

Sharing the Stories of Cas Walker



In 1924, Cas Walker arrived in Knoxville. He is one of 20th-century Knoxville's most famous citizens and his colorful life became some of the city's favorite urban legends, which are captured in a new book, *Cas Walker: Stories on his Life and Legend*, edited by Joshua Hodge, a graduate student in the UT Department of History who lost his two-year battle with brain cancer May 2019.

"I can't think of another city I've lived in that has a person like Cas in its collective memory,"

said Ernie Freeberg, professor and head of the history department. "Those stories, many shared in endless variation, serve as a window on Knoxville in the 20th century. He was so ubiquitous in Knoxville from the 30s through the 80s, and many who lived here feel an obvious nostalgia about his place in their lives. Others remember him as a barrier to the city's progress, and a master of a form of politics that Knoxville is better off without."

Members of the UT community gathered in Hodges Library November 5 to view rare film footage from Cas Walker's television programs. Louisa Trott, assistant professor in the UT libraries and co-founder of Tennessee Archive of Moving Image and Sound (TAMIS), helped discover and restore the collection of clips for the public. The event also paid tribute to Hodge's memory and legacy.

During his time at UT, Hodge focused his research on revealing the history of people whose lived experiences are often hard to recover. He recognized that the historical record favored those who were able to

write it - not necessarily those who live it. His work eventually led him to gathering stories of Cas Walker and recording the oral histories of those who knew the man behind the legend.

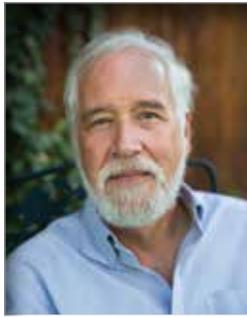
"Josh did a masterful job on this project, tracking down 20 people who knew Walker well, and gathering stories that reflect many different angles on the man's long career in Knoxville," Freeberg said. "Cas is beloved by many, while others remember him as a negative force in the city's development. Josh captured that complexity, and gathered the legends that reflect Walker's role as a grocery tycoon, a coon hunter, a populist politician and editor, and as a music promoter."

In addition to the collection of Cas Walker stories, Hodge's memory will live on in an endowment established in his honor. The Joshua S. Hodge Award will recognize the task graduate students in the UT Department of History undertake when they decide to research and recover lost voices. Hodge's research highlighted his commitment to ensuring that everyone's voice is heard.

Established by Freeberg and Max Matherne, a fellow doctoral student, the endowment preserves the memory of a young, committed UT scholar who, despite the fact that his life was cut short, was dedicated to research and history while helping future scholars reach their dreams.

"When Josh learned in July 2017 about his terminal diagnosis, he did not simply retire and give up on his work," Matherne said. "He not only continued working on his dissertation, but remained active in the historical field. He continued to submit articles for review, organize conference panels, and participate in the dissertation writing workshop, all the while working on his dissertation and the Cas Walker project."

Recipients of the Joshua S. Hodge Award will be announced annually during the Department of History awards ceremony. Learn more about how to make a contribution to this endowment at history.utk.edu.



ERNIE FREEBERG

Professor and Head
Department of History

Continuing to Educate Citizens of Our State

I am pleased to send you this fall semester update on the UT history department. We welcome three exciting new colleagues, celebrate books published, and announce another impressive slate of fellowships and awards for our outstanding faculty and graduate students.

We also mark a major milestone for the department, completion of the papers of James K. Polk, an editorial project that is completing its final volume, a major contribution to our understanding of American history that has been six decades in the making.

Our thanks to those alumni and friends who have continued their generous support for the department. Your donations help a dynamic and accomplished faculty in its mission to produce ground-breaking research, to train a new generation of professional historians, and to extend the benefits of an excellent liberal arts education to more citizens of the state.

-Ernie Freeberg
Professor and Head, Department of History

Historic Tailgate

During homecoming weekend last November, members of the history department made history when we hosted the first ever department tailgate, under a tent on the Hill. A cloudy and slightly chilly morning quickly warmed to perfect fall homecoming weather. From noon to the start of the game, alumni, current students, and faculty mingled while decked out in orange gear. Dean Lee and Provost Manderschied both stopped by. Faculty and graduate students' kids took over the lawn. Several hundred hot dogs were eaten. Gallons of apple cider were drunk. History department goodies were handed out. A good time was had by all.

And we did it again at Homecoming this fall. This time, we convened in front of the stately walls of old Dunford Hall, several hours before game time Saturday, November 2. We enjoyed snacks, games, and kept warm on Tore Olsson's badminton court.



China at the Knoxville World's Fair

The 1982 World's Fair left a lasting impression on the Knoxville community. In fall 2018, the history department sponsored an event to commemorate the participation of the People's Republic of China at this World's Fair. Organized by Associate Professor Shellen Wu and hosted by the East Tennessee History Society, this event was well attended by members of the UT community and the general public. The audience learned the interesting history behind what became the most popular attraction at the fair. Invited speakers added a personal dimension to this history by reflecting on their participation and sharing their memories.

According to Wu, China was the most popular attraction at the fair and played no small part in putting the fair in the black, even turning a profit of \$57. From May 1 to October 31, 1982, 11.4 million visitors came to the fair, most of whom waited in long lines to enter the China Pavilion. Many visitors were intensely curious about China, closed for decades to foreigners. The exhibit featured a piece of the Great Wall (19 bricks to be precise), as well as a number of the recently excavated terra cotta warriors from Qin emperor's tombs in Xi'an. Chinese artists and artisans worked in the pavilion and produced handcrafted items that were sold to visitors.

As the audience learned, the decision to bring China to Knoxville was due to the efforts of Bo Roberts, at the time president and CEO of the World's Fair (the organization that oversaw the effort was the Knoxville International Energy Exposition Incorporated, or KIEE). Roberts talked about how he came to focus on bringing China to the World's Fair once the Soviet Union pulled out. The Soviet Union had already begun construction on what was to be the largest pavilion and an anchor for the World's Fair when they invaded Afghanistan in 1979. President Carter's strong response led to the Soviet retaliation and withdrawal from the Fair. Along with the Soviet Union, a number of other Eastern European countries also pulled out. With the loss of the anchor pavilion, it became essential for the success of the Fair to attract Chinese participation.

Roberts, along with other colleagues, made multiple trips to China and met with officials to convince them to sign on. At the time, China had no experience with the World's Fair. One of the audience members who worked for the Fair accompanied a Chinese delegation to visit previous sites at Seattle and San Francisco. KIEE contacted politicians, including Senator Baker and former President Carter, who each wrote letters to the Chinese ambassador and top

Chinese leaders to press the case. KIEE also put up \$1 million to help with costs for the Chinese pavilion. Or as Roberts put it, "the best money we ever spent."

During the event, attendees also had the opportunity to hear from local members of the Knoxville community who likewise shared their memories of this historic event. For instance, Knoxville History Project Director Jack Neely had worked at the Fair as a part of the security detail. He talked about his experience at the Fair, corralling the crowd and having to inform an extremely disappointed crowd that because of some building issues, the China Pavilion had to be closed for a day. Jack Neely read a short selection from the work of a Chinese journalist who spent two years in the US in the early 1980s and spent some time in Knoxville at the Fair. The journalist, Liu Zongren, subsequently published a memoir of his time in the US, *Two Years in the Melting Pot*. Liu wrote that "The Chinese Pavilion was the best part of the whole fair; many visitors had to wait outside the gate for two hours to get in....For all the Chinese staff, except the delegation head, it was their first time abroad."



Welcome New Faculty



FACULTY PROFILE:
Robert Bland

Robert Bland joins the UT Department of History as an assistant professor after having been a faculty member in history at St. John's University in Queens. His research explores late nineteenth- and early twentieth century African American life and culture. In particular, his work investigates the legacy of the Fifteenth Amendment, the racial politics of disaster relief, and the intellectual history of the Gullah-Geechee.

His upcoming book project, *'Requiem for Reconstruction': The South Carolina Lowcountry and the Afterlife of Radical Republicanism*, follows a group of politicians, writers, educators, and intellectuals, both academic and vernacular, who sought to use the history of Reconstruction to defend black suffrage, make claims for disaster relief, establish schools, and, ultimately, contest anti-black academic narratives about black progress in the postbellum South.

Bland earned his PhD from the University of Maryland in 2017. When not in the archives, he enjoys playing pick-up basketball, travelling inordinately long distances to hear rappers from the nineties, and trying street food in different cities.



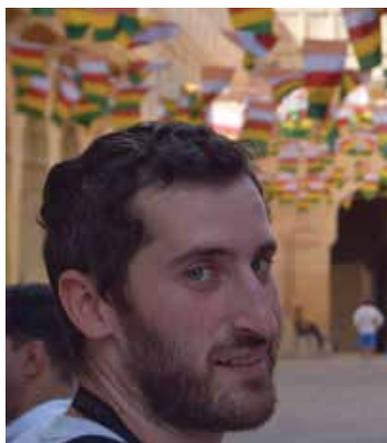
FACULTY PROFILE:
Susan Lawrence

Susan Lawrence joined the department last year as a full professor. She comes to us from The Ohio State University. She received her PhD in the history of medicine from the University of Toronto, Canada, after majoring in mathematics at Pomona College. She made the move with her husband, David Manderscheid, the new Provost at UT.

Her research interests range broadly in the history of British and American medicine. Lawrence's first book, *Charitable Knowledge: Hospital Pupils and Practitioners in Eighteenth Century London*, explored the emergence of the modern medical profession in and around London's general hospitals. Her next book, *Privacy and the Past: Research, Laws, Archives, Ethics*, focuses on the history of medicine and the effect of privacy laws.

Lawrence continues her fascination with the history of anatomical dissection in medical education with the history of the rise of whole-body donation in the United States. Why did some Americans—as early as the 1870s—want to give their bodies to science and education when for hundreds of years dissection had been associated with post-mortem punishment, poverty, and horror? By the 1970s, most bodies used in teaching have been donated, in remarkable acts of corporeal philanthropy.

When not teaching, researching, and writing, Lawrence loves to read mysteries, sew her own clothes, and play with their two Abyssinian cats.



FACULTY PROFILE:
Victor Petrov

Victor Petrov joins the department as an assistant professor of East European history. He received his PhD from Columbia University in 2017 and spent the year before Knoxville as a Max Weber Fellow at EUI in Florence, Italy (so he is still looking for recommendations on good local wines). His research explores the histories of the Cold War, the modern Balkans, technology and its intersection with politics, especially as it pertains to the dreaming up and failures of utopias.

His current book project, *Cyberia: Bulgarian Computers & The World 1967-1989*, explores the socialist world's biggest computer industry and weaves together the stories of communists, engineers, spies, philosophers, science fiction writers, and anyone else that catches his eye. To do so, he uses both written and oral sources from three countries (Bulgaria, Russia, and India). This has sometimes involved, inadvertently, going to the archives in an Indian Army jeep, or rooting around in half-abandoned buildings, which is of course the best part of any research.

When not pursuing esoteric research, he likes playing music - badly, but with gusto - spending time in mountains, reading bad science fiction (he has, thankfully, abandoned any dreams of writing it), and finding the time to explore new places.

Faculty Highlights

Margaret Andersen published an article in the *Journal of Contemporary History* and won a research grant from the American Philosophical Society. She has been conducting research in France and Morocco for her current book project.

JP Dessel was elected president of the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem, which is the oldest American overseas research institute dating to 1900.

Nikki Eggers has been conducting research in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Her work takes her to a remote former internment camp near the town of Kasaji where, during the colonial era, the Belgians detained followers of the religious community known as Kitawala (the subject of her current book project). There she interviewed descendants of the former prisoners, some of whom were born in the camp.

The Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR) awarded **Daniel Feller** its Distinguished Service Award “for outstanding contributions to the work of the organization and to the study of early American history.” In 2018 the Papers of Andrew Jackson project, which Feller directs, received major federal and private grants to accelerate completion of the volumes covering Jackson’s presidency.

In 2018, **Laura Nenzi**, along with scholars of early modern and modern Japan the world over, reflected upon the 150th anniversary of the Meiji Restoration (1868). She was a guest of the “Meiji at 150” podcast and traveled to Singapore to give a paper titled “Tokugawa v. Meiji: A Nocturnal Interpretation.” She also taught a new undergraduate class—The Samurai: Fact, Fiction, Fantasy. “You thought you knew a thing or two about the samurai? Think again.”



Tore Olsson’s first book, *Agrarian Crossings*, received five national and international prizes in agricultural, American foreign relations, and Latin American history. He delivered public lectures on the book at MIT, the University of Toronto, Washington University in St. Louis, the University of Colorado, and the University of Georgia. In the first week of 2019, he published an op-ed on President Trump’s proposed border wall in the *Washington Post*. His accomplishments were recognized with the University of Tennessee’s Early Career Research Award from the College of Arts and Sciences.

Sara Ritchey published two peer-reviewed essays, “The Sacrificial Herb: Gathering Prayers in Late Medieval Pharmacy” and “The Wound’s Presence and Bodily Absence: The Experience of God in a Fourteenth-Century manuscript.” She also received acknowledgement from the University of Tennessee’s Panhellenic Society with the Teacher Recognition for Empowerment, which recognizes efforts to “empower women in our local communities to strive for excellence.” This year she won two of the most prestigious fellowships in the humanities, from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Council of Learned Societies.

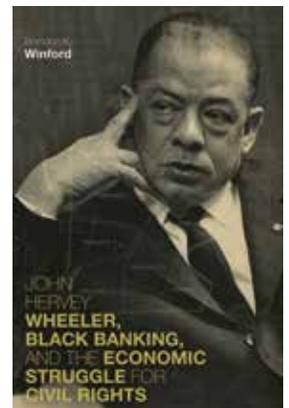
Faculty Bookshelf

Literate Community in Early Imperial China: The Northwest During Han Times
Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019
Charles Sanft

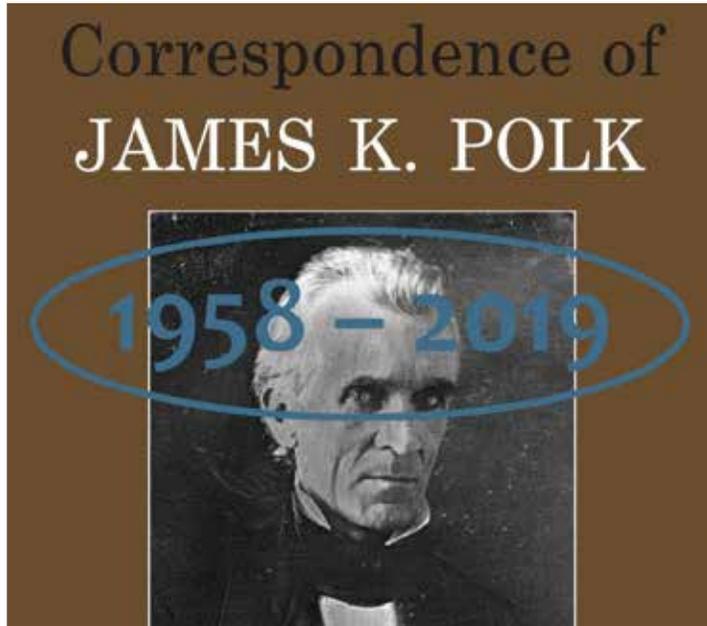
Examining writing from China’s northwestern border, Charles Sanft offers fresh insights into the role of text in shaping society and culture during the Han period (206/2 BCE–220 CE). Documents from abandoned military outposts — wooden strips and other nontraditional textual materials such as silk—recorded the lives and activities of military personnel and the people around them. Sanft explores their functions and uses, including signaling across distances, brewing beer and evaluating swords, and letters exchanged by low-ranking officials. These sources reveal that a much broader section of early society had meaningful interactions with text than previously believed, which directly challenges long-standing assumptions about the limited influence of text and literacy had on early Chinese culture and society. More broadly, Sanft’s new book makes important contributions to the study of literacy and to the global history of non-elites.

John Hervey Wheeler, Black Banking, and the Economic Struggle for Civil Rights
University Press of Kentucky, 2019
Brandon Winford

In his new book, Winford combines black business and civil rights history to explain how economic concerns shaped the goals and objectives of the black freedom struggle. Winford focuses on the black business activism of banker and civil rights lawyer John Hervey Wheeler (1908-1978). Wheeler graduated from Morehouse College in 1929, and then moved to Durham, North Carolina, where he landed a job as a bank teller with the Mechanics and Farmers Bank (M&F Bank), one of the nation’s largest black-owned banks. In 1952, he became president of M&F Bank, a sister institution to the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company (N.C. Mutual). Between the 1950s and 1960s, Wheeler was the Tar Heel State’s most influential black power broker and among the top civil rights figures in the South. Winford’s new book examines one of the leading black businesspeople in the United States in one of the country’s most well-known “Black Wall Streets.”



Department Completes James K. Polk Project



Few individuals have impacted the history of North America as visibly as James K. Polk. As president (1845–49), this Tennessean oversaw the Mexican War and the US acquisition of California and the Southwest. His letters comprise a crucial collection of primary sources. For more than a century, using them required travel to numerous archives and scrutiny of barely legible handwriting. In 1958, Herbert Weaver began a project at Vanderbilt to locate and publish the letters. In 1987, the Polk Project moved to the UT Department of History, where it has been led consecutively by Wayne Cutler, Tom Chaffin, and Michael Cohen.

This fall, Cohen completed work on the 14th and final volume of the *Correspondence of James K. Polk*. Published by the University of Tennessee Press, the series features annotated transcriptions of more than 5,000 letters written by or to Polk between 1817 and 1849. Forty-three faculty, staff, and student editors have worked on the project. Contributors to volume 14 include our department's alumni Bradley Nichols and Phillip Gaul and current graduate students Ryan Gesme and Alex Spanjer.

Now easily accessible, the letters serve scholars and students in diverse areas of US history. Polk's correspondents range from Andrew Jackson to Brigham Young to a female textile worker in Lowell, Massachusetts, to a free African American who feared being sold into slavery. Topics range from Texas annexation and the

Mexican War to technological innovation and Indian removal to the expansion of slavery and the rights of religious minorities. Letters include those from an enslaved blacksmith, owned by Polk, who had bet on his master's election; from a teacher whose parents had "brought us up Politicians" in a society that largely excluded women from government; and from "The Devil"—clearly a detractor—who proclaimed Polk a "bloody hound of hell" and a "scorpion of the regions of the damned."

On April 12–13 the department celebrated the project's completion. Ninety scholars, students, and enthusiasts gathered at the East Tennessee Historical Society for James K. Polk and His Time: A Conference Finale to the Polk Project. Speakers and session chairs included our own Thomas Coens, Aaron Crawford, Daniel Feller, Lorraine Dias Herbon, and Laura-Eve Moss. They also included Oxford and UCLA's Daniel Walker Howe, as well as Penn State's Amy S. Greenberg, who delivered the keynote address on first lady Sarah Childress Polk. Charles Sellers, author of *The Market Revolution* and a Polk biography, sent enthusiastic remarks to be read. Cohen is editing a volume of selected conference papers. Broadcast on C-SPAN 3, conference sessions can be viewed at c-span.org.

Volume 14 covers the last year of Polk's presidency and his brief retirement. One of few presidents who chose to serve only one term, he died of cholera three months after leaving the White House. UT Press will publish the volume in fall 2020. In the meantime, all earlier volumes are available both in print and, thanks to Newfound Press, online. You can find them, plus an early edition of volume 14—with most of the letters but without the annotation—through the Polk Project's website, polkproject.utk.edu.



A toast to editor Michael Cohen, on the completion of the James K. Polk Project.

The outstanding work done by our graduate students was recognized by many fellowships and awards this past year. Congratulations on your success!

Alyssa Culp received a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) short-term research grant and a travel research grant from the Central European History Society.

Elizabeth Eubanks received a UT College of Arts and Sciences Dissertation Completion Semester Fellowship.

Tess Evans received a UT Humanities Center Dissertation Fellowship and the Newberry Library's Jack Miller Center Fellowship to conduct research this summer.

Ryan Gesme received a Fulbright Fellowship, DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) long-term fellowship, and an American-Scandinavian Foundation Fellowship.

Eric Gubelman received a UT Humanities Center Dissertation Fellowship.

Lorraine Herbon received a Gunther Barth Fellowship by the Bancroft Library at the University of California in Berkeley to pursue her research on Jessie Benton Fremont.

Yiyun Huang (Malcolm) received a Frances E. Malamy Research Fellow for eight weeks at the James Duncan Phillips Library in Salem, Massachusetts. In July 2019, Huang returned from his travels abroad in China. A PhD candidate, Huang studies the 18th-century tea trade between China and America. Funding provided by UT Humanities Center helped make a trip this summer possible.

Michael Lovell received a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) award for summer language study in Berlin at Humbolt University.

Thomas Maurer received a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) Exchange Program Scholarship.

Matthew Menarchek received the McClung award for the best article in the 2018 *Journal of East Tennessee History*. Editor Aaron Purcell presented the award at the annual banquet of the East Tennessee Historical Society.

Minami Nishioka received the Social Science Research Council, Mellon International Dissertation Research Fellowship; the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, Samuel Flagg Bemis Dissertation Grant, the Organization of American Historians, Travel Grant; the Konosuke Matsushita Memorial Foundation, Research Grant; and the New England Regional Fellowship Consortium Grant.

Laura Roesch received a UT Humanities Center Dissertation Fellowship.

For 2019-20 a number of our graduate students have been awarded funding through the Marco Institute:

- **Jordan Amspacher**, Paul Barrette student travel/ research award for dissertation research in France
- **Stacie Beach**, MRST GTAship
- **Kelsey Blake**, Haslam public humanities fellowship
- **Alexandra Garnhart-Bushakra**, Haslam dissertation fellowship: "If Life Were Verse: Masculinity and Memories of Violence in the First Crusade Narratives"

CONGRATULATIONS RECENT GRADUATES

Doctor of Philosophy degrees awarded in 2019

Elizabeth Eubanks, dissertation: *Benevolent Patriarchs: Gender and Charity in Colonial America*

Joshua Hodge, dissertation: *Alabama's Public Wilderness: Reconstruction, Natural Resources, and the End of the Southern Commons, 1866-1905*

Susan Kennedy (Sister John Catherine Kennedy), dissertation: *You Have Made No Mistake in Seeking to Save Souls Among us': Catholic Evangelization Among Black Nashvillians, 1898-1908*

Kathryn (Katie) Kleinkopf, dissertation: *A Second Skin: Ascetics as Body-Places in Late Antique Christianity*

Eric Lager, dissertation: *The Transformation of a Confederate State: War and Politics on the South Carolina Home Front, 1861-1862*

Max Matherne, dissertation: *The Jacksonian Reformation: Political Patronage and Republican Identity*

Master of Arts degrees awarded in 2019

John Hugens
Eric Muirhead

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CAS WALKER STORIES PROJECT

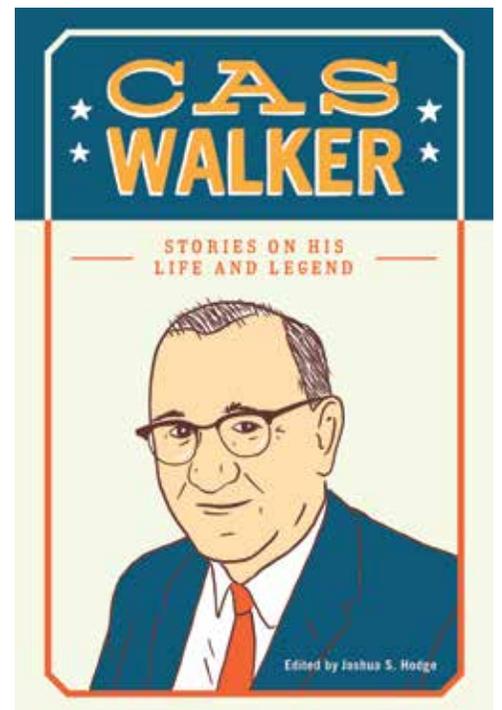
The Cas Walker Stories Project gathers the tales and legends told about one of 20th century Knoxville's most famous citizens. The project has recorded oral histories with many who knew Cas Walker, as friends, employees, and political rivals or allies, and collected others from the public. Learn more at caswalkerstories.utk.edu.



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FALL / 2019

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
NEWSLETTER

FOOTnotes