Conococheague Pioneer Times

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

Volume 30 Issue 2



2nd Quarter 2024

Good Day to you...From the Executive Director

I truly hope everyone had a marvelous spring: Perhaps you enjoyed some of it with us at the Conococheague Institute during the busiest stretch of time I've ever experienced!





Many of you have been keeping up daily with our social media, or receiving our bi-monthly emails, but for some our Quarterly Pioneer Times is THE place to catch up. Indeed so much has happened, I've had to consult my social posts, emails and even my calendar to make sure I didn't miss any huge events that happened this Spring (but that seem like a lifetime ago).

An award to begin with, in March I was named the CVBA 2024 Innovator of the Year! This award is given to someone who shows clear leadership, has expanded a program or business, and CI's growth, expansion of programs, staffing, and its endowment was a clear sign of that. In the acceptance speech, I thanked the community who makes CI possible; our staff, volunteers, Board, partners and donors, and noted some key aspects of leadership that apply to any business leader no matter the sector: Honesty (with your visitors, with your donors, partners and with yourself and team) in all things, Mission Focus, and Accessibility...ensuring all have the ability to participate and enjoy what the organization has on offer.

That wasn't the only congratulations as our Visitor Experience Facilitator Kori Taber was awarded a merit based scholarship to the 2024 **ALHFAM** Conference. ALHFAM is The Association for Living History, Farms and Agricultural Museums and is the leading resource in our field for a range of subjects, and this year's conference has the theme of 'Curating Living History: Preserving Skills and Intangible Culture'.



She actually returns this week, and is brimming with ideas and connections that will help CI prosper in our program and mission. The resources she acquired during will be instrumental especially as CI prepares to launch our animal husbandry program in 2025.

We've been very successful in executing grant awards, and the **M&T Bank Priority Preservation** projects were all swiftly completed. Visitors can now enjoy eco-friendly hand dryers in our bathrooms, appreciate the students who did restoration work on our cabins, and rest assured that CI has a full size and infant AED life saving device on site at all times.

As well as being busy on site, CI was also out and about A LOT this Spring, being requested to do lectures for the Mercersburg and Washington County Historical Societies, The Institute for Retired Persons at Mennohaven, Rotary, Kiwanis & Ruritan clubs and of course our School outreach.



Our constant connection with the schools has allowed us to continue a rapport with students from Middle School programs to graduation, and it's great to see what the students retain in their memories from CI.

Our annual 'Can you Live 18th Century' immersion program in collaboration with Mercersburg Academy was a great success, especially as we added some new elements: English Country Dance, Music, & an Indigenous Culture program with guest Drew Shuptar Rayvis. As the Cultural Ambassador of the Pocomoke Indian Nation of Maryland, Drew has gathered a lifetime of experience on language, culture, crafts and traditions, and was able to offer the students a comparative experience for the Indigenous people of the region in the 18th century.

Drew will be leading the same program publicly at CI on June 29th at 11am and 1pm so don't miss it!









Spring Donations

generosity!

We'd like to thank the following people for their recent (March 4th to June 10th) donations and memberships. Philanthropy from our community is the reason we are able to keep on in our mission to preserve the past and educate the next generation of historians and naturalists. No matter the amount we are grateful for your contribution. Thank you!

Dean & Lynne Wigfield, Clarissa Johnson, Matt South, Joanne Thomas, Tom Finucane, Bryan Larew, Bailey Long, Jenny Grebe, Mark Knowles, Zeama Atherton, Donald Fisher, Steve Brindle, Andy Abel, Tara Wetherell, Christopher Husson, James Strutz, Keith Lindgren, Mary Sanders, F&M Trust, Douglas Foreback, Mercersburg Historical Society, Donald Fishel, Thomas Thorsen, Don & Kay Boward, Phyllis Wertime, Kim Spanos-Telsing, Lisa Poole, Faye Pleso, Claude Zimmerman, Jack Murray Ebersole, Middletown Valley Bank, Shady Grove Ruritan Club, James Rogers, Darren Moats, Franklin County Visitors Bureau, Mary Poscover & Sam Cathey, Kurt Culbertson, Tanya Nitterhouse, JD Bennett, John Mendyka, Claudia Mooij, Sheryl Snider, Ann Allen, John & Virginia Marshall, James Rogers Sr, Richard Bell, Dennis Kubicki, MaryRuth Reis, Janet and Lee Davis, Rotary Club of Hagerstown, Gaye McGovern, Melissa Phillips, Leonard Brown, David Busey, Joan McCulloh, Linda Ries, Gina Vitale, Cecil & Anna Snyder, Jean Woods, Robert Miller, Hicksville Planing Mill and Brad & Jill Fulton. Every contribution is important and we're so grateful for your

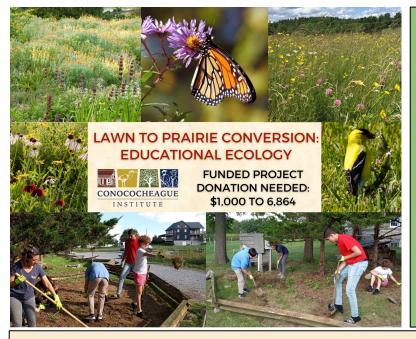




Thanks to Hicksville Planing Mill for donating all the lumber for our animal shed!







<u>Funded Project Opportunity: Lawn to Prairie</u> <u>Conversation: \$1,000 to \$6,864</u>

All your donations make an impact on the site, as our operations and staff are necessary to ensure our historic and natural areas are accessible to the public. However sometimes, we like to offer a special funded project that has a clear start and finish.

This season we'd like to execute our planned lawn to prairie conversion, removing a large section of grass turf and replacing it with native wildflowers and grasses to create a sustainable habitat.

If you can donate toward this project, just note 'Prairie' on your donation. Our intern team will be working on removing invasives this summer ready to plant in the Fall!

Depending on the funding amount will determine how many plant plugs we purchase versus seeds!

Reasons to Give: In Memory, In Honor and in Appreciation

With every donation, we ask our members to share why they chose to support the Conococheague Institute and our mission. For some like **Jim Strutz** it's due to ancestral ties: the **Mcfarland** and **Irwin** families in his case, but our genealogical assets span 100's of frontier families too. **Dennis Kubicki** and many others simply state that they give as CI clearly offers programs that ensure a love and respect of history in the region.

We've received many more donations in memory of **Jim Rogers**, with contributions from **Tom Finucane**, **John and Virginia Marshall**, **Janet and Keith Lindgren** supporting Jim's passion for history.

MaryRuth Reis donated in memory of her mother Dorothy Royer Seibert who used to live nearby, and Jan and Lee Davis made a very generous repeat contribution to our intern fund in memory of Lucas Lapole, CI's former curator.

When you make a tax deductible donation you are supporting CI's mission, benefiting the community and we'd love to hear from you. Drop us a note with your next contribution, or mail in the slip and the last page of the newsletter.

Giving in Memory: Leaving a Lasting Legacy at the Conococheague Institute

In the last newsletter we had included the obituary for one of CI's founding Board Members **Jim Rogers**, and we've continued to receive donations in his memory.

Jim was a great supporter of CI, and during our 30th Anniversary celebration we shared a special moment with Janet Rogers, their son and granddaughter as we planted a memorial Red Maple tree and dedication plaque.

During the celebrations **Tom Finucane shared some memories of Jim,** which showed how much of an impact he made.

Decades ago, when CI had no permanent staff leadership, each Board member was given 3 votes for wishlist items for what was needed to help CI grow. Jim got up out of his chair, and put all 3 votes towards hiring an Executive Director, and that started a wave of support from the other Board members. **Had Jim not taken that first step, we may not be where we are today!**

Another longtime member **Jane Hershe**y, also passed on April 2, 2024. We recently had the pleasure of having tea with Jane, and her cousins, John Stauffer and Ann Allen at her incredible historic home Rose Hill Manor.

Of all of her passions, history and historical preservation were at the top of Jane's list. For most of her lifetime, she served on various boards and committees including the Washington County Historical Society, the Washington County Historical and Fine Arts Trust (later the Mary K. Bowman Fine Arts Fund), the Society for the Preservation of Maryland Antiquities (Preservation Maryland), the Williamsport Memorial Library, the Washington County Historical Advisory Committee, the Antietam Battlefield Advisory Commission, and the Washington County Historic District Commission.

Finally, we were recently notified of the passing of **cherished CI librarian Dr Joan McKean.** Joan came to CI as a miracle: She had a lifetime of library knowledge (*Chief, Library Services, GS-9, Toul-Rosleres Air Base, France, 1960-1962, Library Director, Metropolitan State College, Denver, Colorado, 1965-67, Educational Affairs Specialist, GS-13, NOAA Headquarters, Washington D.C., 1990-93, among many others), and when she settled in the region she dedicated that experience to organizing CI's vast collections. She served as a Board member and librarian from 2009 to 2015, and continued to support CI as a donor and attending meetings. We had the honor of her presence at recent Annual Membership*

we had the honor of her presence at recent Annual Membership meetings where she expressed her gratitude and joy to see CI in such a flourishing stage of growth, and we've been informed that she generously left 50% of her estate to the Conococheague Institute.



The Rogers Family dedicated Jim's tree at CI



Jane Hershey and her historic home Rose Hill Manor in Williamsport



Joan McKean cutting the ribbon on a Little Free Library in 2014

If you're able to include CI in your Estate Plans, like Joan kindly did, let us know, and we'll happily share ideas and projects that you could fund for generations to come!

Or make an endowment contribution today, directly by donating stocks & securities directly to the Kurtz Endowment for Early American History DTCC Number: 2116

Conococheague Institute Acct#301500000

This endowment fund at F&M Trust was established to further on ongoing education programs and partnership with Mercersburg Academy by Robert Kurtz Jr (Class of '52)

Spring Activities: A Snapshot

Site Improvements: Well House, Whitewash, Cemetery Restoration and Animal Husbandry (construction)

We're always striving to improve our site, both in preserving the past, and creating a better sense of program immersion for the present. This Spring we added a Well House at the **Negley Cabin**, which looks better (and more accurate), and allows visitors to draw from both a pulley system and crank. We also whitewashed the interior and exterior of several historic structures and it looks fantastic. Students from **Greencastle Antrim** did a big **cleanup of the cemetery**, weeding and scrubbing algae from the headstones. Finally our team has finished building a historic goat shed: The next phase is the pasture fencing!







Amazing Volunteers: JLG, Middletown Valley Bank, Franklin County Gov, Mercersburg Academy & GA High School Though our team has continued to grow, we are still able to achieve so much more thanks to community driven volunteers. Mercersburg Academy students regularly work each week in our gardens, whitewashing buildings, clearing trails, and this Spring we also hosted several community volunteer days. During the United Way Day of Caring 30+ Franklin County Government employee achieved more in 1 day then we could do all season, our JLG and MVB Good to Give Back days got 75 trees planted (& some other projects besides), and the abovementioned students from Greencastle Antrim had a great day.







Wondrous Wild World: Snakes, Turtles and Trilium

Sharing the Conococheague Institute with so many amazing plants and creatures that call it home is a joy, especially in the Spring. In the last few weeks we've seen **scores of snakes (young Garter Snake pictured) and turtles** while exploring. We are also lucky to have **Purple Trillium** in our woods, and member **Jean Woods recently shared some interesting facts** about that plant. It takes 9 years after germination for a Trillium to flower, each flower yields only ONE seed pod per year (so don't pick them), they can live for 25 years, and they are propagated by ants. The seeds are covered by a sweet coating, and when ants take them underground they germinate in a perfect subterranean environment.







New Sensory Exhibits Explore Musical Heritage in our Visitor Center

Recent visitors will have noticed a song in the air in our museum, as our new music exhibit has been a huge success. This exhibit 'Listening to the Past - Music in Early America' is just one of our 2024 Preserving America grant projects, and we're so grateful to Americana Corner for their support. The music includes Welsh cultural instruments (the Crwth, a bowed lyre), bagpipes, German flutes (including an original with unique repairs), recorders, bones, jawharps, military fifes and even sheet music from Antiphonal chanting.

The Crwth was popular since the medieval period but by the 18th century it was being replaced by violins and fiddles. However, it was of interest enough that writers recorded its history and tuning in 1784, allowing it to be revived. The instrument has a flat, fretless fingerboard and six gut strings, tuned gg'c'c''d'd'. Due to its shape, all the strings are bowed at once creating a rich harmony. A Welsh poet described its song as "yn y llaw yn gan llai" (in the hand a hundred voices). The player could also pluck the top strings with the thumb while bowing to create a drone, though this takes a lot of practice.

The exhibit features recordings of each instrument's music that play when the buttons are pressed: We've noted a trend that kids (and adults are prone to pressing all the buttons at once!











Creating Enriching Experiences Through Education

Education bookings have truly become the bread and butter of the Conococheague Institute, on a range of subjects from 18th Century Medicine, Women's Roles, Militia Duties, Gardening, Birding, and sometimes even making Bread and Butter! There is a reason we've been named Educator of the Year (2022), and received a PA Museums Institutional Achievement award for programs (2023).

But what's new this year is **the sheer unprecedented volume!** In Spring of 2024 we were fully booked for programs, and **it is thanks to your support** and the **Americana Corner Preserving America** grant program which allows us to **operate with a professional education staff** and offer large school discounts.

This was the first time that we've had to turn away groups (or have them reschedule in the Fall). In one heavy 14 day stretch we had over 1000 students in bookings on site, and this season we saw 100's of students coming from new schools: Chambersburg Montessori, Shippensburg Middle, and even New Market Middle School from Frederick County, MD!

When schools are booking so regularly at CI, it's a clear sign that our reputation for making history fun and engaging is well earned, and we look forward to continuing this trend for years to come.

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped out with the large groups, our staff for working long hours, and the teachers and students for participating so well in the programs!

Get to Know Nature Event Summary: By Brittani Watkins

Brittany is a volunteer and writer who kindly offered to write a blog of her family experience at the April 13th Get to Know Nature Event.

Conococheague Institute rests quietly among the mountains between Clear Spring, Maryland, and Mercersburg, PA. The drive there offers a serene peace, a respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life – with sunlight meeting the surrounding farmland & silvery shadows of clouds stretching the vast landscape. Here, I managed to corral my sister, her husband, my two nephews, and my close friend visiting from out of town. I had been talking their ears off for weeks about a local museum where I started the process to volunteer, specifically about their weekly programs that focus on 18th century living, history, and nature. And so, they agreed to attend the Get to Know Nature event on April 13th in celebration of the approaching Earth Day.

It was the perfect day to be outside, a tad brisk with the wind, but the sun brought warmth and illuminated the lush grounds consisting of countless attendees, volunteers and staff navigating through craft vendors, food trucks, nature-related activities, and educational demonstrations. Our first stop was the Falconry demonstration led by Miller's Wildlife where we learned more about various avian creatures and had the opportunity to meet Hawkeye, a Red-Tailed Hawk. The presenter did a phenomenal job of educating and entertaining the crowd (and later quelling the rapid-fire questions from my mischievous nephews attempting to hold Hawkeye).

Following the presentation, we wandered to the bird watching deck to take in the views of the neighboring mountains and took turns spotting local wildlife. Adjacent to the bird watching deck is an 18th century homestead where I did my best to discuss 18th century history - I reminded them of the various historical artifacts, weapons, and medicinal tools on display in the visitor center.

As my sister and her family engaged in a scavenger hunt, my friend and I circled the craft vendors. We stumbled across a tent with 18th century garments, a woodworking vendor offering carved historical weapons (where my nephews later begged me to buy them a Warhammer), and Harvest Trails' table of delicious, dehydrated goods. We grabbed a sweet treat from the Antietam Dairy truck, indulging in Butter Pecan while sitting on a nearby bench and admiring the newly planted garden.

My friend and I stopped at the Conococheague Audubon Society table where we met cheerfully eager guides who discussed several types of local birds with displays of their associated eggs and feathers. Afterward, exploring the connecting walking trail amidst a mass of trees that paralleled a creek blanketed by greenery & bursting with the buzzing and chirping of wildlife.

We found my sister and her husband at the playground, observing my nephews engage with newfound friends until we headed back to catch the Wonderfully Wild Animal Show. I enjoyed seeing my nephew's faces light up when the presenter would bring around various reptilian creatures (plus a hedgehog named Thorn). Afterward, my nephews enthusiastically awaited their turn to pet Mr. Noodle, a Ball Python - I reluctantly agreed to do so myself but am glad to have had the exhilarating experience. We said our goodbyes and left the Conococheague Institute with refreshed mindsets & new experiences. Furthermore, I was delighted to show my loved ones that museums can be so much more than history lessons & artifacts. Although those things are equally important, having a family-friendly, interactive, and nature-based environment, with a myriad of activities & events, intrigues and reaches even more inquisitive minds.











Event Spotlight: 30th Anniversary Welshfest June 1st 2024

A tea party and plaque unveiling with our founding members, enchanting sounds from the Rehoboth Welsh Choir, Lauren Swain and Forbes Road Frolic, fascinating presentations of 18th century life from our amazing volunteers, and all our fantastic partner vendors, the 30th Anniversary celebration for the Conococheague Institute was a marvelous day, with some truly blessed weather.

Their were some excellent speeches from our founding members, and **David Stauffer** spoke on behalf of our founding family with some words written by **Sara Stauffer**:

"They say in the Welsh/Irish Highlands, that the US Explorers were some of the first European settlers to this part of the country. Among them were some of our blood relatives from 8-12 generations ago. This story is often told around the fireplace at Christmas Time in South Central PA, where Grandpa (John C. Stauffer, President Emeritus) still has a house.

Some of the fiercest strife forced the Welsh Irish to seek refuge by going to the US. Even more importantly, the people were adventurers who wanted to start a new life. Promises of large expanses of land for the taking or cheap, abundant good weather for crops and a sure good new life. How exuberant were the lucky ones who got selected for the boats. Bon Voyage Relatives! Two months later they landed near Philadelphia, and took stagecoaches to their new locations. At first they tried to stay along the coast where fishing and shipping is so important, and all commerce. But the coast was reserved for the Elite so they had to head inland. Our Welsh Irish relatives went inland enjoying the views and the bounty of land. What a fantastic place. By and by, they came upon gently rolling verdant hills, with pastures, just like the old homeland. Rocky outcroppings reminded them of back home. They thought it looked just like the Gaelic highlands, and they chose their new area, their new home.

Our ancestors worked with their hands creating the basics of a new business and home, then throughout the generations became Artists, Doctors, a Poet, and intellectuals for sure. Grandpa (John) is from a line of 4 generations of doctors. On occasion the family visit this very favorite family farm and neighborhood, as many relatives still live near the area)."



















Thank you to everyone past and present who have been part of our shared journey. We look forward to celebrating 30 more years, make a donation today to celebrate this special time!

Welcome our 2024 Interns! Karlee Lisinski (Wilson College), Mikaela Mummert (Greencastle Antrim High School) and Rosalyn Remeikas (Mercersburg Academy)

We've been continuing our paid internship program in recent years with much success. Amelia Craven of Shippensburg University transitioned to a team member as they continue their studies, and this year we were able to expand the program thanks to the generous financial support from Jan and Lee Davis (in memory of Lucas Lapole), Ann Allen (in memory of Jane Hershey), and a grant from the PHMC Cultural and Historical Support Grant program, supporting career development for youth.

As CI continues to expand, as part of our strategic plan we reached out to several schools that had environmental science programs to recruit a Naturalist Intern. We are thrilled to have Karlee Lisinski of Wilson College join us for the summer, and she has already started some new projects: A lunar moon garden to attract nocturnal pollinators, a macroinvertebrate program among them! She'll also be dedicating much needed time to clearing up our gardens and trees. We also accepted applications for our High School paid internships that started so successfully last year with Selena Feng and Nathalie **Maurer**. We had a great time interviewing dozens of talented students, finally accepting Mikaela Mummert of Greencastle Antrim and Rosalyn (Roz) Remeikas of Mercersburg Academy. Mikaela is looking for a career in Parks and Forestry, and has done many scout projects at CI, and Roz will be joining the Naval ROTC this Fall, but is looking forward to lending a hand outdoors where she is happiest!





COLLEGE

Karlee after tending the Phyllis Stauffer Memorial Rose Gardens





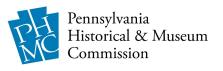


Selena (left), Roz (center) & Mikaela (right)





Building career skills (and building skills) at CI. Thanks to the PHMC for supporting the program!





Donate to the Lucas Lapole Memorial Fund to Support Career Development

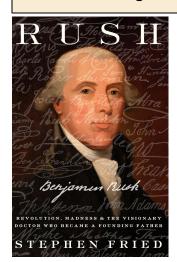
All donations made are tax deductible and ONLY benefit the 100% paid student interns.

Donate today by including the note "Intern" on any donation to CI.



The Conococheague Book Club

3rd Thursday of every Month at 1pm at the Welsh Barrens Visitor Center Book Club is taking a break in July, but let us know what you are reading this Summer! We have great library books to borrow so come join us. Book Club is free and open to all.

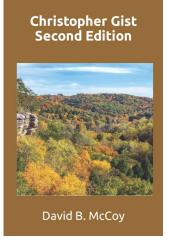


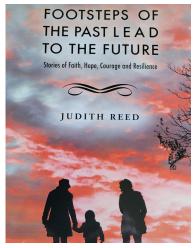
Thursday, Aug 15th at 1 PM

RUSH: Revolution, Madness & the Visionary Doctor Who became a Founding Father" by Stephen Fried

Thursday, Sept 19th at 1PM

"Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier" by James H. Merrell





Local author Judith Reed just published a book about her family history, and local reflections on the past and present. It includes lots of memories from the local region, Brown's Mill Elementary School, Greencastle families as well as history of the earlier Davis family members. Contact us and we'll you in touch with Judith for local copies

Archives and Artifacts: Looking into our Collection

Our library and genealogy assets are a big part of our collection, and we just accepted a donation from long time members **Ed and Victoria Whetstone** of local Welsh Run history

The diaries of **Ida Ann Catherine Steck** (1857-1940) and autograph books of her sisters (**Lillian Steck Lawrence**, 1866-1939 & **Alda E. Steck Graham**, 1964-1891) provide a window into the past which would be unfamiliar to most of us today.

Ida Ann Catherine Steck was born on July 27th, 1857. Her parents were Martin Luther Steck and Lydia Ann Adeliah Truman (Payne), Steck. The eldest of eight children, she outlived all but one. Ida kept a diary through the later years of her life. On behalf of the family, the diaries spanning 1917 to 1939 are available for researchers to peruse.

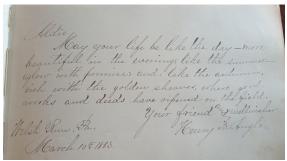
On April 28th, 1926 the community of Welsh Run debated whether to get electric lights or not, and later that year on September 19th the lights were turned on for the first time! What an impact it must have made as people stood on their porches and marveled to see lights dappling the long darkened lanes.

Much of the diaries are commonplace day to day chores: "Cleaned the cellar and it was a mean black job"! In that we are linked to the past, as our own newsletters and social media feeds are our modern diaries.

The diaries also contain genealogy family notes for the Steck and other regional families. The Stecks settled in Welsh Run in the 1700s and they were by origin German Swiss, Lutherans who had migrated north into the Neckar Valley, and centuries hence to America. They disembarked in Philadelphia in 1757, followed a well-worn path to Lancaster, and within a decade or so were settled at Conococheague.

We'll be featuring some of these items and some of our other journals and bibles in a Summer/Fall exhibit as part of our 30th Anniversary, and they'll also be available for researchers in the library. Contact us for more details.





THE WANAMAKER DIARY
SUN Easter APRIL 1933
16 Sh Commenced raining about
8 vc and continue fall day,
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12 78 Leigner Ner Bucker Metals,
It the there you a war ord me we
E 33 Camehome at & 30 to listents
Wilbur Wright, one of the airplane inventors, born-1867.

SAVE THE DATE! FREE PROGRAMS EVERY SATURDAY





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Staff and Team

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

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

Karlee Lisinski (Wilson College), Naturalist Paid Internship,

Mikaela Mummert (Greencastle Antrim) & Rosalyn Remeikas (Mercersburg Academy), High School Paid Internship

Contact us

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