

Conococheague Pioneer Times

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

Volume 32 Issue 1



1st Quarter 2026

Good Day to you...From the Executive Director



Happy Spring! The long winter has passed, and though it was productive and busy, we're so glad to welcome the change in seasons.

We were fortunate to avoid any major damage from the intense snowfall. The pipes froze once or twice, we even got a bit of frostbite while plowing, and there were many chilly mornings spent making sure the animals were comfortable. (I remember one day seeing my car's thermometer read -2°F and being surprised it could register that low!)

All in all, we rode out the storms with frontier grit. I hope this newsletter finds you similarly safe, healthy, and happier for the warmer weather.

The start of a new year is always a busy time, planning programs, events, and exhibits; implementing budgets; and forging community collaborations and partnerships, among much more. We now have everything in place to make 2026 an incredible year for your CI!

Over the next few pages, we'll recap some of our recent successes and share what's ahead.

On **MLK Day** in **January**, we were reminded that service is most powerful when it is hands-on, local, and rooted in care for one another. Despite icy temperatures, students from **Mercersburg Academy** spent the day at the Conococheague Institute building a birthing hut for expectant growing herd. Amazingly, the entire thing was completed in just one afternoon!



February flew by, but we managed to get a lot of invasive species removal completed in our woodlot. Having **Penn State Mont Alto** student **Mikaela Mummert** as a long term intern is really paying off, and she now gives *ME* tips on chainsaw use.



By **March**, we welcomed new animals to the farm (*read page 3 for the full story*), but also unveiled a **new exhibit** on the 250th, and we're welcoming new visitors **every Saturday** with our **Revolutionary Homestead** programming. With weekly adventures including hearth cooking, crafts, and frontier chores, we've also been mixing it up with some special programs. Our entire team just completed a public workshop on blacksmithing with **P.C. Janusz**, and the skills learned will be useful in our interpretive programs.



Strike while the iron is hot, get reading to catch up, and as always, contact me if you ever have any questions or suggestions for the Conococheague Institute. mwedd@cimlg.org 717-328-2800

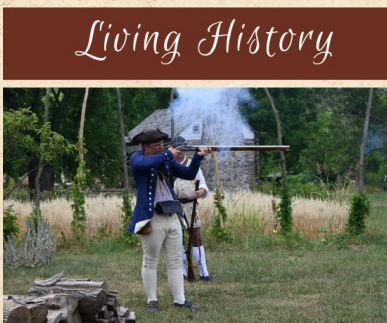
*Cheers! Matthew Wedd
Executive Director*



*Step into our Frontier Story
Where History Comes to Life*



Education



Conservation



Stewardship



*Free Programs
every Saturday!
10am to 4pm*



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THE CONOCOCHÉAGUE INSTITUTE
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MERCERSBURG, PA, 17236
WWW.CIMLG.ORG 717-328-2800 INFO@CIMLG.ORG

2025/6 Winter Contributions

We're pleased to report that you BEAT the \$50,000 Matching Campaign supported by our founder Dr. John C. Stauffer.

We hit the campaign total just before Christmas, meaning \$100,000 to end the year for our operating expenses.

Our annual budget is \$320,000 and we are deeply grateful to everyone who contributes, who continue to support our programs, educational visits, and preservation work. Every gift truly makes a lasting impact.

Proud CI Contributors

Jean Guritz, Ralph & Dottie Young, Joanne E. Klase, Betty Jane Lee, Bob Weir, Tom Finucane, Mike & Mary Ellen South, Tom Riford, Kay Boward, Richard Johnson, Gail Reeder, Will Willis, Shirley Shatzer, Jacob Shaffer, Jack Demuth, Martha Stauffer, Mike Reed, Steven Hatleberg, Estate of Catherine Stickell, Frank Hood, Ed Leisinger, Darren Moats, Richard Culbertson, David Ditto, Judito Ditto, Betsey Lillard, Randall Sanders, Keith Taber, Bitners Antiques, Jennifer Hawbaker, Denise Ordway, Fast Ink, Barry & Charlotte Elliott, Charles Angle, Joanne Thomas, Barbara Onorato, Vince Newell, Bob Failor, Karen Miller, Conococheague Audubon Society, Rachel Wiley, Joann Williams, Jon Wood, Amalia Verno, Larry Williams, Douglas Foreback, Charles Shannon, Lin St Clair, Patriot Federal Credit Union, Ed & Vicky Whetstone, Joshua Beall's MD Forces, The Tenant House at Shady Spring Farm, Julie Alice Johnson, Kelly Foster, Andrea Pahowka, Steve Brindle, Lynda Thomason, Joshua Martin, Lee Davis, Kathleen Detlefsen, M&T Bank Charitable Foundation, PHMC Cultural and Historical Support Grants, Franklin County Visitors Bureau, Tom & Char Hand, Americana Corner, Brittany Miller, Joann Christy, Rebecca Schultz, Cynthia Jewart, Ken Myers, Rita Steele, and Bill Leasure.

...Thank you for your support! Every contribution is stewarded to ensure our organization is a success



In-Kind Donations

We are so grateful to **Robert and Virginia Putnam** for their generous gift (and hard work) in installing our new Purple Martin house near the CI playground! From digging the post hole to preparing the specialized housing, this was truly a labor of love.

Purple Martins (*Progne subis*) are the largest native swallows in North America, known for their graceful, acrobatic flight. But they need our help. Their population has declined by 24.1% over the last 55 years, a loss of 2.8 million birds. Habitat loss and competition from invasive species like House Sparrows and European Starlings have contributed to these declines. **Thank you, Robert and Virginia, for helping us protect and celebrate these remarkable birds!**



GOAT GIVER



**NIGERIAN DWARF GOATS
CARMELLA AND HAWTHORNE
\$50 - GOAT GIVER
\$250 - HERITAGE GOAT GIVER**



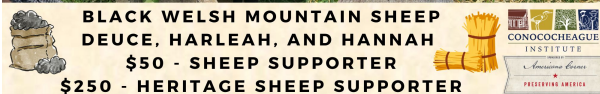
Are you a goat giver or sheep supporter?

Contact us to find out more about donations towards our Animal Husbandry program, ensuring their care and community impact.

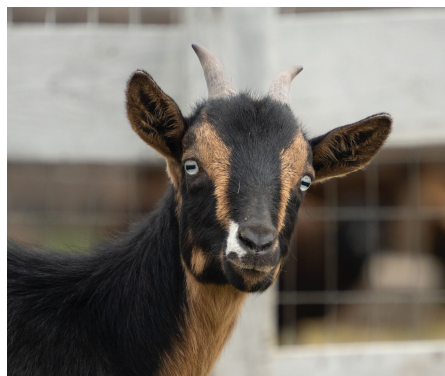
SHEEP SUPPORTER



**BLACK WELSH MOUNTAIN SHEEP
DEUCE, HARLEAH, AND HANNAH
\$50 - SHEEP SUPPORTER
\$250 - HERITAGE SHEEP SUPPORTER**



Scan this link to make a tax deductible contribution and have it matched directly through Square!



Endowment contribution will be matched too!
You can give by donating stocks & securities directly. Just use this information:
**DTCC Number: 0141
Conococheague Institute
Acct#6672-9564**

Animal Husbandry on the Frontier

If you're reading this after the December newsletter without our email and social updates... you've missed quite an emotional rollercoaster!

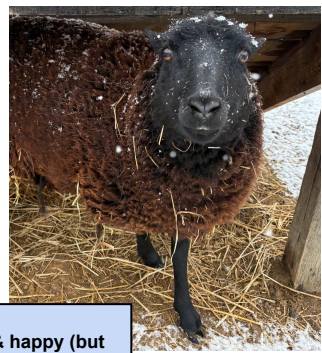
To recap, last October, with help from **Lappans Springs Farm**, we undertook a breeding program for our animals. **Carmella** our Nigerian Dwarf goat took a two week vacation with a buck **'Duke'**, and we welcomed a breeding ram **'Gilthunder'** to stay with our Black Welsh Mountain sheep **Deuce**.

Both ladies seemed to be in heat, and we presumed the due dates (145-155 days after conception) would be late February/early March, and made plans. Our staff and volunteers trained in birthing care, winter heat lamps were installed in the animal house, Carmella put some serious weight on, there were other physical and emotional changes, and we kept the public riveted with updates. Goat Watch was happening 24/7 in recent weeks, with one of our most supportive volunteers, Dana Rogers checking in the wee hours when it was extra cold.

Then the due dates passed... and nothing! As we neared the end of the healthy birthing expectations, we called in the experts from **Greencastle Veterinary Hospital** to check on them.

The initial examination suggested that they aren't expecting this time, and blood tests confirmed it. In some cases, animals can experience a "false pregnancy" or may lose a pregnancy very early, and all signs point to that here. **Though this is a tough moment for us all, most importantly, all of our animals are happy and healthy.**

This is also a useful learning moment, farming doesn't always go according to plan, and caring for animals means adapting and making the best choices for their well-being every step of the way. Thousands of students who visit us each year learn from moments just like this, and we will continue to share the journey with the community for years to come.



Our healthy & happy (but not pregnant) herd!



We're currently designing some heritage breed animal shirts. Watch this space!



♥ Heart healing at Lappans Springs Farm ♥



But our plans to grow our herd continue unhindered! Last week, our animal care team had a refreshing and memorable visit to our friends at **Lappans Springs Farm**, where we met so many happy, healthy heritage breed animals. Last year, Lappans Springs Farm donated the animals that launched our animal husbandry program, and **we're excited to share that we adopted three NEW friends for our program!** We are also expecting some new lambs in the coming weeks from another farm.

We're excited to be joined by a 1-year-old mama doe and her two daughters; a sweet black goat and a brown-and-black beauty with a little white star on her head. And now for the fun part... all three still need names! **Contact us with what you think fits.**

We've already heard some amazing suggestions like **Sable, Libra, Luna, Juniper, June, Virginia, Cedar, Lena, Nora, Freya, Astrid, Nova, Nebula, Vesper, Hemlock, Willow, Seren, Iris, Lily, Antelope, River, Maui, Aurora, Briar, Rose, Nyx, Reesie Cup, Connie & Jiggy**, and we love the celestial, historical, nature-inspired, and mythic vibes you're bringing.

They'll be wonderful additions to our growing herd, supported by the **Americana Corner Preserving America Partners** program and by people like you, all just in time for a very busy few weeks of school bookings.



SPONSORED BY
Americana Corner
★
PRESERVING AMERICA



HELLO
my name is

Help name our latest frontier family additions
"Unnamed mother and two girls"

Winter Activities: A Snapshot

1775: A Colonial Christmas

It seems like a lifetime ago, but thank you to everyone who made this event such a magical experience! We had a great time sharing 18th century holiday traditions with our community.

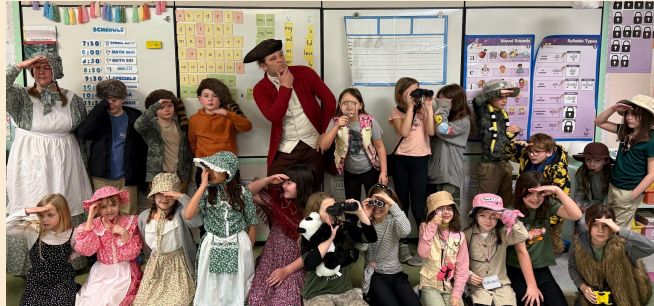
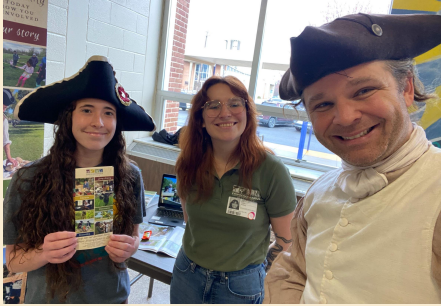
The gingerbread in the bake oven and wreath making were most popular, keeping up CI's reputation as an interactive family experience. **2026's Christmas event is already set for December 12th 2026!**

(Congrats to Catherine Stasiowski on winning the 1775 Raffle!)



Out & About, Winter Outreach

Though we still host programs and tours throughout the winter (and lots of meetings), we keep connected with the local community through our bustling outreach programs. In the last few months we've attended career fairs at **Shippensburg, James Buchanan, and Greencastle Antrim** schools, lectured at **Menno Haven's** care facility & for the **IRP**, shared our work with social clubs, attended **Ben Flory's Eagle Scout Ceremony**, and much more. For **Read Across America** week Matthew read for all of **Mercersburg Elementary K-4** (a fun book about pirate sheep for their pioneer and explorers day), we taught 300 8th graders from **GAMS** about 18th Century Medical and Surgery, and have another 300 student program lined up this week!



Latest 250th Exhibit

As we commemorate 250 years since the American Revolution, it is tempting to focus on famous names and dramatic battles. At the Conococheague Institute though, we know the struggle for independence was carried on the shoulders of ordinary people; farmers, laborers, artisans, apprentices, immigrants, men and women whose daily lives were upended by war. Here in Franklin County and across Pennsylvania's frontier, the Revolution was not an abstract political debate. It was personal, disruptive, and transformative.

Our **new exhibit in the Welsh Barrens Visitor Center** spotlights the remarkable sacrifice of the soldiers who fought for freedom, with our restored US musket as the central piece, **but also explores the paradox of liberty in the 1770's**. On the very ground where our museum now stands, enslaved individuals, Jane, Cate, Dine, Bill, Jake, and others known to us only through account books and probate records. labored on farms and in households. Their names were often reduced to entries in ledgers, assigned monetary value alongside livestock and tools. And yet they built families, sustained cultural traditions, and resisted in ways both subtle and bold. As white colonists debated natural rights, enslaved Pennsylvanians pressed a piercing question: who, truly, was entitled to freedom?



As we mark this 250th anniversary, we are invited to look beyond familiar stories of generals and declarations. The Revolution belonged to ordinary people whose lives were marked by sacrifice, contradiction, and resilience. If we had lived in that uncertain moment, when the meaning of freedom was still being fought over, where would we have stood? And how might its promises, and its limits, have shaped our own lives?

Two and a half centuries later, those questions remain as urgent as ever.

Check out this latest exhibit (and our entire collection) in the Visitor Center when you visit!

**Coming Up: 1776: Hearth, Home, and Springtime
Saturday, May 9th, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

We have an exciting year of special events planned, all themed around 1776 in celebration of the nation's 250th anniversary. Our first event takes place just before Mother's Day and highlights the vital roles women played in farming, gardening, and agriculture.

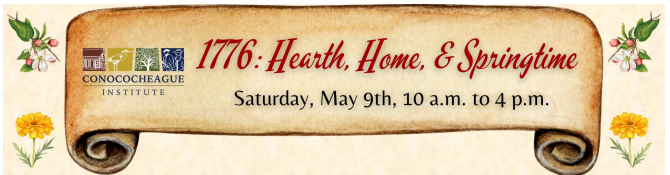
In conjunction with our animal husbandry program, we're especially excited to showcase a live demonstration of historic sheep shearing. Our Black Welsh Mountain sheep will be shorn by professional shearer **Jess Valenza**, who apprenticed under **Margaret Quinn** at the 19th-century site **Howell Living History Farm** in New Jersey. Jess will be stepping back into the 1770s for this event, and we're thrilled that our own team will have the opportunity to learn from her as well.

We're also pleased to welcome **Robert Moulard** for his first appearance at the Conococheague Institute in recent years. Fans of 18th-century music and entertainment may recognize his multi-instrumental performances and dancing puppets from **Mount Vernon, Colonial Williamsburg, and the Museum of the American Revolution**.

We're delighted to feature the incredible music of **Forbes Road Frolic** (fan favorites at CI), who will share traditional tunes such as lively jigs, laments, and period ballads with our visitors.

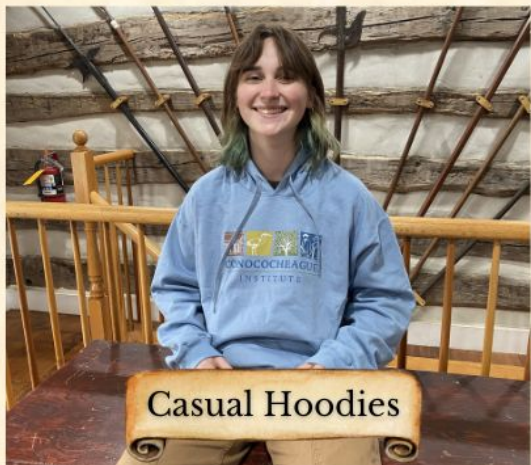
Plus, our garden and roses will be in full bloom. Guests can enjoy an animal petting area hosted by **Stouffer's Fowl Pole Farm & Rescue**, browse craft vendors like **Bouncing Goat Soap**, and relax with drinks from **Berg Brewing**, along with much more.

Don't miss out on this special event, free to the community!



Conococheague Institute Merchandise Store

Exciting news! You can now wear your love for our frontier story wherever you go. **Our new online apparel shop is officially open!** From comfy hoodies to athletic tank tops and cozy loungewear, we've created a collection that lets you show your support in style. Whether you're exploring the outdoors, running a 5k, relaxing at home, or visiting the Conococheague Institute, you can represent our mission with pride. Available online only through our Bonfire store <https://www.bonfire.com/conococheague-institute-logo-apparel/> All profits support our educational programs and help us continue sharing the stories of our frontier past.



Casual Hoodies



Athletic Shirts



Lounge Wear



Join us in giving a warm CI welcome to the newest member of our team, **Tom McQuaid!** Tom joins us as the **Historic Site Grounds and Maintenance Technician** and has already accomplished a great deal in his first week. He has been busy de-winterizing Rock Hill Farm's garden beds, preparing the grapevines for new growth, and lending a skilled hand wherever repairs are needed.



Conococheague Institute's Little Learners

Even the smallest members of our CI community can enjoy all that CI has to offer! Through this program we will explore nature concepts through story time, movement activities, and crafts Targeted to children 2-4 years old (siblings welcome)



Little Learners will take place on the *Second Thursday* of every month at 10:30am. No RSVP is required but contact visit@cimlg.org for more details. Indoor and outdoor rain or shine!

12995 Bain Road, Mercersburg, PA 17236
www.cimlg.org | (717) 328-2800 | info@cimlg.org
 A 501(c)3 Non Profit Organization

Follow our Socials!



\$5 per child for Non-Members
 Free for CI Family Members



Education Bookings, Rock Hill Farm Tours, & Private Workshops

We're almost fully booked on education bookings through to May, just like last year!

But if you have a school, homeschool co-op church, or senior group looking for a field trip contact us.

Likewise, we offer Rock Hill Farm tours year round, and are now offering Private Workshops (Archery, Baking, Hearth Cooking) for small groups. All are available on our website www.cimlg.org on the 'Book an Experience' tab or contact us for more details.

Lucas Lapole Memorial Intern Fund: Goal = \$32,000

We've started the year out strong with \$11,200 for our Annual Intern fund. That's a third of the way! Thank you the the PHMC Cultural and Historical Support Grants and Lee Davis for their continued (and increased) support to this important program. We started advertising over the winter, and have 18 candidates being interviewed this week for 5 summer positions. Donations to our intern fund ensure students have the opportunity to make real career progress, while benefiting our site and mission goals. We're always accepting rolling applications too. **Just note 'Intern' on any donation to become a supporter!**



2026 PUBLIC HISTORY PAID INTERNSHIPS THE CONOCOCHIEAGUE INSTITUTE



LOOKING TO PURSUE A CAREER IN MUSEUMS, LIVING HISTORY OR PUBLIC TEACHING? THE CONOCOCHIEAGUE INSTITUTE OFFERS PAID PUBLIC HISTORY INTERNSHIPS TO FOSTER A PASSION AND EXPERIENCE FOR CAREERS IN THESE FIELDS. CONTACT VISIT@CIMLG.ORG FOR MORE DETAILS. MUST BE 16 TO APPLY

Internships are supported by the Cultural and Historical Support grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, R. Kurtz Endowment for Early American History, Lee Davis, & John Stauffer



2026 ENVIRONMENTAL PAID INTERNSHIPS THE CONOCOCHIEAGUE INSTITUTE



LOOKING TO PURSUE A CAREER IN FORESTRY, PARKS MANAGEMENT OR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION? THE CONOCOCHIEAGUE INSTITUTE OFFERS PAID ENVIRONMENTAL INTERNSHIPS TO FOSTER A PASSION AND EXPERIENCE FOR CAREERS IN THESE FIELDS. CONTACT VISIT@CIMLG.ORG FOR MORE DETAILS

Internships are supported by the Cultural and Historical Support grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, R. Kurtz Endowment for Early American History, Lee Davis, & John Stauffer



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're always updating the exhibits, and there really is something for everyone.

Throughout the week, our staff are always on-site working, so give us a call or knock when you visit.

Conococheague Book Club: 3rd Thursday at 1pm

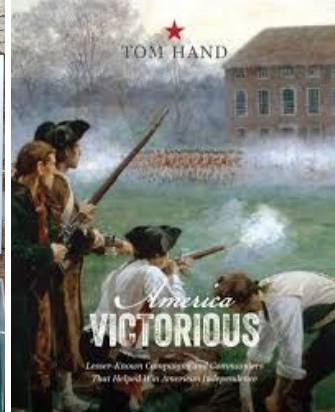
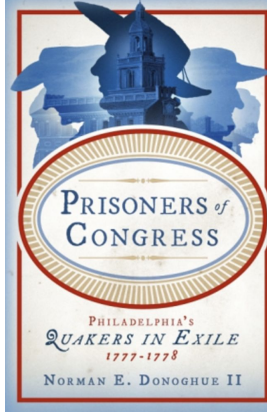
No meeting in March

April 16th - Prisoners of Congress: Philadelphia's Quakers in Exile 1777 - 1778 (2023)

by Norman E. Donoghue II

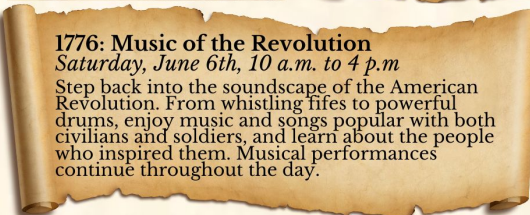
All are welcome, join us for invigorating conversation on key historic topics.

Purchase books in our gift shop, including the new book by Tom Hand: America Victorious!



1776: Hearth, Home, and Springtime
Saturday, May 9th, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Experience traditional domestic life around the hearth and home, and learn the timeless art of food production. Discover the vital roles women played in farming, gardening, and agriculture, and explore how families managed goats and sheep, with fresh born lambs and kids on our farmstead!



1776: Music of the Revolution
Saturday, June 6th, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Step back into the soundscape of the American Revolution. From whistling tunes to powerful drums, enjoy music and songs popular with both civilians and soldiers, and learn about the people who inspired them. Musical performances continue throughout the day.



1776: Harvest on the Homestead
Saturday, October 10th, 12 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Celebrate the harvest with grape stomping (pigéage) for wine, cider making, beer brewing, hearth cooking, dance, and games, then gather round our Bonfire for our special evening tradition! Special Author Talk with Tom Hand at 1 p.m. followed by CI's Annual Member meeting at 2 p.m.



1776: A Colonial Christmas
Saturday, December 12th, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Experience the sights, sounds, and flavors of an 18th-century holiday season. Watch a colonial feast being prepared, try your hand at baking traditional gingerbread, and join in the festive spirit with Wassailing and old-fashioned games. Free cookies and hot drinks during our Stocking Stuffer gift shop sale.



2026 Special Events
Celebrating America's 250th Anniversary



Our '1776' special events have some incredible presenters this year and are free to attend thanks to support from Americana Corner, F&M Trust, Middletown Valley Bank, Shady Spring Farm & the Franklin County Visitors Bureau. Don't miss out!

Around the Conococheague

Artifact & Relic Show
Sunday, April 12, 2026
2:00PM - 5:00PM
CHAMBERSBURG, PA

WILSON COLLEGE
John Stewart Memorial Library
Lenfest Learning Commons
1015 Philadelphia Ave, Chambersburg, PA 17201

FREE ADMISSION
Vendor Exhibits Welcome - Free to Participate - Register by April 1, 2026
Donations in support of the Conococheague Institute will be warmly welcomed and gratefully accepted.

CONOCOCHEAQUE INSTITUTE
30 Years of Bringing History to Life

REGISTER TODAY!

AMERICA 250 PARADE
APRIL 18TH, 2026

OVER \$5,000 IN PRIZES!

JOIN THE PARADE! Register at: ExploreFranklinCountyPA.com



12 MONTH MEMBERSHIP

PRESERVING OUR
CULTURAL AND
NATURAL RESOURCES

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Elizabeth Lillard (*President*), Sam Cathey (*Vice-President*), Bob Schwartz (*Secretary*), Selena Feng (*Treasurer*), Ellen Kinzer, Will Sheppard, Matt South, Will Slater, Derek Furry, David Ditto, Barbara Onorato

Advisory Board

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

Staff and Team

Matthew Wedd, *Executive Director*, mwedd@cimlg.org
Kori Taber, *Programs & Farmstead Manager*, visit@cimlg.org
Mikaela Mummert, *Visitor Experience Team Member*
Tom McQuaid, *Historic Site Grounds & Maintenance Technician*

Contact us

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

Phone: 717 328 2800 Email: info@cimlg.org

Website: www.cimlg.org

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<https://www.facebook.com/conococheagueinstitute/>

Instagram: [@conococheague_institute](https://www.instagram.com/conococheague_institute)

Youtube: [@coloniallivingattheconococheagueinstitute](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

Did you Know?

Our memberships are valid for 12 months from the time of purchase, and we just got NEW cards. **Check your expiration date to find out when you are due.** Our membership remains strong, with 200 families from across the country (and a few overseas). Without your dedication, we wouldn't be able to do the important work we do. Thank you for your support!



**Be a part of our 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/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,
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 Thank you!

I support the Conococheague Institute because: _____

Names for the Goats: Mother: _____ Black Girl: _____ Two-tone Girl: _____

I would like a copy of the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan mailed

I would like more information about Funded Projects and Sponsorships

I would like more information about legacy giving and bequests

I have included CI in my Estate Plans