a cross between a turnip and a cabbage plant, and their leaves can also be cooked and eaten. Turnips are another root vegetable with edible leaves that can be eaten raw, roasted, mashed, or added to soups and stews. They have a mild, slightly sweet flavor. Parsnips are closely related to carrots and parsley. They have a pale, tapered shape and can be roasted, mashed, or added to stews and soups. Their flavor becomes more pronounced after being exposed to freezing weather.

Beets are another root vegetable found in Pennsylvania Germans gardens. Prized for their vibrant colors and sweet, earthy flavor, beets thrive in the spring and fall. They can be eaten raw, roasted, steamed, or boiled and were likely preserved by pickling.

Although not a root vegetable and probably one of the more unusual-looking plants in the garden is kohlrabi, which is also known as a German turnip, or turnip cabbage. The bulb is the edible portion and appears just above the surface of the soil. The bulb, to which the leaves are attached, is the size of a tennis ball and is eaten raw or cooked.

We welcome you to walk around the kitchen garden any time you visit the farmstead. The names of all the crops appear on wooden stakes so you will be able to identify them.

