

Conococheague Pioneer Times

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



Volume 30 Issue 4

CONOCOCHUEAGUE

INSTITUTE

30 Years of Bringing History to Life

4th Quarter 2024

Good Day and Wassail to you...From the Executive Director

It's our last newsletter of 2024, released just in time for sharing with your family and friends during the holiday season.

From the Conococheague Institute I heartily wish you a 'Wassail' with my sincere thanks for your support during our 30th Anniversary year.



The origin of wassail is Middle English *wæs hæil* 'be in (good) health!', and was adapted as both a greeting and holiday tradition involving wassail the drink. Used as part of a ritual to ensure a good apple harvest, people would sing to each other, as in the song "*Here We Come a Wassailing*" in a tradition that became our own Christmas Carol traditions.

If you missed any of our programs this year, be sure to look up our video features on YouTube. We have some examples of our wassailing on there and this year have added excellent features on viniculture, dye crafts and more. It's made CI available to 100,000's viewers online!



18th Century Wine Making

It's been a wonderful year, and I've truly cherished it. There have been so many educational bookings, projects, and a staggering show of community support. Thank you to everyone who makes what we do possible. I'm inspired by the dedication of people like local student Océane, who organized the most thorough cleaning of our Old Welsh Cemetery I've ever seen!

Our youth are so respectful of history, and it brings me great joy.



It has been a magical 30th Anniversary year, and what better way to showcase that than a rare viewing of the North Lights above CI in October!



Enjoy reading, and **as always** I love to hear from our members.

You can contact me 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 in person!

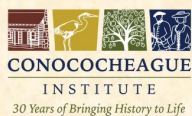
Cheers! Wassail! Matthew Wedd

Our Mission

Develop and foster awareness, understanding, and stewardship of the cultural and natural history of the Appalachian frontier of Pennsylvania, Maryland, & Virginia

Our Vision

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.



COLONIAL CHRISTMAS AT THE CONOCOCHUEAGUE

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14TH
10:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.



**HISTORIC WASSAIL & CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS, GINGERBREAD, WREATH MAKING, DANCE, GAMES AND CHRISTMAS CRAFT VENDORS
MADE POSSIBLE BY OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS**



Martin's
Famous
POTATO ROLLS AND BREAD

Visit
HAGERSTOWN
Washington County
Convention and Visitors Bureau

Liberty
AUTO & TIRE

Winter Contributions

We'd like to thank the following people for their recent (August 12th to December 9th 2024) donations and memberships. In that time we've had a spree of End of Year Giving, as part of John Stauffer's \$50,000 Matching Campaign, as well as generous contributions to our funded projects. **In the same duration we received \$22,653 in donations, \$2,335 in memberships, \$7,900 in business sponsorships, \$6,000 in grants, \$2,739 in tour fees and \$867.26 in gift shop sales, totalling \$42,494.26!**

Proud CI Contributors

Barb and Tony Ororata - Shady Spring Farm, Robert Weir, Robert Chamberlin, Barb Danowski - Fast Ink, Ron Jones, Patriot Federal Credit Union, Joann Williams, Karen Sourbier, Tomo Kotowich- Mercersburg Inn, Jamar Galbreath, Robert Miller, James and Melodie Anderson-Smith, MaryRuth and Richard Reis, Mary Sanders, Dr. John Stauffer, Visit Hagerstown - Washington County CVB, The Foundation for Enhancing Communities, Carolyn Ketchel, Karen Sourbier, Jan and Lee Davis, Mary Stouffer, Craig Rockwell - Rockwell Construction, Oliver Goetz, Lois Steichen, Shirley Shatzer, Linda Gilmore, Joanne Klase, Jacqueline Martin, Chris Boryan, Ann Allen, Bailey Long, Douglas Foreback, Lisa Cannac, Mercersburg Academy, Middletown Valley Bank, Brittany Wedd, Michele Martin - Martin's Famous Potato Rolls and Bread, Patricia Novack, Brenda Shaffer, Lynda Thomason, Mercersburg Moose Lodge 1790, Anonymous, Eric Ardjewski, Pam Knepper - Hummingbrook Farm, Lisa Coombs, Betsey and Ric Lillard, Chuck and Carole Holland, Will Willis, Susan Etter, Susan Swope and Shirley Tannenbaum, Carol Parsons, Don and Debra Kaminski, Brent Feight, Margaret Rowe, George White, Diane Reed, Tom Riford, Carol Zehosky, Eric Fischer, Wendy Mahan, Cecil Snyder, Marnie Keller, Denise Ordway, Ed Leisinger, Mary Ann Ashcraft, Toni Zimmerman, Deb Corcoran, Scott Longstreth, Tiffany Corl, Ralph and Dottie Young, Jack Demuth, Mac and Madeline Cepeda - Liberty Auto and Tire, Blackjacket Munitions and many more contributions in our donation boxes during programs and events
Thank you!

BLACKPOWDER FIREARM GIVEAWAY!
SUPPORT LOCAL HISTORY AND WIN
A DIXIE GUN WORKS PISTOL, AND POWDER HORN



Blackjacket Munitions is supporting the Conococheague Institute's 30th Anniversary celebrations by donating a Dixie Gun works pistol, and powder horn to the organization. Everyone over the age of 18 who makes a donation to CI's \$50,000 Matching Campaign will be entered into a drawing to occur at their Christmas event on December 14th. Make a donation today by scanning the QR Code, and don't forget all contributions will have double the impact for local history and education. Contact info@cimlg.org for more details.



In-Kind Donations

Thank you to Robert Miller of Hicksville Planing Mill for donating lumber for the animal pasture, the family of Harry Thrush Davis for an arrowhead collection, Robert Wertime for Foreman books on local history from the collection of Loreta Cline, Betsey Lillard for a reproduction meat fork, and Mary Poscover and Sam Cathey for diverse antiques and interpretive materials, including an 18th century tavern hutch valued at over \$4,000!



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. There has been an overwhelming concurrence of people giving in honor of John Stauffer's matching gift, many citing his generosity and vision for CI! Other donations have been made in honor of ancestors, with MaryRuth Reis giving in memory of her mother Dorothy Royer Seibert, and Carolyn Ketchel for 'The Drummer Boy'. We're ending this 30th Anniversary year with an incredible stride, and many have complimented CI's progress especially with engaging the area youth in a love of history. Pam Knepper shared that CI is a great learning center for kids and adults, and Carol Parsons complimented CI's outreach, student programs...with a special note of thanks for Matthew Wedd's leadership! 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 on the last page of the newsletter.

Our founder, Dr. John Stauffer has created a true legacy at CI, and still enjoys spending the summers here with his son David. His announcement to match all contributions between now and the end of the year up to \$50,000 means there has never been a better time to donate to CI. Current tally? \$40,900 since announcing the campaign in September! Just \$9,100 to go for the deadline of Dec 31st 2024!

Or make an endowment contribution today, directly by donating stocks & securities directly. Just use this information DTCC Number: 0141 Conococheague Institute Acct#6672-9564 A qualified charitable distribution (QCD) allows individuals who are 70½ years old or older to donate up to \$105,000 total to one or more charities directly. This is a tax-free process! Contact your IRA manager today!

Fall Funded Projects: December Update

As well as the general operating support through the Matching Campaign, we’ve seen amazing contributions for the funded projects we launched in September.

The following projects are completely funded:

- \$5,000: Winter Saturday Programs, Martin’s Famous Potato Rolls and Bread, gave generously to ensure the community has free programs to attend all winter at CI.
- \$1,500: PA Sound System, Mics and Headsets for Outdoor Lectures and events. Thank you Jan and Lee Davis, and the Mercersburg Academy Cheap Thrills fundraiser!
- \$350: Natural Dye Kits. We’re going to make have some colorful programs thanks to Pam Knepper!
- \$1,400: Eagle Scout Archery Targets and Range. We’ll never lose another arrow due to the support of Shady Spring Farms.

The following projects have been generously partially funded (but still open):

- \$1,000: Archery Supplies. We’ve added 40 more arrows, 18 youth arrows, a Native flatbow, Welsh longbow and two youth bows. Fast Ink, Jamar Galbreath, and Carol Parsons helped us hit the mark.
- \$350: Hearth Cooking Supplies. We’ll be whipping up some tasty soups (with toast) thanks to Carol Zehosky, Carol Parsons, and Pam Knepper.
- \$250: Tree ID plaques. We’ll start with some of our best Apples, Oaks and Maples thanks to Lynda Thomason and other donors.
- \$50: Lecturers and Guest Presenters. Enjoy when we have special guests out? Patricia Novack does, and would like to see more in 2025!
- \$5,900: Lucas Lapole Memorial Fund for Student Internships. The Mercersburg Moose Lodge 1790, Ann Allen and Jan and Lee Davis all believe that creating careers and experience for students is a worthy cause, and we heartily agree!

Other Projects still open for funding:

- \$2,250: Musical ‘*Wishing Well Harp*’ for the playground
- \$100-\$1,500: Wool Processing tools and equipment
- \$2,580: 18th Century Brewing equipment

These funded projects are a great way of seeing your donations put straight into the experiences we create for our community. **Contact us for more details.**



Thank you
business
sponsors!



Funded projects and sponsorships directly impact our program needs. If you would like to further support our interpretive supplies and educational programs, please consider 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 our ongoing education programs and partnership with **Mercersburg Academy** by **Robert Kurtz Jr (Class of '52)**

Winter Activities: A Snapshot

Field Trips: Fall educational bookings keep history alive in local students

Large field trips have now become the norm, and October saw us hosting 300 students per day from **Greencastle-Antrim Middle School**, as well as students from **Washington County Public Schools**, homeschoolers, and church groups.

This fall, we also adapted to school requests by developing an 18th-century "Law and Crime" program for **JB High School** students studying civics, and another for a **Mercersburg Academy** English Literature class reading *Letters from an American Farmer* by French-American writer J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, first published in 1782.



Americana Corner: Preserving America Conference and new Preserving America Partners program

In November, CI had the prestigious honor of being chosen as a presenter at the first **Preserving America Conference**. Hosted by **Americana Corner** and the **American Battlefield Trust**, Matthew joined the leaders of **Fort Ticonderoga**, **Washington Crossing**, **Fort Ligonier**, and **Vicksburg Battlefield** on stage—an illustrious list! Attendees at the conference had the opportunity to learn about what has been successful for these organizations and the best practices to follow. The Conococheague Institute has undergone incredible growth in recent years, and we’re thrilled to help others achieve the same.

It was a wonderful experience, and we look forward to next year's conference, where we’ll be able to share more about our 2025 Preserving America Partners program: a five-year, \$125k grant that will enable new historic initiatives focused on the nation's anniversary, our animal husbandry program, as well as greatly improving our marketing and infrastructure. Look out for a billboard and more advertising soon!

Also, consider supporting American history by purchasing *An American Triumph* by AC founder **Tom Hand**. It’s stocked in our store and available online at <https://www.americanacorner.com/>, and would make an excellent holiday gift!



Our Volunteers: Giving extra voices to our story

With our growth, our small staff would be overwhelmed by all our programs and educational bookings without our trusted volunteers. They come from all walks of life and are an incredibly varied yet talented group, dedicated to sharing history with the public. This fall, we saw Saturday volunteers in our public programs help with textile processing, grape stomping, hearth cooking, and archery. Our October large field trips wouldn’t have been possible without **Sam, Mary, Frank, and Jacob** leading stations for the 300 students we had on-site each day and helping dedicate our new historic marker from the **Pomeroy Foundation**. Our outreach events have also seen great volunteer participation. **Kelly and Damian** helped us ring in the Christmas season at the Mercersburg Tree Lighting, and **Sophia, Stella, and Maggie** warmly greeted visitors at the **James Buchanan Birthplace** cabin alongside Matthew during the **Mercersburg Academy** holiday tour.



Animal Husbandry: Pasture Two Complete!

With the cooler weather (and wetter ground), we were able to make fast progress on the second pasture for the animal husbandry exhibit. Our student volunteers from **Mercersburg Academy** came out every week, rain or shine, to lead the work and learned a little about construction techniques along the way.

We finished just in time, thanks to a kind offer from **Phil and Donna Kelly**, who lent us three goats in November to test out the pasture and our management. So, we welcomed **Gabe, Aspen, and Maple** to the homestead for a week, where they served as great ambassadors for the programs we'll be launching in 2025!



Lawn to Prairie Conversion: 2000 Native Plants for Future Habitat

We mentioned this project in our last newsletter and are excited to share that it's now complete! Thanks to the **Thomas and Nancy Burkey Charitable Fund** through the **Franklin County Community Foundation**, we had the funding to plant 2,000 native plants outside the Visitor Center. Thanks to the aforementioned students from **Mercersburg Academy** (along with several CI staff and volunteers), the plants are now in the ground for winter. Check back in the spring to see how they bloom, and we'll be providing guides on how to replicate the project at home! We learned a lot along the way: for example, the lawn removal tools aren't as simple to use as they are advertised. It took some hard labor to get this project done, but we're proud of everyone who helped along the way!



Fall and Winter Events: Bonfire Night and (many) Christmas Celebrations

A Bonfire without the Fire!
On November 9th, we made some adaptations to our annual Bonfire event. Due to the county-wide drought and fire risk, we decided not to have an actual fire. Instead, some of our creative volunteers rigged up a lighting system under the fire, which looked great, while Rebecca and Rhys Connors' bagpipe performance was hauntingly powerful and made for an excellent addition. We look forward to more piping at future programs!

Another highlight of the event was, of course, **Miller's Wildlife** Bird of Prey presentation, blacksmithing, craft and food vendors, historic activities, the Eagle Scout archery range, and a children's entertainment program by Ray Owen.

Thank you to everyone who supported the event, and to **Middletown Valley Bank, Visit Hagerstown Washington County CVB, Fast Ink, and Liberty Auto and Tire** for their sponsorships of the activities.

The word "bonfire" comes from the Middle English word *bonefire*, which literally means "a fire of bones." The earliest known use of the word was in the 15th century, though others surmise that its origins lie with the French *bon* for good. Bonfires were often used for community celebrations, and we certainly consider all our CI bonfires a good time to spend with friends and family.



The colder winter months don't stop us from sharing history with the community. In December, we've been doing outreach at Mercersburg and Greencastle Christmas events, Mercersburg Elementary and Broadfording Church kids' programs, and at the Mercersburg Academy Holiday Campus Tour at the James Buchanan Birthplace cabin. The new year is bringing a new round of lectures and presentations, so look out for us! Our winter programs are sponsored by **Martin's Famous Potato Rolls and Bread** and include our outreach, free Saturday programs, and our Colonial Christmas event.



Our final 2024 event is a 'Colonial Christmas' on Saturday, December 14th!

The Welsh Barrens Visitor Center: Open every Saturday 10am to 5pm

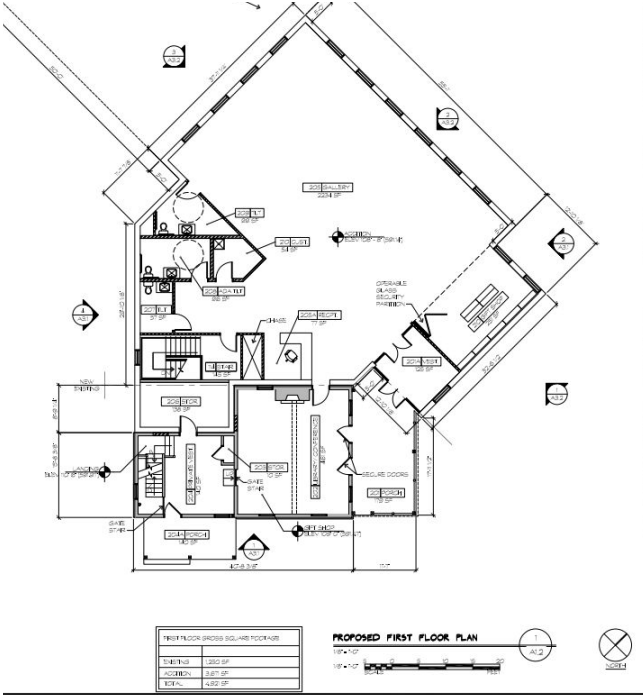
Whenever you start your visit we hope you stop by the Visitor Center first. Greet our team, receive the history of Rock Hill Farm, check out the exhibits, and make a purchase in the gift shop (or join as a member to support our mission). Even when the building is closed our staff are often on-site working, so give us a call for a tour.



For our final 30th Anniversary exhibit in the Visitor Center, the focus was on our books, diaries and bibles from our library collection. The earliest examples on display are texts from the 18th century which would have been read by settlers in the region. It also includes a local Robert Davis family bible from the 1800's which is filled with genealogy, and an extensive collection of the diaries, calling cards and mementos of Ida Ann Catherine Steck (1857-1940), donated by her family. The personal details, handwriting and artistry in these early texts are a treasure of local history, and show our links to the community in Welsh Run from the earliest settlement to the modern day. We have extensive collections and archives in our library, and we wish we could display them all. Perhaps one day...soon!

Looking forward to our future: New expansion of the Welsh Barren's Visitor Center

As we continue to experience significant growth, our infrastructure has faced challenges in keeping up. To address this, our **Board of Directors**, at the recommendation of our **founders**, has partnered with the architect firm **Bushy Feight Morin** to design a plan for a major expansion of our Visitor Center. This expansion will bring several new features to the museum, including a library, gallery space, conference hall, and ADA-compliant bathrooms—all on the main floor. Beyond enhancing visitor experience and accessibility, the expansion will also help us better manage our storage and archives. The next step, if we move forward, is a large-scale capital campaign to fund the project. **We would love to hear your thoughts!**



Annual Members Meeting Report

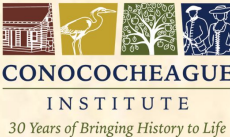
On the 2nd Saturday of October CI held the Annual Members Meeting, and this year we had a lovely turnout to discuss the year's progress and plans for the future. In addition to the annual budget reports and minutes, this is also a chance for new Board candidates to be voted on and sworn in, and we're pleased to say that our four open slots were filled with a unanimous vote. So welcome Derek, Selena, Terri and Will!

As well as Board roles, CI also has several committees that provide excellent resources to our mission, and any member can serve on them. We have committees for Nature, Library, Development & Fundraising, Budget and other roles, **so contact us if you'd like to help!**

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!
DEREK FURRY, SELENA FENG, TERRI SCOTT, WILL SLATER



The Board of Directors of the Conococheague Institute work with the Executive Director to ensure the sound management of the organization and help it accomplish its mission. They are a diverse group of Business Leaders, Historians, Philanthropists, Entrepreneurs, Naturalists, and work together to form a whole. The Board of Directors are volunteers, and receive no compensation for their services to the Conococheague Institute.



SAVE THE DATE! FREE PROGRAMS EVERY SATURDAY



Board of Directors

Elizabeth Lillard (*President*), Ellen Kinzer (*Vice-President*), Bob Schwartz (*Secretary*), Sam Cathey (*Treasurer*), Will Sheppard, Melanie Desmond, Bailey Roberts Long, Gina Vitale, Matt South, Selena Feng, Will Slater, Derek Furry, Terri Scott.

Advisory Board

Dr. John C. Stauffer (*Founder & President Emeritus*), Avery Cook, Tom Finucane, Dr. Doris Armstrong-Goldman, Gay Buchanan, Martha E. Stauffer, MD, Roger Swartz, David Stauffer, Chuck Holland, Carol Zehosky

Staff and Team

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

Contact us

The Conococheague Institute, 12995 Bain Road, Mercersburg, PA, 17236
Phone: 717 328 2800 Email: info@cimlg.org Website: www.cimlg.org
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/conococheagueinstitute/> Instagram: [@conococheague_institute](https://www.instagram.com/conococheague_institute)
Youtube: [@coloniallivingattheconococheagueinstitute](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0niallivingattheconococheagueinstitute)



Pick us and be part of our family: 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	Membership Level: _____
Individual: \$25	Additional Donation: _____
Family: \$35	
Patron: \$125	Make Checks Payable to The Conococheague Institute, 12995 Bain Road,
Corporate: \$200	Mercersburg, PA, 17236
Sustaining: \$300	Thank you!
Life: \$1000	

I support the Conococheague Institute because: _____

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

I would like more information about Funded Projects and Sponsorships (*check here*) ☐

Funded Project for your Donation: _____