

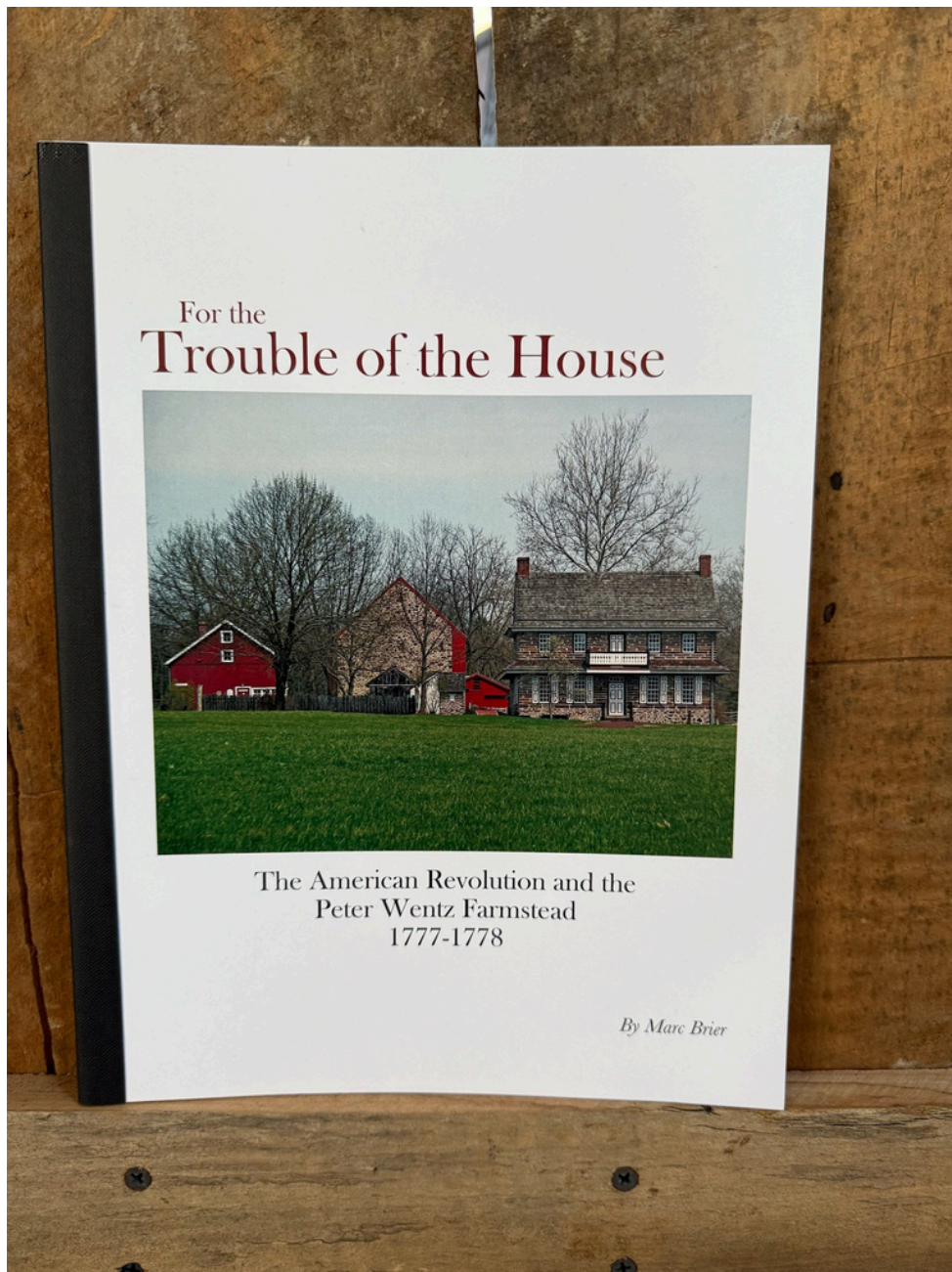
# Wentz Post

A Publication of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

Vol. XLIII, No.1

Spring 2026

The story of George Washington's stay at the Peter Wentz Farmstead has long been a source of fascination. Former Park Ranger Marc Brier wrote the book, *For the Trouble of the House*, to highlight the circumstances that brought Washington to PWF in the fall of 1777 as well as to tell the story of the impact that the American Revolution had on the local inhabitants when the war came to their doorstep. (See story - 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

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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.

## Wentz Post

Volume XLIII, No. 1

Spring 2026

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Peter Wentz Farmstead Society

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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.

**\*\*SAVE THE DATE\*\***

OCTOBER 15, 2026 at 5:00 PM

Peter Wentz Farmstead  
Society Dinner and Board Meeting.

Social hour, dinner, and  
entertainment at the Bay Pony Inn.

We are pleased to welcome  
Carol Spacht,

internationally known interpreter,  
as Martha Washington.

## President's Message

By: Joy A. Dolan

### INTO THE ARCHIVES – LOOKING BACK AT THE WENTZ POST

Given that this year we will celebrate the 250th anniversary of America's Independence, we are reflecting on our own Peter Wentz Farmstead and its evolution to the present-day site, where staff and volunteers are dedicated to the interpretation of colonial farm life. Those early years around 1976 were busy and exciting times, focused on restoration, preservation, interpretation, fund raising, and gathering a collection of furnishings for the historic house. Always at the forefront was the education of the many visitors to the Farmstead. Then, as now, dedicated staff and volunteers lead the charge, developing programs and events, some of which are still enjoyed today, 50 years later!

We decided to take a look back into the archives of the

**Wentz Post**, which was first published in 1980, with an eye to the happenings in the early days of the site and how the many volunteers to the Farmstead spent their time. Interestingly, volunteers at the Farmstead numbered 50+ in 1990, some with 500+ hours given.

#### Excerpt from Spring 1990 Wentz Post...Volunteers

*"The Peter Wentz Farmstead's and the Farmstead Society's most valuable asset is their volunteers. Researchers, garden helpers, and curatorial committee help create a clean and pleasant educational environment while the interpreters, docents, and craftspeople provide interpretation for the public. The inventory and financial record keepers provide the Society with a firm financial base. Without these dedicated volunteers the Society could not continue to provide its valuable assistance to the Farmstead. For all the volunteer help that the Society has received, a special thank you is extended to each and every one."*

Larry Burghart

Thank you to our presentday volunteers. We look forward to this year and its many PWF programs. Volunteers are essential and valued. Join us and invite your friends and family to become involved!

#### PWF Staff and Volunteer Offices on the Move

The Farmstead Office is about to have a facelift! A recent review of the building by structural engineers has led to recommendations for improvements to the second-floor framing and roofing. The work is initially expected to continue through 2026 with the new offices being ready for us to move back into in 2027.

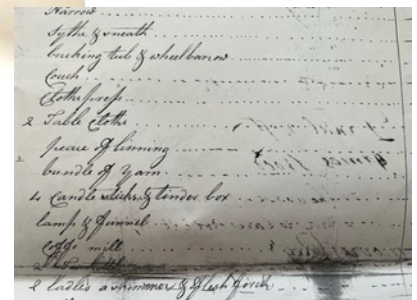
During both the design and construction phases the staff and volunteer offices are relocated to Alvin's House, a ca. 1969 custom-built ranch house on Salome Lane (also known as Old Schultz Road). Desks, chairs, file cabinets, the Farmstead library, supplies and materials for all the education projects and programs, all the "tools of our trades" have joined the collection of reproduction clothing we wear at special events in the five rooms on the first floor of Alvin's house. As we settle into our new, temporary "digs" we are enjoying the additional space-- though we all miss being closer to the museum house and, of course the animals. Visitors wanting a house tour can make a reservation by calling us at 610-584-5104 or by emailing us at [peterwentzfarmstead@montgomerycountypa.gov](mailto:peterwentzfarmstead@montgomerycountypa.gov).

## Coffee Mill Purchased for House

By: Scott Houting

Over the past few years, the Peter Wentz Farmstead staff have tried to acquire historic objects reflected in Peter and Rosanna's Probate Inventory of 1793. While we simply don't know what happened to the family-owned original objects, we can acquire similar "like" objects listed on their inventory to help our visitors better understand what may have been in the house while the Wentz family lived here from 1758 to 1784. A good example is a recently purchased brass coffee mill. The family inventory clearly lists a "coffee mill" among their household items.

The staff curator, Scott Houting, was able to find the coffee mill pictured in this article through an antique dealer in western Ireland. Dated from the mid- to late-18<sup>th</sup>-century, the mill is constructed from walnut with a brass bean hopper and two brass finials on the wrought-iron grinding crank. The box used to collect the ground coffee beans includes a removable front drawer with a turned wood knob. The four box sides are decorated with a carved diamond pattern turned horizontally with raised chevrons. The origin of the coffee mill is believed to be English based on the typical English brass finial "acorn" design. It is worth noting when dating coffee mills, that American mills, sometime after 1800, usually had tin or pewter hoppers. The use of brass is more commonly connected to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and English manufacture.



Coffee Mill & Family Inventory

## A Book that Provides the Background to Washington's Stay at Peter Wentz Farmstead (*From cover*)

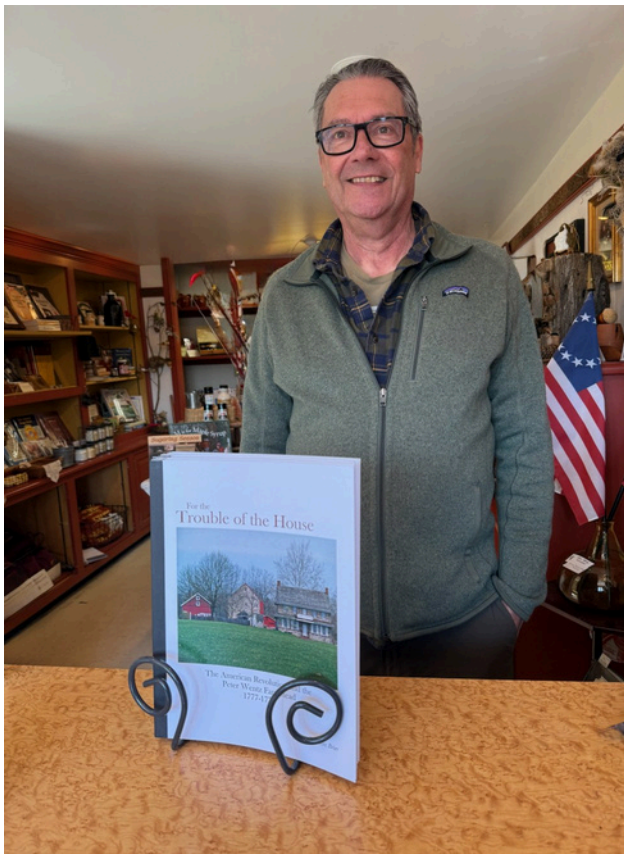
We are pleased to announce that the book, *For the Trouble of the House*, by Marc Brier, is available in time for America's 250th anniversary. The book describes General George Washington's reason for his stay at the Peter Wentz Farmstead twice in October 1777.

Marc Brier was a park ranger/historian with the National Park Service from 1984 to 2014. Marc also worked at the Peter Wentz Farmstead in a similar capacity, and taught early American history at Montgomery County Community College. He has always been fascinated with the movement of Washington's troops through Montgomery County. Many of the routes that the troops traveled can be traced on the roads that we travel every day.

The book is available at the PWF Museum Shop.

If you would like even more information on the subject, this is the link to the story map that covers the entirety of Washington's stay in Montgomery County:

<https://sites.google.com/view/continental-army-in-montco/home>



Author Marc Brier

## A Seasonal Check-in with the Farmers

By: AJ Kissinger

With iced-over water tubs in the pastures and foot-long icicles gracing our shop's roofline, there's no doubt that it's winter at the Peter Wentz Farmstead. And what a winter it's been! From tirelessly battling weekend snowstorm after weekend snowstorm with salt spreaders, snowplows, tractors, and shovels to keeping the animals warm and well-fed during several severe freezes, this winter has been one to remember. We've dealt with temperatures lower for longer than we've seen in quite a while, which puts a strain on our animals just as much as it does for us humans... we feed more hay and grain than usual and more nights are spent inside than out. We insulate the chicken coop with extra bedding during deep freezes, and the cows are as well-prepared as our sheep with their fluffy winter coats. As the site's visitor center is preparing for a face-lift, so too is our barn. We recently had the front (down-slope) doors fully rebuilt, with all iron hardware restored or reproduced in-house. Staples, hinges, and latches were all patterned directly from the old pieces in Farmer Jay's blacksmithing shop. Later this spring, all the barn's outer siding boards will be replaced, breathing further new life into this building and ensuring dry and stable storage for many harvests to come.

Candlelight Tours returned to an evening schedule this year in style, as the Farmstead was once more bathed in candlelight from several hundred lanterns and Belschnickel roamed the premises. The smokehouse has continued to perform magnificently, but it was the Farmstead's valued volunteers Robin and Emma who stole the show, expertly running the Summer Kitchen's open hearth and bake oven over the course of multiple demonstrations. The staff and volunteers enjoyed delicious stews, mincemeat pies, and even rye bread made from the grain we harvested on site!

After a tour of Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site earlier in the year, the farmers welcomed Hopewell's animal program staff for a tour of the Farmstead, giving an overview of our animal program and focusing on what kind of work goes into raising a working team of oxen. Each NPS worker got licks from Max and Connor, then continued onto a house tour.

Off days this winter have been few and far between, but we do occasionally get the chance to restock on feed and bedding, perform upkeep tasks around the site's various buildings, and work on other projects. Everything from mundane electrical and plumbing work to tree pruning and field fertilizing needs to get done, and a little bit of snow doesn't put a stop to the big stuff or the small stuff. These days, foxes are frequent visitors around the Farmstead, and we've watched the great migrations of geese passing overhead. There have been several days that we've snowshoed into work or around the farm's fields, and our holly trees attract quite the troupe of feathery visitors.

From the outside, the Farmstead's greenhouse looks dormant, but it isn't dead! After a short trial growing season last year and with gracious Society support, the farmers and I have begun gathering cold-stratifying seeds from over twenty different native plant species. I'll be propagating everything from Big Bluestem Grass and American Chestnut seedlings to Cardinal Flower and Wild Cucumber in the greenhouse this spring, with the goal of bolstering and diversifying the wealth of native plants we have on site here at the Farmstead, potentially returning long-lost ecosystems to our farm.

Maple sugaring season is fast upon us, and we'll be setting taps in more than a dozen trees around the farm. Soon enough, we farmers will welcome visitors to come learn about how we make maple syrup, and we'll once more bask in the steam of boiling sap as we bid (more enthusiastically than some years) farewell to winter and usher in the coming spring.

## Frequently Asked Questions from Visitors to the Farmstead

### Why are barns usually painted red?

According to David DeVorkin, Historian at the National Air and Space Museum, it is because red paint was less expensive than other colors and was readily available. The red pigment comes from iron, an element that is plentiful in the soil. Once exposed to air, it forms iron oxide, which when mixed with linseed oil becomes an excellent paint and preservative for wood siding.

(*Smithsonian Magazine*, March 19, 2021)

### What is that item that looks like a long-handled pan? How do you use it?

Two bedrooms at the Wentz Farmstead both have a brass pan with lid and a long wooden handle. Visitors often ask what it is? The next question after being told it's a "bed warmer" is, how does it warm the bed? Bed warmers were used in colder months. At bedtime, when the fireplaces had a bed of red-hot coals, a metal cup was used to scoop a cup of the hot coals into the metal pan of the bed warmer. After closing the lid and gently shaking the bed warmer to move the coals around inside the pan, the person would lift the upper bed "tick" (what we call a "comforter") and carefully move the heated metal pan between the sheets to warm them. Then, the pan would be returned to a room with a fireplace, the coals replaced in the hearth, and the bed warmer leaned safely against the edge of the fireplace. The tired resident would promptly climb in bed and enjoy the nice warm sheets. Although the process didn't necessarily provide long-lasting heat, it certainly helped reduce the chill of the linen sheets.



AJ Kissinger navigates in harsh winter conditions

## The Peter Wentz Farmstead Kitchen Garden

By: Lori Curtis

As I compose this article, a fresh bed of snow is covering the garden beds. Nonetheless, underneath this insulating blanket are various vegetables, herbs, and flowers that have survived the winter.

One of the most vigorous plants spotted last weekend, before the snowfall, is a vegetable called "corn salad," which has rosettes of spoon-shaped leaves that can be cooked like spinach or added to salads, providing a mild, nutty flavor. It has three times the amount of vitamin C as lettuce and is rich in beta-carotene, B6, iron, and potassium.

Additional vegetables that survive the winter are Swiss chard and kale. While we will be adding seedlings to augment them, it is always reassuring for a gardener to have robust and healthy starts.

Throughout all the garden beds are Johnny-jump-ups, a small pansy look-alike that adds cheerful yellow, purple, and white spots of color. They are entirely edible, including the flowers, leaves, and stems, and are used in salads, as cake garnishes, and in tea, adding a mild wintergreen-mint flavor.

I also spotted clusters of German chamomile, an annual that self-seeded where it was planted last year. This herb was used for medicinal purposes in colonial times as an anti-inflammatory and to treat digestive issues as well as reduce anxiety and insomnia.

In April, we always look forward to the woodland tulips, which thrive in the beds along the fence and blanket them with luminous, yellow flowers.

The volunteers who tend the Farmstead's kitchen garden have been enjoying a winter break but will soon be on site to prune the grapevines. We start meeting weekly as a group in mid-April, and will have onions, cabbage, lettuce, chard, and other cold-tolerant vegetables planted by Sheep Shearing Day on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

We hope you will visit the kitchen garden whenever you come to the Farmstead. Please 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 will be able to purchase seeds for some of them in the Museum Shop.



Johnny jump-ups

Woodland tulips

Cot salad

## Farewell

By: Linda Snyder

Anne Condon, a past president of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society, was born in 1941 to Anne and James O'Connor. Anne was raised in Roslyn, PA, with siblings Marie, Pat, and Jim. After graduating from St. Basil's Academy, Anne started what would be a long career in banking. Anne married her sweet-heart, Bill Condon, who grew up down the street from Anne's family in Roslyn. Anne and Bill opened their home to many beloved pets over the years. They were together until Bill passed away in 2012. Anne joined him in 2025, when she passed away on November 18.

Anne was generous and kind as well as feisty and outspoken. After her term as president of the Peter Wentz Farmstead Society ended, she continued her involvement with the group and the farmstead.

Anne, you will be greatly missed.

## Garden Ladies

By: Donna Armstrong

Research indicates that the colonial garden was the domain of the women of the house. After the men had tilled the soil and readied it for planting, the ladies took over planting and maintaining the crops.

In this the 250<sup>th</sup> year of our country's founding and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our PETER WENTZ garden, it is interesting to look back to our first LADY, Martha Washington. Records show that she was no different than other women of her era, taking an interest in the tasks of gardening. What did she plant? Records indicate she enjoyed an extensive garden at Mt. Vernon. Among her plantings were Danver's carrots, which we grow here in our Peter Wentz garden. It is noteworthy to think we can grow today what has endured in kitchen gardens for centuries.

Martha's talents also included many kitchen skills. A favorite story relates that the recipe for her GREAT CAKE was not so much the flavor, but the SIZE!

Have a GREAT gardening season this year!

Did you know you can now find us on the internet? The Peter Wentz Farmstead Society has a website and a Facebook Page. Explore the website at <https://www.peterwentzsociety1.org> (make sure you include the 1 in the address).

On the website you can explore the history of the farmstead, information about the kitchen garden, read past issues of the Wentz Post and stay up to date on upcoming events.

Follow the Facebook page where we will be sharing upcoming events, fun photos from around the farmstead and more. The Facebook page can be found by searching PWFS Friends Group.

## Family Fun & Education Colonial American Households & Their Family Pets

By: Melissa Jay

Throughout human history, people have always enjoyed keeping pets. Have you ever wondered what types of animals were domesticated in colonial America?

In colonial America, pets were often more than ornamental or just part of the family. They served essential functions that suited the needs of their owners and their communities. Even in early America, there was the family dog. Most were working dogs or sporting dogs, serving different purposes. Dogs were used for their protective instincts and guardianship, herding, and hunting. Breeds that were common were spaniels, hounds, setters, pointers, terriers, bulldogs, and mastiffs.

In addition to dogs, other types of pets were found in homes. These pets also had specific duties. A cat's primary job was to control vermin in the home, such as mice and rats. It wasn't until the 18th century when cats became valued as companion animals. Another animal, the squirrel,

was popular among children for their playful nature and energetic antics. Markets in town sometimes sold squirrels as pets. The local tinsmith would create cages and small exercise wheels for them. However, squirrels often proved troublesome as pets because of their inclination to chew on household items like clothing and furniture.

Other types of wildlife are also on record during this period as being kept as pets. Animals, such as raccoons, otters, deer, and wild birds, all became pets, for companionship and entertainment. Among the upper class, keeping a deer as a pet was a mark of status and good taste. Apparently, et deer added a touch of elegance to private gardens and estates. Some families went as far as training the deer to take walks with them and would often adorn the deer with decorative collars and allow them to wander freely on their grounds.

Horses were essential for work and for travel in early America. They were truly indispensable and served a variety of roles. From working on the farms to serving as elegant mounts for travel and social occasions, horses formed deep bonds with their owners.

All animals on farms in colonial America were special, whether it was to maintain the fields, provide food staples or wool, or just simply for companionship. When you visit the Peter Wentz Farmstead, be sure to ask about and view the sheep, cows, and other animals that are special to all of us!



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## Peter Wentz Farmstead Calendar of Events

### **Sheep Shearing Day \* Saturday, April 25th \* 10:00AM to 4:00PM**

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.

### **Tavern & Music Night \* Saturday, May 30th \* 4:00PM to 8:00PM**

Experience a night of music and libations at the Farmstead. Enjoy local craft beer, live music, and colonial games. Cost of the food and drink; 21+ for beer.

### **Juneteenth Tours \*Saturday, June 20th\* 10:00AM to 4:00PM**

Learn the history of the African American experience in 18th century Pennsylvania during special subject tours. All ages; Free; Reservations requested.

### **Happy Birthday America Party \* Sunday, June 28th \* 1:00PM to 3:00PM**

Celebrate America's 250th birthday with a good old fashioned birthday party! Enjoy Colonial games, some birthday treats, as well as visits from our fellow Montgomery County parks and historic sites. There will also be a commemoraon of 50 years of the Farmstead being a historic site! All ages;Free.

### **Colonial Saturdays at Wentz:**

April 18 – Felt Craft - 11:00 am and 1:30 pm sessions - \$5 per family

May 16 – Toys and Games

June 20 – Doll Making - 11:00 am and 1:30 pm sessions - \$5 per family

**Art Contest – January 1st -October 31st – photography, painting, and other medium categories – adults and children welcome**

**For more information, go to [hps://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/2661/Events-at-Wentz](https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/2661/Events-at-Wentz)**

Peter Wentz Farmstead Society  
PO Box 679  
Worcester, PA

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