



Fort Defiance *Chronicle*



Winter Issue

February 2024

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

fortdefiancenc@gmail.com

historicfortdefiancenc.org

Board Of Directors

Sandra Watts

President

Nell Fisher

Secretary

Ike Forester

Treasurer

Bill Karr

Bob Kogut

Stephen Rauchfuss

Doug Davis

Tina Triplett

Monty Minton

John Fletcher Church

Site Director

Gabe Pipes

Newsletter

Committee

John Hawkins

Sandra Watts

Kelly Coffey

Barbara Freiman

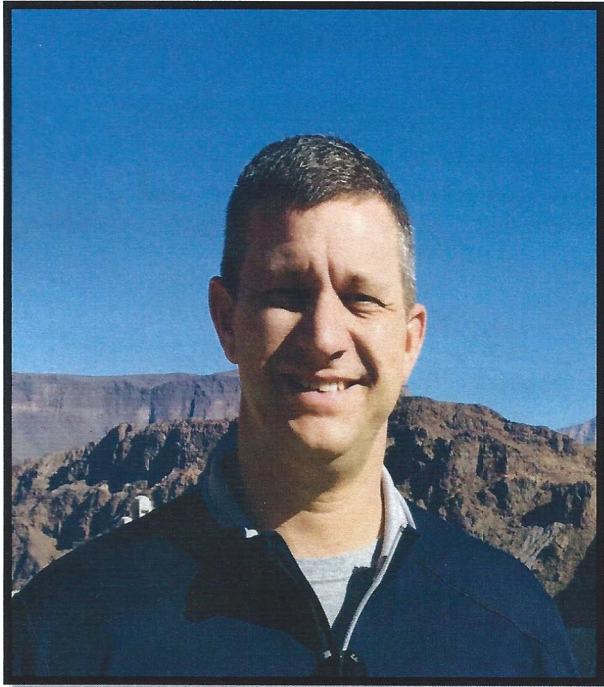
Lenoir's Rangers Return in March



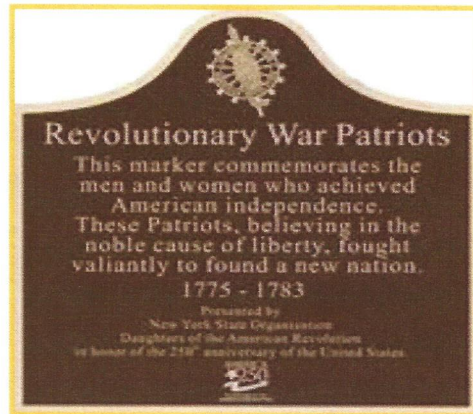
Fort Defiance will host Lenoir's Rangers, a group of local reenactors from Davidson's Fort in Old Fort, North Carolina from March 23rd and 24th. They will be displaying period camping, as well as, demonstrating muskets and long rifles. Additionally, they plan to reenact the Skirmish of Cane Creek at **2:00 pm** on the **23rd**. The skirmish took place on September 12th, 1780 in the Cane Creek of Burke County pitting the Provincials and Tory Militia of Patrick Ferguson against the rebel forces encamped there. Admission is \$10.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children ages 6 to 14. Children 5 and under are free. This price covers the main event and a tour of the home of William Lenoir. **The event will run from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm.**



New Site Director



Fort Defiance is excited to welcome Gabe Pipes as the new Site Director. Gabe is originally from Hudson, North Carolina and graduated from South Caldwell High School. He enlisted in the U.S. Army where he retired after twenty-two years of service as a Human Resources Sergeant. His most recent assignment in the Army was as the First Sergeant of the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program. While serving in the Army, Gabe attained a Liberal Arts degree from Troy University. Gabe has a love of all things history and enjoys reading historical biographies. His hobbies include golf, travel, and watching college sports. He currently lives in Valdese on his small farm where he raises barnyard animals. Gabe has two grown children and two who are currently in high school. He is very excited about joining the Fort Defiance community.



Tucker's Barn DAR to Install Revolutionary War Patriots Marker

The Tucker's Barn Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution has applied for and received funding for a grant to place a marker commemorating Revolutionary War Patriots by the entrance to the Fort Defiance Visitor's Center to "promote education, historic preservation, and patriotism." The marker will be the first of its kind in Caldwell County and will help to commemorate America's patriot ancestors at the upcoming 250th anniversary of the nation's founding. Remaining installation expenses for the marker will be sought by the Tucker's Barn DAR utilizing donations, fundraising, and community sponsorships.

Fort Defiance Nut Grove Likely Included Black Walnut

by Kelly Coffey

Records indicate that William Lenoir planted what he called a “nut grove” somewhere on the Fort Defiance property. We don’t know specifically what type of nuts he grew, but almost certainly a native black walnut tree (*Juglans nigra*) would have been included. Imagining a nut grove without black walnut would be like planting a fruit orchard without apple trees. It was a staple nut of the time and valued even more for its wood.



The native range of the black walnut extends throughout the eastern United States. It is not a rare tree, but neither is it plentiful, hardly ever being found in pure stands. Most seedlings grow from nuts that squirrels bury and forget. They grow fast, as much as three feet the first year and even more the second. A tree starts producing seeds (i.e. nuts) when just a few years old, but it takes almost 30 years to yield a significant quantity in one season.

Black walnut competes against other plants by producing a toxic chemical that is lethal to certain species such as white pine, apple, and some garden vegetables. Conversely, the tree is found to be beneficial to other plants such as black raspberry and bluegrass. An Ohio State University study found that cattle gained more weight in a pasture with black walnuts than in a control pasture.

Black walnut nutmeats come encased in a shell, which is covered with a husk. Husks are notorious for staining anything they come in contact with, but for centuries they have been put to good use as a dark dye for clothing and other items. When I was a boy, I heard a revival preacher tell the story of his mother husking and shelling black walnuts to sell the nutmeats at the local country store to pay for his seminary training. He described her hands being calloused and stained from hours toiling at the task. It was a bit melodramatic, but nevertheless a good illustration of the value of black walnut and how our ancestors monetized an abundant and free natural resource.

Usually the first thing that comes to mind when black walnut is mentioned (besides the nuts) is high quality furniture. Before 1750, most fine furniture was made from the wood. After 1750, mahogany became fashionable, but still didn’t totally replace black walnut. The wood has a satiny surface and it’s stable—it doesn’t warp or shrink and it’s hard to break or splinter. Even black walnut veneer is highly desirable. At one time, furniture manufacturer Henredon, with plants in Burke and Mitchell Counties, was the world’s largest maker of black walnut veneer furniture.

What might come as a surprise to most people is that black walnut shells have many industrial uses, from cleaning jet engines to filler in dynamite. It is possible that nutmeat production would not be profitable if not for the high commercial value of the shell.

Black walnut makes a decent grade of firewood whose smoke smells like tea leaves, though one is unlikely to burn any part of the tree large enough to be sawn for lumber.

An impressive, mature black walnut tree is presently located in the landscape behind the Fort Defiance house. While rather large, I doubt that it is old enough to have been planted in William Lenoir's lifetime, though it could be an offspring of one he set out. Take a look next time you visit, and imagine the expansive nut grove that once fed the plantation's inhabitants.

To read more articles on the region's wildlife, history, folklore, and geography, visit my website at www.blueridgeloire.org. I plan to post a longer version of this article in the future.



Black Walnut Tree (*Juglans nigra*) on the grounds at Fort Defiance

A Letter from Slave Andy Lenoir to Selina Louisa Lenoir

The following letter was written on December 21, 1862 from Andy Lenoir (believed to be 44 years old) at Thomas Isaac Lenoir's farm in Haywood County, NC to Selina Louisa Lenoir (age 74) at Fort Defiance, NC. The letter was transcribed as written from the original text by Ike Forester from his private collection.

Mistres, I take the present opportunity of righting you a few lines to let you no that myself and family is well and doing well at this time and is very well satisfied. I hope these lines may safely reach your hand and find you enjoying the best of health. I wood like the best kind to see you and all the rest give my best respects to Master Walter tell him that I want to see him the worst kind and hope I will see him out hear before long as I no I shood bee better satisfied if he was hear tell him wee have not moved on his farm yet nor I don't know when wee will I wont to git there as soon as I can as I suffer som what dissatisfaction in regard to the way ramey treats mother and sister Patsey he and his wife treats them very badly in deede. Pleas redd this to brother Larkin and sister Polly so they may no too the are thare olde mother and hir going on hir crutches. I want you to pleas tell them to right to me how Jacob and Ginney is doing and raise them up right and keepe them out of all mischief as fair as the can. I want brother Larkin to right to me as soon as possible the condition of my children if the are still at home or where the are. I hope the will remain there. Pedly enjoys hir health here better than she did there. Unkle Harry is in good health except the rheumatic pains. I am not comber-end with thare fusses hear nor hope I never will bee. I am going to try to live up to the promise I maid when I left you. I will right again as soon as conveynient. Master Thomas has bin confined to his bed for some time. I think he is slowly mending. I hope he will soon bee up able to attend to his affairs so no more at present only remding as ever your obeidient servant Andy Lenoir



Fine Pickled Cabbage

From the cookbook of Cornelia

Isabella Lenoir, 1856

Shred red & white cabbage, spread it in layers in a stone jar with salt over each layer. Put 2 spoonsful whole black pepper & the same quantity of Allspice, cloves, & cinnamon, in a bag & scald them in 2 qts vinegar. Pour the vinegar over the cabbage & cover tight. You may use in 2 days after.

Typical Slave Cooking Utensils on Fort Defiance

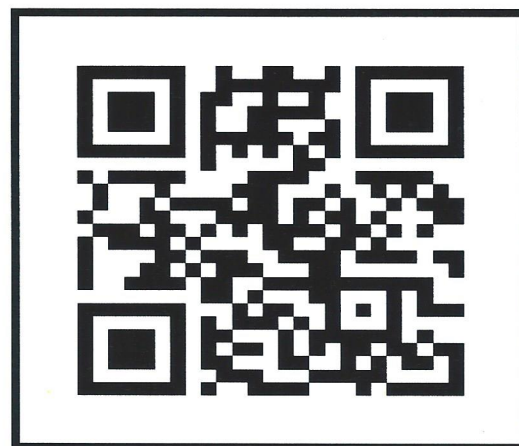
Compiled by Ike Forester

Maria's:

- ◆ 1 good dinner pot
- ◆ 1 good flat skillet
- ◆ 1 medium size skillet
- ◆ 1 good large oven, no lid
- ◆ 1 deep skillet, no handle
- ◆ 3 pots, 2 large, 1 small

Caroline's:

- ◆ 1 good dinner pot
- ◆ 1 good flat skillet and lid
- ◆ 1 oven of her own
- ◆ 1 old flat skillet, broke
- ◆ 1 frying pan
- ◆ 1 deep large skillet, broke



2024 Memberships Are Due!

Help keep the story of General William Lenoir and Fort Defiance alive! Memberships allow the site to provide visitors and school groups with a unique experience while visiting Fort Defiance. By renewing an existing membership or becoming a member the site can continue the goal of preserving and interpreting Fort Defiance's history. **Memberships are for a one-year period from January 1 through December 31.** For more information on becoming a member see page 7 of this newsletter then take a moment to fill out the portion at the bottom. Make check payable to **Fort Defiance** and mail it to **Fort Defiance, P.O. Box 686, Lenoir, NC 28645** or make payment by using the QR Code or by visiting the website at www.historicfortdefiancenc.org to show support. Your continued patronage is essential to the success of Fort Defiance. **Thank you!**

Board Highlights

The board meeting was held on January 11, 2024. Board members in attendance were Tina Triplett, Monty Minton, Ike Forester, Steve Rauchfuss, Bill Karr, John Church, Sandra Watts, Bob Kogut, Doug Davis and site director Gabe Pipes.

- ◆ Cindy Day from the Caldwell County Heritage Museum attended to discuss with the board the marker that the Tucker's Barn DAR plan to install in front of the Visitor Center.
- ◆ Ike Forester stated that the Wilkes Rendezvous Mountain DAR Chapter plan to place markers on the graves of William Lenoir and Charles Gordon.
- ◆ Gabe Pipes discussed visitation of the site for the 4th quarter, an event planned the last weekend in March, and his plan to attend the Wilkes/Surry/Yadkin meeting of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association in Wilkesboro.
- ◆ Sandra Watts gave a run down of potential grants for 2024. The NC Genealogical Society is celebrating 50 years and has expressed an interest in doing a Lunch & Learn in September
- ◆ Tina Triplett has arranged for the outside doors of the addition to be painted.
- ◆ The group discussed a list of potential new board members.

FRIENDS OF FORT DEFIANCE

Your support is vitally important to the operation of Fort Defiance. **THANK YOU!** The following members have joined for **2024**:

Patriot/Individual

Oscar L. Doberiner
Mary Bohlen
Karen Barlow (in honor of Charles Lenoir)

General/ Benefactor

Barbara Freiman
Yorke Lawson
Brenda Bernhardt

Militia/Family

Wanda Prince
Betty Buss
Lissa Holsclaw
Douglas L. Pegram
R. Kelly Coffey
Katherine Nell Lenoir
Tom Gwyn
Douglas Pegram
Lucy McCarl
Jean Lenoir

Lieutenant

Captain/Patron

Dr. Myra A. Dickson
BrendA. Combs
Monty Combs
John Hawkins
Frank McMillan
Lee Taylor
John B. Beall
Mary A. Kincaid
Steve McCord
Tina Triplett

Colonel/ Sponsor

Samuel L. & Sandra B. Ramsey

Specified Donations—Thank You

Bernhardt Furniture Foundation (Capital Improvements)
Broyhill Family Foundation (Capital Improvements)
Lenoir Service League
Hogan Family Foundation (Grounds)
Stevens Family Foundation (Grounds)

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 Fort Defiance, Inc., P. O. Box 686, Lenoir, NC 28645. Or you can make payment by credit card on our website, www.historicfortdefiancenc.org.

_____ 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

Contact Fort Defiance at fortdefiancenc@gmail.com or call 828-758-1671.

Name: _____ Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Please Come Visit Soon!

Fort Defiance is located past the former Patterson School on Hwy 268.

Hours of Operation

April-October Thursday - Saturday 10 AM-4 PM
Sunday 1 PM - 4 PM

November-March Saturday & Sunday 10 AM - 4 PM

Admission

\$7 per Adult

\$5 for children (Ages 6 -15)

Children 5 and under free

Like us on Facebook and Follow us on Instagram.

To schedule a group of 10 or more, please call for an appointment.



Return Service Requested

Presorted Standard
Postage & Fees Paid
Fort Defiance Inc.
Permit No. 28, 28645

Fort Defiance
P.O. Box 686
Lenoir, NC 28645