

# Conococheague Pioneer Times

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

Volume 31 Issue 1



1st Quarter 2025

## Good Day to you...From the Executive Director



I feel like I've been **bleating** on about this nonstop, but our last newsletter was in early December, so I won't be **baa'd** if I say it again now: **The animals have just arrived on the homestead! Come meet them right away!**

I've given them an entire feature on page 5, so I won't say more, but this newest addition to our mission and programming is truly having an amazing impact.

We had two incredible experiences at the end of 2024. First, we hosted a lively and exciting Christmas event on December 14th, during which the homestead truly felt alive with love and joy from our community.



Second, our members continued to give generously in support of our funded projects and matching campaign. **Thank you to everyone who gave in honor of Dr. John Stauffer's \$50k match**—the campaign officially surpassed its goal, with total contributions exceeding \$56,000! **This means we ended the year with \$106,000 in contributions for our mission and site.**

**As the New Year rang in, work began frantically to make 2025 our busiest year yet.**

Our popular school bookings have consistently increased each year, as more and more students want to engage in our site's history and natural programs. We can see this trend reflected in our tour revenue: **2021: \$2,634, 2022: \$5,250, 2023: \$8,939, 2024: \$11,617**

This winter, we've been taking bookings for Spring nonstop, and so far, **we have over 3,000 students booked in programs between March and May, totaling \$18,000 in tour revenue!**

To manage this increased workload, our **Board of Directors** was pleased to promote **Kori Taber to Programs and Farmstead Manager**. She'll now be overseeing our animals, gardens, school bookings, volunteers, and the gift shop. She's already doing an incredible job, and has such passion for CI.



Many of these bookings are new to our programs, such as the **Tuscarora School District** booking their entire elementary range (911 students) for a full week of programs centered around the theme of Johnny Appleseed. We're excited to plant new apple trees for them and teach them about cider making in our orchard!

**Enjoy reading, and as always, I love hearing from our members**, with your thoughts and suggestions for our future. Alternatively, stop by for a visit and chat in person! We're busy, but never too busy to spend time with our cherished members.

*Cheers! Matthew Wedd*

## 2025 Events at CI

Visit any Saturday for free programs, but **don't miss our major events this year**. We're bringing in special guest lecturers, presenters and vendors to make this year busier than ever, and each event will tie in with the greater themes of the 250th Anniversary.

**May 10th:** 1775 Spring on the Farmstead

**June 14th:** 1775: A Call to Arms

**October 18th:** 1775: Harvest on the Homestead

**December 13th:** 1775: A Colonial Christmas





2024/2025 Winter Contributions

**You did it!** Since September 2024, we'd been running a \$50,000 matching campaign, generously supported by our founder, **Dr. John Stauffer**, to help fund our annual operations.

Before the Christmas break, **we had raised \$46,200** — already an incredible achievement in itself. After processing the wave of donations that came in post-holiday, we are thrilled to announce that **the campaign officially surpassed its goal, with total contributions over \$56,000!**

**Thank you to everyone who contributed to the 2024 fund**, and those who have already given generously in the last few months to support our 2025 operations. The following people kindly made a contribution between December 10th 2024 and March 15th 2025.

**Proud CI Contributors**

*Steven Hatleberg, Tom Finucane, Shively Motors of Shippensburg, Virginia Schaefer, Christine Carracino, Robert Weir, Frank Walizer, Fast Ink of Mercersburg, Richard and Rebecca Johnson, Roy Nesbitt, Joyce Horst, Sally Haver, Carolyn Ketchel, Thomas Durkin, Ken Myers, Charles Angle, Derek Nesbitt, Barbara Onorato, John McCulloh, Don and Kay Boward, Bob Failor, Jon Wood, Ed Leisinger, the estate of Joan McKean, Mac Cepeda/Liberty Auto and Tire, Jamie Craven, Max Justice/Setas Mushrooms, Elizabeth Mummert, Gay Buchanan, Betty Jane Lee, The Thomas and Nancy Burkey Foundation, Jean Guritz, Richard Johnson, Frank Hood, Martha Stauffer, Jack Murray Ebersole, the estate of Catherine Stickell, JeanMarie Walz, Donna Catling, Stephen Brooks, Jason Koons, Pam Anderson, Dennis Warrenfeltz, Joe Heffley, Barry and Charlotte Elliott, Gregory Adamson, Julie Alice Johnson, Lin St Clair, Vince Newell, Monte Herron, Alexander Bush, Shelly Coonrod, Janet Rogers, Jolisa Jones-Corey, Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission, Conococheague Audubon Society, Dr John C. Stauffer, Jerome Harness, Larry Smith, Donna Thornton, Washingtonburg Sons of the American Revolution, Lynda Thomason, Vince Newell, Patriot Federal Credit Union, Janet and Lee Davis, Christopher Husson, Americana Corner and Karen Miller...and many more contributions in our donation boxes during programs and events. Thank you!*



**In-Kind Donations**

Thank you to **Leonard Brown** for donating ‘The Amazing Legacy of James E. Hanger, Civil War Soldier’ and sharing his own stories of amputation during our medical lecture, **Lee Davis** for providing a collection of animal husbandry books for our team to train with, **Ben Haldeman** for giving our much antique barn hardware for repurposing, **Ralph Young** for donating an antique rocking chair, **Mercersburg Academy** for sending us some new feminine mannequins, **Gay Buchanan** for sharing a preserved Rattlesnake and 2 winter bird feeders, and **Zane Tindall** for making us a home forged tasting ladle for the cabin.

A very special thank you to **Chris Connolly and Tony Hake of Lappans Springs Farm** for donating ALL of the animals for our new programs. We’d approached them to purchase heritage breed sheep and goats but they were so impressed with our vision they chose to support us completely!



**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. At the tail end of the year the support for **John Stauffer’s matching campaign continued**, many like his dear friend **Gay Buchanan** citing his generosity and vision for CI! **Frank Hood** made a contribution in memory of his friend **Jim Rogers**, and we’re pleased to say that Jim’s Red Maple has grown more than a foot since it’s dedication last year!

**Lynda Thomason** said she loves American History and is proud of all we do at CI. **Virginia Schaeffer** loves our mission, and many others expressed how proud they were of what C.I has achieved. **Donna Catling** says its important that we know our history. **Jolisa Jones Corey** gave in honor of **Robert Shinham Jr’s 90th Birthday**.

*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.*

With your support we ended 2024 in an amazing place, and it’s already resulted in 2025 looking busier than ever, with more bookings, free programs and activities.

**This Spring season, consider making your first tax deductible gift of the year to C.I’s growth**, support a specific fund or program, or make plans for your estate providing future generations with the heritage we keep alive.

**Don’t forget to check your membership renewal date, an important way of showing your support!**

**JOIN**

**Annual Memberships:**

**Student: \$10**

**Individual: \$25**

**Family: \$35**

**Patron: \$125**

**Corporate: \$200**

**Sustaining: \$300**

*Your Membership supports our educational and preservation mission, and is valid for 12 months*



**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!*



**Sponsorships and Funded Projects**

On behalf of The Conococheague Institute (a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, EIN# 25-1763245), we would like to express our gratitude for your continued support over the past years, which has been instrumental in the incredible growth of our organization.

Business contributions and sponsorships have played a key role in helping us provide quality educational programming, free community events, preserve history, and engage with our local community.

For 2025, we are seeking sponsorships to help bring history to life. Our 2025 **event series and educational booking season are now available for sponsorships**. So far, we have received \$3,000 from **Patriot Federal Credit Union** and a pledge of \$3,000 from the **M&T Bank Charitable Foundation**. These sponsorships enable us to offer discounts for large school bookings, creating even more opportunities for learning.

We are also excited to offer **paid internships** to college and high school students, and this year, we hope to expand the program. **Thanks to a generous contribution of \$10,500 from the PHMC Grant and Jan and Lee Davis**, we are able to fund **three internships for this year so far**.

We have already welcomed **Jenna Benke of Wilson College** for a **Conservation and Environmental** position this spring, and we have dozens of interviews lined up for summer positions. **We’d love to offer four summer internships**, as well as an additional **fall conservation position**. To make this a reality, **we are asking for your support to match the \$10,500 already contributed**.

**Any donation made to the intern fund will directly support CI and create valuable job and career opportunities for local students.**

In addition, young scout **Ben Flory** of Greencastle has come to us with a wonderful idea for his **Eagle Scout** project: a historic shaded lean-to in the garden, complete with a bench where a weary gardener can rest after their labor. The roof will include a gutter to funnel rainwater into a barrel. Ben plans to dedicate this project in honor of his neighbor, our very own **John Stauffer**, and is seeking donations. Please note “Eagle Scout” with your donation to CI, and we’ll support this meaningful endeavor.

Lastly, for this spring, we are introducing a **"Flower Fund."** Please note “flowers” with your donation, and it will go toward purchasing native flowers for our garden beds and historic crops for our interpretive programs. **Middletown Valley Bank** has already pledged \$500 for April!

*Contact us for more details, and as always, thank you for your generous support.*





**\$3,000 Pioneer Education Sponsor**



**2025 SUMMER INTERNSHIPS**  
**VISITOR EXPERIENCE TEAM MEMBER**



LOOKING TO PURSUE A CAREER IN NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT, HISTORIC MUSEUMS OR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION? THE CONOCOCHEAQUE INSTITUTE OFFERS PAID INTERNSHIPS TO FOSTER A EARLY PASSION FOR CAREERS IN THESE FIELDS. CONTACT VISIT@CIMLG.ORG FOR MORE DETAILS

Internship program is supported by the Cultural and Historical Support grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, & the R. Kurtz Endowment for Early American History







**EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT: BEN FLORY TROOP 99 COVERED SEATING AREA WITH RAIN CATCHER IN HONOR OF JOHN STAUFFER FOR CI GARDEN**

**FUNDING REQUIRED: \$2,000**







Winter Activities: A Snapshot

**Premium Saturday Programs**

In addition to our weekly **Revolutionary Homestead** programs, for 2025, we’re offering a premium presentation each month. January featured **Medicine and Surgery**, February highlighted **Firelocks on the Frontier**, and March (22nd) will showcase **Brewing in the 18th Century**. Both January and February saw full houses for each lecture throughout the day at our Visitor Center. The February lecture focused on the timeline of firearm history, with a special emphasis on the firelocks that would have been found in the region. It was a treat to showcase our original Dutch Musket, and after the presentation, visitors walked down to the homestead for a firing demonstration.



**Historic Preservation**

The coldest months of the year give us time to carry out important repairs and renovations across the homestead. Over the past few months, we’ve completely refitted the **Piper 'tavern'** interior to improve visitor flow, re-daubed the tavern and **Negley cabin** to seal bug and bird holes, and repaired broken shingles and leaky roofs, among other tasks. Student volunteers from **Mercersburg Academy** helped on **MLK Day** with a day of philanthropy, doing an amazing job linseed oiling the floors in the **Welsh Barrens Visitor Center**. New additions (beyond the animal pastures) include a new firepit at the Negley cabin for laundry demonstrations—perfect for spring.



**Organizational Growth and New Library Additions**

Keeping up with the increasing activity at the Conococheague Institute is a tough task, but our dedicated team of staff, interns, and volunteers are up to the challenge. Team member **Amelia Craven** led the effort of accessioning hundreds of new books donated by **Lee Davis** and **John Stauffer** into our library this winter. This was a massive job, involving researching the books and cataloging them into our extensive collection. The result is a newly expanded section on medicine, nautical history, and 18th-century science. A big thanks also goes to **Kim Spanos-Telsing** and **Betsey Lillard** for lending their expertise to the project.



Speaking of libraries, in honor of former CI Librarian **Dr. Joan McKean’s** foresight and faith in our mission by including CI in her estate, we’ve made plans to dedicate a **Little Free Library** outside our Visitor Center in her memory. We’re redesigning the library she installed in Welsh Run (which was removed by tenants when the property changed hands) to resemble a log cabin like our Negley, and we’ve installed a memorial bench in the shape of stacked books, which will be accompanied by a plaque. We hope for it to be finished & dedicated in early Spring.





## Animal Husbandry: New Life on the Farmstead

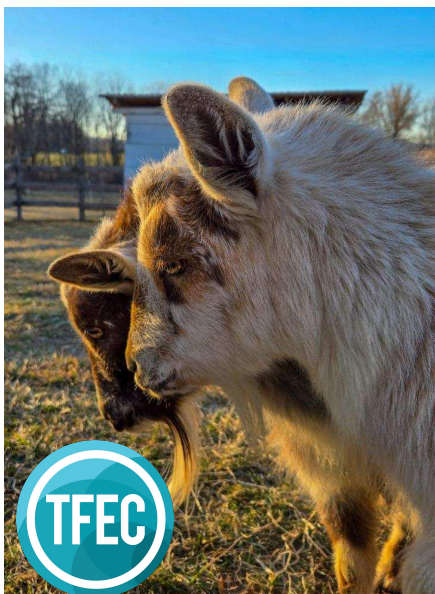
Since last year, we've been talking about the upcoming Animal Husbandry on the Frontier initiative. Our goat shed was built with the help of our student interns last summer, the pasture fence was assembled by volunteers, and the program launch is being funded by the **Foundation for Enhancing Communities (TFEC)**, with a five-year commitment from the **Americana Corner Preserving America Partner's** program.

Thanks to **Tony and Chris of Lappans Springs Farm** for donating the livestock, delivering them, and coaching us through their care, the program has officially begun. We now have heritage breed Black Welsh Mountain Sheep and Nigerian Dwarf goats on-site, and we couldn't be happier!

The sound of bleating as you walk down our footpaths signals a living, breathing farmstead, and visitors from as far as Washington, D.C. have already made the trip out to C.I. to see the new additions.

The animals are an integral part of our new historic programs, allowing us to tangibly demonstrate the sources of wool, fiber, cashmere, dairy, and meat for frontier families.

Hundreds of students and visitors have already come to meet these full-time residents of the Conococheague Institute. We invite you to come pet and feed these adorable animals and learn about their rich heritage.



## Help Support Our Animals...by Naming Them!

This new initiative is being launched with the help of grants and foundations, but in the coming months, we'll be providing opportunities for you to support our hardworking animals through donations. **We've already received some pledges from generous members who recognize what a valuable asset these animals will be to our mission.**


While we're setting up that program, we're asking for something more—**your suggestions for names!** We have two lambs and two kids that need names.

Following the naming tradition of **Lappans Springs Farm**, where each year's animals are named with successive letters of the alphabet, the 2025 births will all start with the letter "H." So, let us know your ideas! How about nature names like **Heather, Hazel, Heath, Hawthorn, or Honey?** Or perhaps historical names like **Horatio, Hercules, Hera, or Hermes?** You could even suggest names with local significance, like **Hager or Hannah** (in honor of one of our Davis family members). **Contact us with your suggestions, or vote on the names currently under consideration! And yes, you can donate now for their care too!**









### The Davis family at Rock Hill Farm

Settled in the 1730s by Welsh immigrants, the farmstead at Rock Hill Farm thrived with apple orchards, field crops, livestock, woodworking, and even a whiskey distillery.

Learn about the families, enslaved people, and indentured servants who made this frontier their home.

### Womens Roles on the Farm

Much of history focuses on the Founding Fathers. But what about the mothers, sisters, aunts, nieces, and daughters, whose stories often go untold?

Explore the daily lives of women in the 18th century and how the Revolution affected their roles on the farmstead, despite the restrictive law of coverture, which denied them equality.





### Animal Husbandry on the Frontier

Help out with farm chores while connecting with animals, including our heritage breed sheep and goats.

Animals played an important role in frontier life, providing wool for clothing, milk for dairy products, as well as meat and hides.

### A Nation Rises

As everyday farmers joined the fight for freedom against tyranny, American independence was eventually won.

Discover the stories of these men, their roles throughout the war, and the impact it had on their lives upon their return.





A Revolutionary Homestead is Proudly Supported by the Americana Corner Preserving America Partners Program. Learn more at [www.americanacorner.com](http://www.americanacorner.com)

SPONSORED BY

*Americana Corner*

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PRESERVING AMERICA

## New Interpretive Program Supported by Americana Corner

The launch of our **Revolutionary Homestead & Animal Husbandry** programs, marketing efforts, major events, and interpretive themes for the next few years are supported by the **Americana Corner Preserving America Partners** five-year grant, aligning CI with the **America250** celebrations and historic tourism initiatives.

**Granting \$25,000 per year and a total commitment of \$125,000**, this long-term support has allowed us to make plans for growth that will continue to expand our reach and engage more visitors in our shared history and heritage.

**Americana Corner**, established to preserve and highlight America's heritage, has been supporting CI for years through exhibits and educational resources. This new program reflects the trust that founder **Tom Hand** has in CI's ability to authentically represent early American life. Since its inception in 2022, Americana Corner has funded over \$3 million for 321 projects across the country and continues to revolutionize what nonprofit museums can do for their communities.

This new initiative promises to be a defining addition to CI's educational offerings, bringing history to life in a meaningful way for future generations.

In 1775, major national events were occurring: Lexington and Concord, Bunker Hill, the creation of the U.S. Army and Navy, and much more! At CI, with our Revolutionary Homestead programs, we'll focus on how these national events affected everyday farm life, while also hosting special events that spotlight larger issues and themes.

We were honored to have **Tom and Char Hand**, founders of Americana Corner, fly out to visit us in March to see the Conococheague Institute and our amazing site.



For more information, including blogs and videos on America's first century, visit <https://www.americanacorner.com/>



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

Whenever you begin your visit, we encourage you to stop by the Visitor Center first. Greet our team, learn about the history of Rock Hill Farm, explore the exhibits, and make a purchase in the gift shop (or become a member to support our mission). We made significant updates to the gift shop and exhibits this winter and are excited to welcome you! ***Throughout the week, our staff are often on-site working, so feel free to give us a call or knock when you visit.***



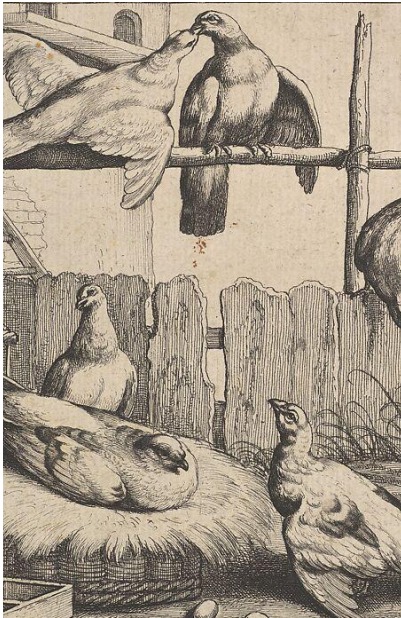
### Conococheague Book Club: Third Thursday at 1pm

March 20th: "The Founding Gardeners" (2011) by Andrea Wulf

April 17th: *Book To Be Determined*

May 15th: "The Revolutionary Samuel Adams" (2022) by Stacy Schiff

June 19th: "Rebels at Sea: Privateering in the American Revolution" (2022) by Eric J. Dolan



### An Historical Anecdote: The Passenger Pigeon

During our hearth cooking programs, we're often asked about hunting and meat on the frontier.

In the 18th century, farmers were far more opportunistic in sourcing their food than we might imagine. Game animals and birds were an important part of that. **If you visited a homestead, you might spot a blind passenger pigeon in a cage, which was part of a unique, twice-yearly harvest!**

To explain further, we turn to the source, **Letters from an American Farmer by J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, published in 1782.**

*"We have twice a year the pleasure of catching pigeons, whose numbers are sometimes so astonishing as to obscure the sun in their flight...We catch them with a net extended on the ground, to which they are allured by what we call TAME WILD PIGEONS, made blind, and fastened to a long string; his short flights, and his repeated calls, never fail to bring them down. The greatest number I ever caught was fourteen dozen, though much larger quantities have often been trapped. I have frequently seen them at the market so cheap, that for a penny you might have as many as you could carry away; and yet from the extreme cheapness you must not conclude, that they are but an ordinary food; on the contrary, I think they are excellent. Every farmer has a tame wild pigeon in a cage at his door all the year round, in order to be ready whenever the season comes for catching them."*

**The mass hunting of the Native Passenger Pigeon, along with habitat destruction from deforestation, led to the bird's extinction in 1914, despite efforts to restrict the practice in the 19th century.** At its peak, the passenger pigeon's population was estimated to be between 3 and 5 billion, making it one of the most abundant birds in the world at the time. The species accounted for 25–40% of the total bird population in North America.

Understanding this history allows us to share these stories during our programs. **While we strive for authenticity with our Revolutionary Homestead programs, we won't be tying a blind bird to the cabin anytime soon for humane reasons.** And any pigeon pies we make will be made with poultry instead!

### 2025 Volunteer Training

With a busy spring schedule ahead, we're looking to expand our volunteer base and update our current volunteers on the new interpretive themes for the year. Kori will be holding a 2025 Volunteer Training on Saturday, March 29th, and you can RSVP today by contacting her at [visit@cimlg.org](mailto:visit@cimlg.org).

Volunteers will participate in skill-building activities and training related to interpretive skills, as well as overall visitor service skills. We have volunteers interested in different areas: some prefer the gift shop and exhibit docentry, others enjoy demonstrating 18th-century life skills in the cabin, and some do it all!

You can start signing up directly on Point using this link: <https://pointapp.org/orgs/5516>.





SAVE THE DATE! FREE PROGRAMS EVERY SATURDAY



**PARK DAY: PRESERVE OUR HISTORY**  
OPEN VOLUNTEER PROJECTS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE AMERICAN  
BATTLEFIELD TRUST AND AMERICANA CORNER  
SATURDAY, APRIL 26TH, 10AM TO 4PM





**REVOLUTIONARY HOMESTEAD**  
FREE SATURDAY PROGRAMS CELEBRATING  
FARM LIFE DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



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**Make your mark on history: 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 and Sponsorships (*check here*) ☐

Funded Project for your Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

Lamb & Kid Naming Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_