

# Fort Defiance

## Chronicle

Fall Issue

October 2022

**Fort Defiance**  
**P.O. Box 686**  
**Lenoir, NC 28645**  
**828-758-1671**

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### Board Of Directors

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Nell Fisher

**Secretary**

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Stephen Rauchfuss

Doug Davis

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Monty Minton

### Site Director

Bob Myers

### Newsletter

### Committee

John Hawkins

Sandra Watts

Kelly Coffey

Barbara Freiman

 **MEMBERS ONLY** 

The Fort Defiance Board of Directors would like to notify the “Friends of Fort Defiance” of the annual membership meeting on October 15, 2022, beginning at 1:00 at Fort Defiance. Food and beverages will be served. Invitations have been mailed to all members. Those planning to attend should RSVP by calling 828-758-1671 or email [fortdefiancenc@gmail.com](mailto:fortdefiancenc@gmail.com). Please RSVP not later than October 5.

Members will be invited to ask questions, offer suggestions, and learn ways they can be involved .

Memberships are on a calendar-year basis. Those wishing to renew for 2023 can do so at the annual meeting. See page 6 for details.

Come for a time of fellowship and information.



### **New Site Director**

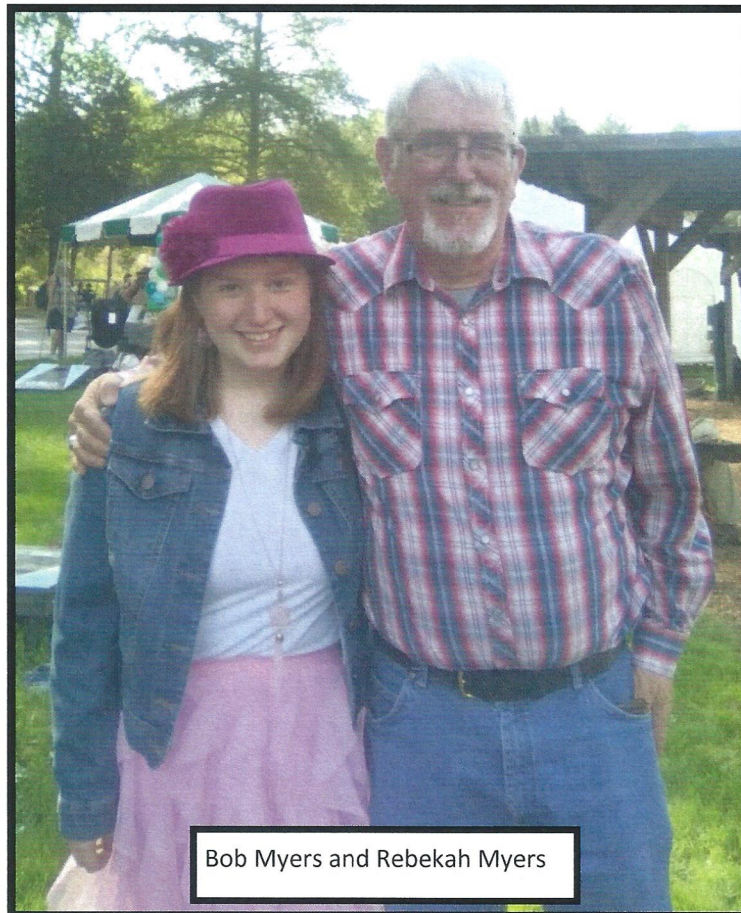
#### **Bob Myers**

Fort Defiance would like to welcome the new site director Bob Myers, a native of Stokes County, NC who now resides in Wilkes County, NC. He is married to Carole Myers, and they have three children. Bob is retired after 28 years with the North Carolina Forestry Service. His last station was at Rendezvous Mountain in Wilkes County. He has served in the pastoral ministry since 1999 and has ministered in Christian Music since 1969. Bob states "I look forward to being a part of the restoration, preservation and a part of the story of this historical landmark".

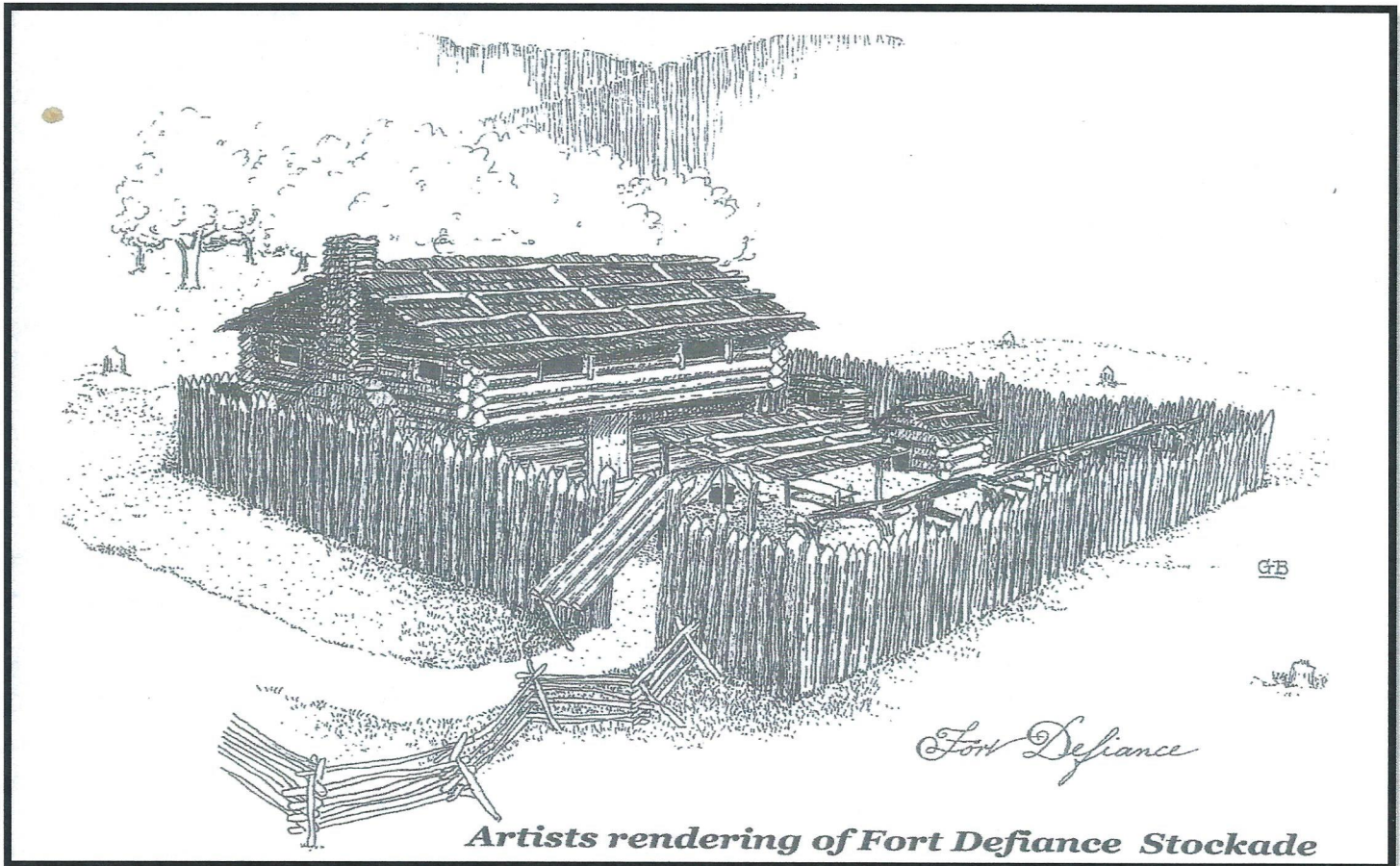
### **New Volunteer**

#### **Rebekah Myers**

Rebekah is the daughter of the new site director, Bob Myers. Rebekah is 15 years old and currently in the 11th grade pursuing studies in American History, bible history, singing, writing and painting. She has worked with the Overmountain Victory Trail since she was six years old helping with living history days. Her many talents include playing guitar, mandolin, spoons and a little fiddle, and has performed Christian and Blue Grass music since she was three years old. Her goal is to become a history major in college. She says "I look forward to the restoration of the house and getting deeper into its history".



Bob Myers and Rebekah Myers



## WHERE'S THE FORT?

By John Hawkins

It is not unusual for a visitor to Fort Defiance to ask, "Where's the fort?" With the name of the site being what it is, people expect to see a stockade

At one point there was a stockade. It was one of a network of forts built along the frontier for protection of the settlers in the event of an Indian raid. The forts were not military installations with soldiers attached, but places of refuge in times of need.

Nancy Alexander states in *Here Will I Dwell* that the fort was built in 1769. However, that was probably the year that the government issued orders for the forts to be built. According to William Guess's pension request, the fort was not built until a few years afterward.

At the time Fort Defiance was built, it would have been in Surry County, but it became part of Wilkes County at the formation of the latter county in 1778. Some of the other forts in the area were Dobbs in present-day Iredell County, Cathey in present-day McDowell. Grider (or Crider) in the town of Lenoir on the site of the former Lenoir High School, is in what was then Burke County.

*Here Will I Dwell* by Nancy Alexander states: "J. M Spainhour, Indian authority, stated that these forts were stockades, constructed of logs about twenty-five feet long, which were halved, and the edges trimmed to fit the adjoining ones. He added, 'A ditch five feet deep was dug in the ground and the timbers standing erect with the flat side out were securely packed in the ground. They form openings, one on each side and the end, through which they passed pins into the adjoining logs near the top, the lower end loose and even with the surface of the ground. The lower end could be moved either out or in and propped for ingress or egress, and could be securely fastened, when necessary, from the inside. Loopholes were cut in the timbers, on a level with the eye, through which they could watch the enemies' approach and fire on them when they came within reach. Inside of this enclosure log buildings were built and covered, in which they slept by turns, a strong guard on duty when danger was anticipated.'"

Maurice York, in his 1979 dissertation, "The Many Faces of Fort Defiance," states: "During the late eighteenth century the valley also was noted for the presence of Cherokee Indians hostile to the encroaching whites. White inhabitants built Fort Defiance about 1775 as a means of protection. They fled to the wooden structure (located on the edge of a precipice overlooking the 'Fort Creek' on the south side of the Yadkin) as soon as danger from Indians was suspected and remained there for varying periods of time until the likelihood of attack subsided."

In 1782, William Lenoir purchased two adjoining plantations on opposite sides of the Yadkin River. The more valuable of these places was located on the north side of the river immediately below the mouth of Buffalo Creek and was bought from William Snoddy of Washington County (now Tennessee), who may previously have lived on it. The other place across the river was purchased from Snoddy's brother-in-law, Joseph McCorkle of Rowan County. The family first lived in a log house, probably built by William Snoddy, on "Old House Hill." Because the fort was a known landmark in an otherwise remote area, it was a point of reference for Lenoir who used the name for his house and lands.

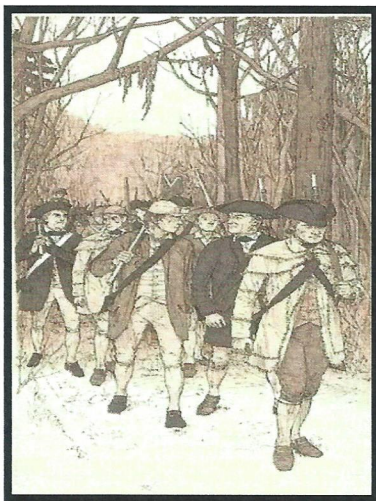
By the time William Lenoir moved to the area, the stockade may have fallen into disuse. Even with his penchant for detail, Lenoir did not mention the fort. It seems to have had a short life span—approximately a decade. Despite its brief tenure, it has not been forgotten.

William Guess, Jr., of Pendleton, South Carolina, states in his Revolutionary War pension that he helped build the fort in the summer of 1777 when he was fifteen years of age. It was built under the supervision of Elijah Isaacs, who was captain of the militia district. There are no known records nor oral stories of the fort ever being used by the settlers for protection from Indians. W. W. Scott in *The Annals of Caldwell County* states that soldiers on the way from Wilkes to Kings Mountain "reached Fort Defiance." Since he specifically states that the men did camp at Grider's Fort, it implies that they merely passed by but did not camp at Fort Defiance.

While some have suggested the fort was across the Yadkin on the Snoddy property, two deeds make reference to the "Fort Branch" being on the McCorkle property, which is verified by York's writing. Tradition says the fort was where the Lenoir family cemetery is located.

As a general rule, when a stockade is not a military installation, the word "fort" follows the name instead of preceding it; however, in the case of Fort Defiance, "Fort" always seems to precede the name. How it acquired the name, Fort Defiance, is not known. Some claim to have seen references to it being called Isaac's Fort, which would seem logical since Elijah Isaacs supervised the building. This writer has never seen those references.

When visitors ask "Where's the fort?" they are given the few details that are known. Then they are pointed to the house whose name serves as a reminder of former times.



In September 1780, the Wilkes and Surry Militia marched up the Yadkin River on their way to join other forces who would fight at Kings Mountain. Whether they encamped at the fort or merely passed by is open to speculation.

Lenoir, a captain during the Revolutionary War, helped to raise more than 200 men for the Battle of King's Mountain, the turning point in the Revolutionary War.

**Summer Activities**



**First Baptist Church of Morganton's Day Care**

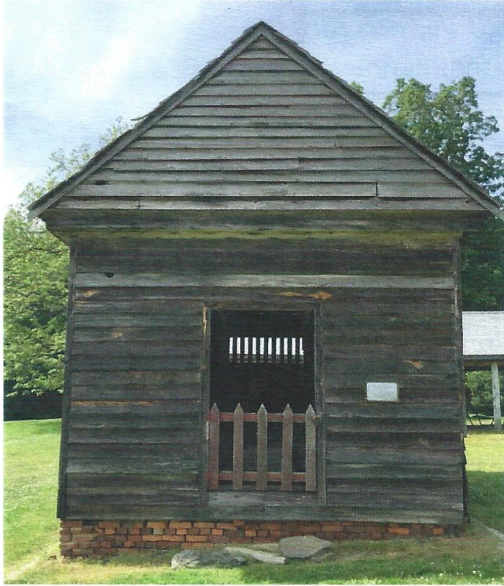


**Lunch & Learn**



**Grace Ridge Retirement Center of  
Morganton**

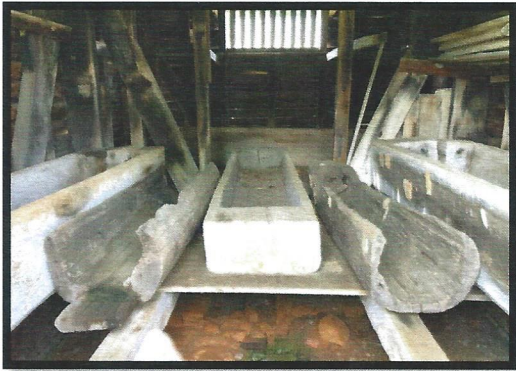
The summer was busy with what turned into a series of Lunch & Learn Programs. There were a total of five. Attendance for these programs numbered about 150 visitors. The Fort was also visited by group of 14 children from the First Baptist Church of Morganton's day care. The children got to tour the house, shuck and grind corn, walked the grounds and was entertained by board member Doug Davis, who played several different instruments. Groups from Crossroads Community Church, and Grace Ridge Retirement Center also visited.



### Original 1792 Smoke House

#### A very important feature of every frontier homestead

- The main purpose of the smokehouse was not to produce cold smoke to improve taste, but to preserve the meat, so it would last for a longer period of time. Preservation was achieved by salt curing and prolonged smoking. The winter weather provided natural refrigeration while the meat was going through the curing process.
- Meat would be cut into relatively thin, lean strips, immersed briefly in a salt solution and hung over a fire to absorb the smoke flavoring as it dried—slowly. Occasionally meat might be smoked without a salt solution, especially if the type of wood burned had distinctive flavoring of its own. Once the process was complete, the meat would then be stored in the building for sometimes up to a year or more.
- On either side of the smoke house and in the middle are three original salt boxes used to help cure the meat.
- The two hollowed-out logs on either side of the salt box were used to bring water to the summer kitchen from a stream 90-100 yards away in 1816.



### Board Highlights

- ◆ Members present—Tina Triplett, Monty Minton, Ike Forester, Doug Davis, Stephen Rauchfuss, Sandra Watts, Nell Fisher and Bill Karr and site director Bob Myers.
- ◆ Monty Minton had samples of the various types of roofing material for the board to consider. After discussing the pro's and con's of the different types of roofing, the decision was to purchase western red cedar singles. Once a decision was reached, the board voted to go ahead and order the roofing material. Bids for the installation of the shingles have been received.
- ◆ Lumber for the siding of the house is finished and has been delivered.
- ◆ Estimates for repair to the windows has begun.
- ◆ Upgrades to the Visitor Center continues. New items for purchase in the Visitor Center have been ordered and received and are now on display. Painting of the interior of the Visitor Center is still scheduled for the fall.
- ◆ Old fire pit has been removed from the picnic shelter.
- ◆ Date for Annual Membership Meeting was set for October 15, 2022.

# FRIENDS OF FORT DEFIANCE

Your support is vitally important to the operation of Fort Defiance. THANK YOU

The following members have joined for 2022:

## Patriot/Individual

Karen Barlow-Goodsell (in memory of Becky Forester)  
Oscar L. Doberiner  
Wanda Prince  
Karen Dickerson

## Militia/Family

Betty Buss  
Dottie Darsie  
Lisa Holsclaw (In memory of revolutionary ancestor Colonel Isaac Lee)

## Lieutenant

### Captain/Patron

Steven Rauchfuss & Lynn Hall (In memory of Hal and Joyce Hall and Art and Mary Rauchfuss)  
Monty & Brenda Combs  
Neil D & Jo T. Beach  
Chuck Forester  
Eric & Pamela Helton  
Steve McCord  
John O. Hawkins  
Tina Triplett  
Sandra Watts  
Jerry & Millie Brooks  
William & Denise Howard  
Mary Kincaid  
Lucy F. McCarl

Jeanette Jacobb

## Colonel/ Sponsor

Samuel L. & Sandra B. Ramsey  
Monte & Donna Minton  
James Pennell

## General/ Benefactor

Building Lab. LLC  
Barbara Freiman  
C. Yorke Lawson

## Matching Funds Contributors

Steve and Jean Branch  
Eliza Bishop  
Liza Plaster  
Monte & Brenda Combs  
Joe & Francis Delk  
Brenda Bernhardt  
Mike Bernhardt  
Myra A. Dickson  
C. Yorke Lawson

## Specified Donations

Covington Foundation (Roof)  
Stevens Family Foundation (Roof)  
Bernhardt Furniture Foundation (Upgrade Visitor Center)  
Hogan Family Foundation (Visitor Center)

Please become a "Friend of Fort Defiance". Memberships are available for individuals, families, and corporations who are looking to support local history and tourism. Each level of membership comes with perks when visiting Fort Defiance. For example, free admission when visiting on regular days of operation, discounts for special event admission, discounts in the gift shop and discounts on ground rentals. Each member will receive a membership card and a copy of the bi-monthly newsletter via mail or email.

Fort Defiance, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit organization. Anyone wanting to become a member of the "Friends of Fort Defiance" should send a check made payable to Fort Defiance, Inc. and mail it along with the membership form to P. O. Box 686, Lenoir, NC 28645.

Contact Fort Defiance at [fortdefiancenc@gmail.com](mailto:fortdefiancenc@gmail.com) or call 828-758-1671.

-----Detach here-----

_____ Patriot/Individual	\$20-39
_____ Militia/Family	\$40-74
Family is defined as two parents and their dependent children.	
_____ Lieutenant/Supporter	\$75-99
_____ Captain/Patron	\$100-499
_____ Colonel/Sponsor	\$500-999
_____ General/Benefactor	\$1000-up

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_