

Conococheague Pioneer Times

The Newsletter of the Conococheague Institute for the Study of Cultural Heritage

4th Quarter 2023



Volume 29 Issue 4

Wassail to you...From the Executive Director

I'm writing this the day after our **Colonial Christmas** event, and the feeling of celebration and jubilation here at the Conococheague Institute are immeasurable.



We're glad to be able to share our recent progress with you, and wish you well during this holiday season.

Following last quarters newsletter announcing the large endowment donations we received so many well wishers, speaker requests and kind words that we will express our thanks for the entire communities support here. We could not be at our current peak without you!

We are in the perfect position to enter our **30th Anniversary year in 2024**, and look forward to sharing that journey with you as well. On the back page of this newsletter are some of the event dates for 2024, but we do have a surprise **30th Anniversary Fundraiser in the works for late May/June**. The exact date will depend on the **Rehoboth Welsh Choir** and a Welsh Harpist availability, and we'll be sending invites out soon.

As we sent out our **End of Year Giving** letters, we also included special notes for those who may not be current members but had contributed much over the last 30 years, and are pleased to see that many old members are re-joining in this time of growth.

Due to numerous requests, we'll be sending out email reminders about membership renewals as they come up, and our paper members had a note written on their envelope with this newsletter.

This Fall I've spent a lot of time on the road expanding our outreach, doing presentations for the Mercersburg Historical Society, Keedysville Historical Society, AARP, Senior Centers, Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Groups, Schools, Radio and more. I'm able to do this thanks to our amazing staff of Kori, Amelia and Selena who keep things running while I'm away. I'm also very grateful to our Board of Directors for their support during this busy time of expansion.

The future of the frontier is looking bright and we want your input. You can contact us at 12995 Bain Road, Mercersburg, PA, 17236, phone 717 328 2800 or email info@cimlg.org with your thoughts and suggestions for our future.

Alternatively, stop by any Saturday from 10am to 5pm and chat with us.

We are proud to announce that we have finished the **Strategic Plan 2023-2026 (facilitated by Gail Reeder as a gratis consultant)**, and you can request a copy via mail.



It focuses on the larger concepts for the organization in the next few years, as we strive to fulfill our vision to **"Become the leading museum and historic site in the region that represents 18th century frontier life accurately, offers to the public engaging learning experiences, and continues to grow and further its reach both financially and in reputation."**

The biggest item is that architects have been engaged to draw up a **Campus Master Plan for the site**, including **new museum spaces, library resources**, as well as an updated **site flow, parking layout** etc. Once that is complete and we have an idea of costs we can then launch into capital campaigning for each step of the way.

As we seek to accurately represent 18th century life, we are going to start the process of one day being a leader in educating about heritage animal husbandry. **In the Spring of 2024 you'll start to see some historic fencing and pens built to house future animals!**



On a smaller scale, due to item donations and increased resources we are going to be launching **several new exhibits in 2024**: An exhibit in the Visitor Center on Conestoga Wagons, an interactive exhibit on 18th century music, and more.

We're going to open accessibility to the site by hosting weekday **"Rock Hill Farm Tours"** for visitors who want to visit but don't want a full education booking, and **monthly children's story walks and crafts** (in addition to our already busy weekly Saturday programs and school booking season).

Fun times ahead! Happy Holidays, and Wassail!

Cheers! Matthew Wedd

Fall Contributions

We'd like to thank the following people for their recent (September 30th to December 17th) donations and memberships. In that time we've had 2 free events, scores of education bookings, 12 free open houses, and launched an End of Year Giving campaign! We've seen a huge amount of generosity as a result, and in that time you gave **\$15,731.18** in donations, **\$59,112.08** in endowment contributions and **\$1,655.00** in memberships

We also mentioned in the last newsletter that we are close to having **\$1 Million in an endowment for Early American History!** Thanks to its market growth and additional stock donations we are just **\$59,000.000** away from this monumental milestone (more on that below) and we can all appreciate the generosity and spirit of our community that has enriched the future of the frontier, and educational opportunities for years to come.

Contributions received September 30th to December 17th

Alva Lynch, Donald and Debra Kaminski, Kathy Hawbaker, John C. Stauffer, Frank Walizer, AARP Falling Springs, Joanne Thomas, Caitlyn McClanathan, Dan Swain, Rebecca Gettel, Virginia Schaefer, Joanne Klasse, Jack and Susan Webb, Richard Johnson, Justin Bedard, Jan and Lee Davis, Sue Gemeny, Keedysville Historical Society, Barbara Danowski, Susan Swope and Shirley Tannebaum, Fast Ink Screen Printing of Mercersburg, Oliver Goetz, Lisa Coombs, Peggy Eyler, John Nelson, Lois Steichen, Julie Alice Johnson, Melanie Desmond, Eric Ardjewski, Denise Ordway, Jeff Feldmar, Steven Hatleberg, Scott Longstreth, Carol Zehosky, Betsey Lillard, Jack and Betty Seburn, Michael and Jennifer Burke, Paul and Shirley Lehman (and the Lehman Family Foundation), Thomas Beddard and Lady Moon Farms, Jack and Barbara Demuth, Martha Stauffer, Sheryl Snider, Wesley Yeager Post 606, Sally Haver, Jean Guritz, Brandon Benner, Ken Myers, Barb and Tony Onorato, Larry and Jacki Smith and Kelly Dowling.

Thank you!



Giving for Another

Many people note that their contribution is made in memory or in honor of another.

Sally Haver gave in memory of Chris Ecton, Deb Kaminski in memory of her own ancestor (and site ancestor) Eliab Negley, Michael and Jennifer Burke in honor of Jim and Janet Rodgers (who have been lifelong founding members), and Jan and Lee Davis contributed towards our intern fund in memory of Lucas Lapole.

Why do you Support CI?

With every donation we like to hear why you support our mission to preserve and educate about the cultural and natural resources of the frontier. Add a note to your next donation, or give us a call. We love to hear from you! In her recent donation Alva Lynch said it simply: CI "is a good thing". Thanks Alva! Lisa Coombs said she supports us because "CI is a unique and special place".

Your contributions to our annual fund ensure we can operate the essentials: staffing, utilities and upkeep are important for allowing our educational programs and preservation to continue.

Remember all contributors whose total lifetime donations exceed \$5000 will be part of a new permanent plaque during our 30th Anniversary celebrations next year. All donations are tax deductible, and should be made payable to "The Conococheague Institute, 12995 Bain Road, Mercersburg, PA, 17236

Dunk the Director!

Our endowment has grown exponentially this year, from \$40,000.00 to \$941,000.00! We are \$59,000.00 from hitting \$1,000,000.00! In celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the Boston Tea Party (on December 16th), our growth as a site, the Conococheague Institute 30th Anniversary in 2024, and our Executive Director's good humour (spelled stereotypically British with a 'u'), if we receive enough donations to put our endowment at a \$1,000,000.00 before December 31st then our American staff and volunteers will throw him into the wetlands pond (while he drinks a cup of tea) and post the video to our community. Donate more than \$15,000.00 & you can take part in the dunking!

So give now! Make a sizable donation via check or donate stocks/mutual funds or IRA directly for a great tax deductible end of year gift. Just contact your financial advisor and ask them transfer stocks to the account information on the right! What a way to bring in the New Year and our 30th Anniversary!



Raise \$59,000 by December 31st 2023 to Dunk the Director for the 250th Anniversary Boston Tea Party!

Preserving the Frontier Endowment Account (Chapin Davis)
DTCC Number: 0141
Conococheague Institute Acct#6672-9564
Donor Name (if you wish to give it)

In-Kind Donations

There are always more ways to give, and this quarter we received more item donations than we have for quite some time!

To complement the arms and armor of the 17th century (which is now displayed in our Visitor Center exhibits), **Dennis Kubicki** donated a beautiful sword. Come check it out this winter, it's been a popular hit with young visitors!

Ginny Schaefer donated an 1820's quilt, a Colonial period checkers board, and a 19th century ledger (JWS Weigert Ironsmith, Lancaster County, 1879). The quilt is now in the Rock Hill Farm bedroom, the checkers board is displayed above the bar in our tavern, and the ledger will be used in future exhibits of period journals and writings from the region.

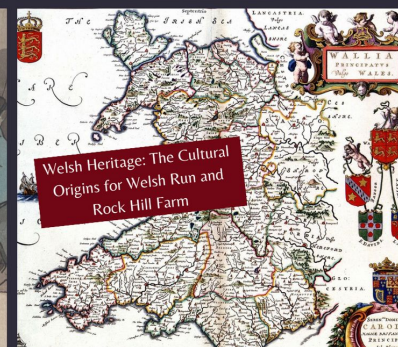
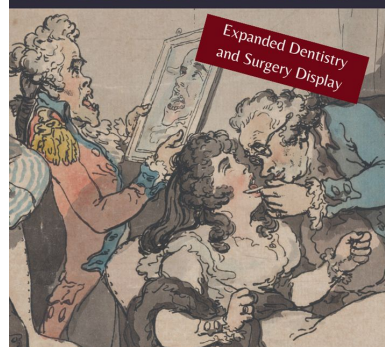
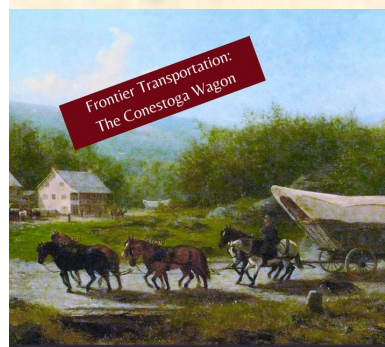
Ron and Sue Kershner donated several birdhouses to replace our older ones, **James Myers** donated an old letter about Mercersburg scything records, **David 'Dog' Reed** donated a wonderful reproduction scythe for use in our programs, and **Ralph Sheaffer** gave us some Leatherbritches beans during the Christmas event!

Finally **Jan and Lee Davis** donated several collections (**over 500 items**) ranging from period artifacts, interpretive tools, exhibit items, reproduction clothing, books and research tools. The assets included have already enriched our educational programs, and we have several new exhibits planned for 2024 and beyond as a result! Check out some of the items below and look out for new exhibits coming soon!

You can donate items, artifacts, or even supplies that help us in our day to day operations (from vacuums to chainsaws). **If you are a business, services are also tax-deductible!**



Coming Soon! New Exhibits for 2024



We accept sponsors year round, not just for major events! Consider aligning your business with our education programs, exhibits, or other activities.

Fall Activities: A Snapshot

Fall Saturday Programs

Thanks to your support we offer free programming every Saturday year round from 10am to 5pm, and we added some new additions this quarter. No RSVPs are required and all are welcome so stop by any Saturday to see what's happening. Recent Saturday programs have included **lots of hearth cooking in the Negley cabin**, conservation projects, **Frontier Trekking presentations by Stonefield Accoutrements**, programs highlighting the social changes in America with **19th Century living history**, sewing projects, a **‘Making Mitts’ workshop with Fikar’s Finest**, Wreath Making, and even a games workshop!



Busy Educational Bookings

We had **1000’s of students in paid educational programs** in the last few months, ranging from small homeschool co-ops, hands on programs designed for the **Lucy School**, 100’s of 4th graders from **Washington County Public Schools**, and then our 2 day ‘History Day’ programs with **Greencastle Antrim Middle School**, where over 2 days 600 students from 6th and 7th grade spent their day learning about early American life. Those large groups require a lot of staff and volunteers, thanks to everyone who helped out, and for the **Americana Corner ‘Preserving America’** grant program for their support of our educational bookings.



Annual Members Meeting

Our **Annual Members Meeting is on the 2nd Saturday of October each year**, and a review of the year is presented as well as any by-law additions. New Board Members are also voted in. This year we had a lively discussion of the years success, and talked about where we want to go from here. New Board Members **Matt South (of MVB Bank)** and **Sheryl Snider (of F&M Trust)** were both voted onto our Board of Directors, and have already been instrumental in setting our Strategic Plan.



And Everything Else In Between...

No two days are alike when working at a historic site, and whether we are decorating Christmas trees for other charities, identifying mushrooms in the woods, or hosting and being taught fencing (or stage combat) by the **Mercersburg Academy Arts Department** we truly enjoy what we do!



Bonfire Night Event Summary: November 4th 2023

We've held this event for 3 years to celebrate the Colonial festival of Bonfire Night/Guy Fawkes Night (historically Nov 5th, but we always use the nearest Saturday), and include 18th century crafts, hearth cooking, history and an evening speech and bonfire.

This year we had a few new additions: a **3 hour archery session led by Matthew for Native American month**, outside vendors (**PA Woodmobile, Franklin County Library Bookmobile, Scouts** selling concessions, **Michaux Brewing Co** selling ale), and thanks to a sponsorship from a local business a hour long falconry presentation from **Miller's Wildlife**.

This program was extremely popular, but had one hiccup: At the end of the program Hawkeye (a red tailed hawk), slipped her leash and flew into our woods with no inclination to come back down!

This launched a 2 day hawk vigil (which made the front page of the **Mercersburg Journal** newspaper) of community support, but fortunately she stayed on site, and finally came down when she got peckish and is back in the falconers care.

We made one other change with this years Bonfire, which we were uncertain how it would be received...

We didn't have an effigy. Traditionally in the Colonial period effigies of the King or national enemies were burned, then it switched to effigies of Guy Fawkes, and more recently just scarecrows. But as worldwide there are people suffering through violence and war, we deemed it wrong to even pretend to represent hate and death. Matthew gave a speech at the Bonfire to this effect, and that we can best help humanity by celebrating each other rather than nurturing hate and was pleased to get a cheer and applause from the crowd! Small changes, but we hope they make a difference.



Funding for the Falconry Presentation at Bonfire Night was provided by Fast Ink of Mercersburg. Thank you!

Colonial Christmas at the Conococheague Event Summary: December 16th 2023

Our final event of the year was blessed with perfect weather: 55 degrees, sunny and no wind! So our Christmas event was the busiest yet, with more than 550 visitors and incredible sales and donations in the gift shop.

During this event we invite the public to join us on the homestead and learn about the traditions of Christmas time during the 18th Century. Activities included seeing a feast prepared, making gingerbread and baking it in our oven, learning about wassailing and singing some tunes to our apple trees, games, wreath making, dulcimer performances, ‘sweet bag’ craft make and takes, and more.

We had over 700 cookies donated, and in our gift shop (which had a discount and book sale) we were giving them and hot drinks free to all. Our way of saying thanks to our community after such a good year!



We can hope for a bumper apple harvest next year as everyone joined in to wassail our trees with a traditional poem:

*Old apple tree we wassail thee
And hope that thou shalt bear
For the Lord doth know
Where we shall be
Come apples another year.*

*For to bloom well
And to bear well so merry let us be
Let every man take off his hat
And shout out to the old apple tree.*

*For to bloom well
And to bear well so merry let us be
Let every man take off his hat
And shout out to the old apple tree.*

*Old Apple tree, we worship thee,
And hope that thou will bare
Hatfuls, capfuls, and three bushel bagfuls
A little heap under the stairs.*

Hip hip hooray!



This free event is already on the schedule for next year. December 14th 2024!

Kori's Korner

Volunteers

With the amount of dedicated volunteers and those that so graciously share their knowledge with us, I wanted to share some of the things that have recently happened that would not be possible without them! It's not always glamorous work, but getting it all done ensures a happy and productive site! Chuck Holland recently lent his construction knowledge and skills to help build an extension onto our maintenance shed. This will be imperative through the winter months to make sure our tools and equipment is properly guarded from the elements. Melanie Desmond and Peggy Eyler joined us in the garden for a day to help winterize it. We pulled dead and dying annual plants as well as spreading straw to insulate our perennial plants in order to help them come back hearty! Finally, we want to give a big thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers who help make the site come to life. Whether it be dressing in historic clothes and educating visitors, helping to garden and clean flower beds around the site, or helping to run the visitor center during busy days, all of this makes a difference for the site.

Interested in joining an amazing group of volunteers at CI? Email visit@cimlg.org to find out how you can start!

Looking at 2024

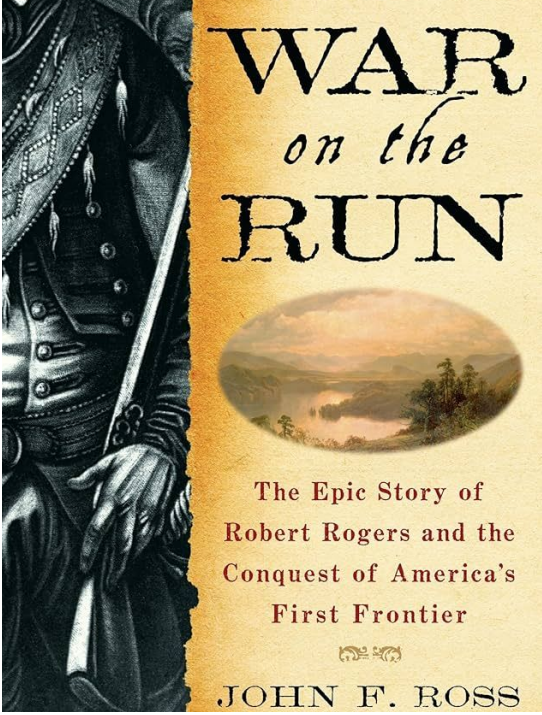
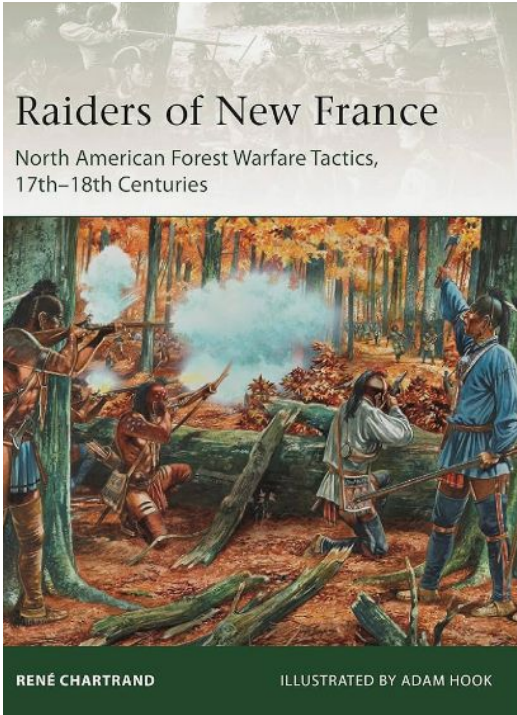
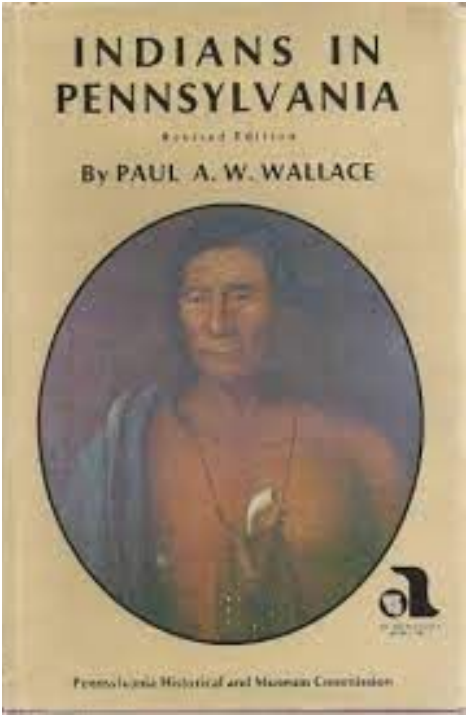
As the year end quickly approaches, we have been looking forward to the new year. We are excited to bring back some favorites as well as bring you new programs and events! While we can't quite reveal everything yet, I wanted to give you an exclusive sneak peek as to what we have in store! First up we have our new **"First Friday Site Tours."** **The first Friday of every month, the visitor center, gift shop, and historic buildings will be open.** Tours will begin every hour from the visitor center, and visitors will learn more about the history of the site, CI as an institution, and the historic building we have on property. **The grounds are still open daily dawn to dusk, this just gives visitors more opportunity to get to know the site what it has to offer.** Next is our upcoming **"Little Learners Education Series."** In an effort to reach our smaller members of the CI family, we are starting a series of educational programs that targets them. A program aimed for 2-4 year olds, we will be exploring concepts of nature and the world around us through stories, games, and crafts. **This program will run twice a month, and will be discounted for members.** Be sure to keep your eye on our website and social media for official announcements and more information about these new programs!



The Conococheague Book Club

3rd Thursday of every Month at 1pm at the Welsh Barrens Visitor Center

Our book club members always enjoy a lively discussion on books about our history and heritage in the visitor center. Bring a snack too and lunch beforehand! All are welcome, no RSVP required.

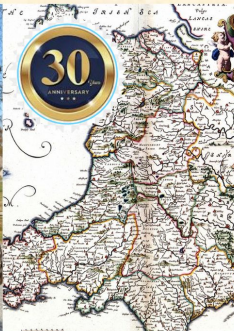


Thursday, January 18th at 1 PM
"Indians in Pennsylvania" (1981) by Paul A. W. Wallace.
Moderator Lois Steichen

Thursday, February 15th at 1 PM
"Raiders from New France: North American Forest Warfare Tactics, 17th – 18th Centuries" (2019) by René Chartrand. Moderator Ken Shannon

Thursday, March 21st at 1 PM
"War on the Run: The Epic Story of Robert Rogers and the Conquest of America's First Frontier" (2009) by John F. Ross.
Moderator Lois Steichen

2024 EVENTS: SAVE THE DATE!



**SATURDAY APRIL 13TH:
GET TO KNOW NATURE**

LATE MAY/JUNE TBA:
30TH ANNIVERSARY
WEI SHEEST

**SATURDAY NOVEMBER 9TH:
BONFIRE NIGHT**

**SATURDAY DECEMBER 14TH:
COLONIAL CHRISTMAS AT
THE CONOCOCHIEGUE**

Make sure to save these headline event dates now for 2024! And don't forget that we have free historic programs every Saturday, and will soon be offering monthly site tours and children's classes, in addition to our year round educational booking season!

Our grounds, trails, picnic areas and playgrounds are open to the public for free 365 days a year from dawn to dusk!

Come out and enjoy the Conococheague
Institute, where history comes to life!

Board of Directors

Elizabeth Lillard (*President*), Ellen Kinzer (*Vice-President*), Bob Schwartz (*Secretary*), Sam Cathey (*Treasurer*), Will Sheppard, Kitty Clark, Melanie Desmond, JD Bennett, Matt Baer, Bailey Roberts Long, Gina Vitale, Matt South, Sheryl Snider

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Staff

Matthew Wedd, *Executive Director*, mwedd@cimlg.org Kori Taber, *Visitor Experience Facilitator*, visit@cimlg.org
Amelia Craven and Selena Feng *Visitor Experience Team Members*, team@cimlg.org

Contact us

The Conococheague Institute, 12995 Bain Road, Mercersburg, PA, 17236

Phone: 717 328 2800 **Email:** info@cimlq.org **Website:** www.cimlq.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/conococheaqueinstitute/> **Instagram:** @conococheaque institute

Youtube: [@coloniallivingattheconcocheaqueinstitute](#)



Spread Merriment and Good Cheer: Your Membership support allows us to continue in our mission! CI Membership runs on a 'Valid through 12 month cycle', so whenever you renew you will receive a full year of benefits

Annual Membership and Additional Donation Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No: _____ **Email:** _____

Newsletter Format Preference, Email or Printed:

Student: \$10

Individual: \$25

Family: \$35

Patron: \$125

Corporate: \$200

Sustaining: \$300

Life: \$1000

Membership Level:

Additional Donation: _____

Make Checks Payable to The Conococheague Institute, 12995 Bain Road,
Mercersburg, PA, 17236

Thank you!

I support the Conococheague Institute because:

I have included CI in my Estate Plans (*check here*)

I would like more information about Funded Projects ([check here](#))