

Fort Defiance

Chronicle

Winter Issue

December 2020

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

Board Of Directors

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Kristen Robbins

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Kristen Robbins

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New Site Director



Fort Defiance has a new site director. Her name is Kristen Robbins age 23, of Sawmills, NC., where she and her husband Coty live on a small farm. Coty is a fireman for the City of Lincolnton. They have two children Harold age 4 and Henry who is 18 months of age. She is a graduate of Caldwell County Career Center Middle College.

Kristen's first encounter with Fort Defiance was in 2015 when she chose the site as the wedding venue for that special day she and Coty got married. Kristen was hired in August 2019 and her appreciation for history makes her a perfect fit for the

Fort.

She and her husband share a love of reenacting which, until she came to the Fort centered mostly around the 19th century. Kristen states "History has always held a special place in my heart—from learning about it in school, to having it come alive at reenactments, and to teaching today's youth through living history. My favorite part of history had been the 19th century, but after coming to Fort Defiance I have grown to love all the eras of the Fort and the Lenoir Family."

"Jan 15th day 1771 I opened reading school in Halifax Co., NC on Roanoke, about six miles below Eatons Ferry, and now board at Capt. Ed. Montforts— February 6, 1771."

William Lenoir

President's Message

With the year coming to an end, and even though it had its challenges, I feel good about the number of things we have been able to accomplish. Because of the pandemic, we had to be closed in the spring but were able to reopen at the end of May. As I stated in the last newsletter, this gave us an opportunity to take a good look at repairs that we needed to make along with some changes to the way we do business. Let me take this time to talk about the accomplishments for the year 2020, and what we want to do in 2021 .

The newsletter was revived, and a membership drive has begun. With the mailing of the October newsletter, our membership drive got off to a good start. Memberships are important to help with ongoing expenses and to provide future programs. It is my hope that members will feel a sense of ownership, visit the site often, and volunteer for events. Members are also ambassadors when they tell others about the Fort and its activities

Our new gate has arrived, and has been installed. This is something that we have needed for a long time. It was moved further up the driveway, making it easier to pull off the main highway.

Our picnic shelter has always been a good place for a passerby to sit and reflect, eat a snack, or just enjoy being outside by themselves or with their families. With the help of Boy Scout Troop No. 377 of Mooresville, the picnic shelter will have a new roof for the coming spring. We urge you to make use of it when you are here.

We have worked closely with Jennifer Cathey, Restoration Specialist, with the State Historic Preservation Office in Asheville, regarding a new roof for the house. We have had several quotes and can now start the process of finding grant opportunities to help with the expense. This will be a long-term goal and I feel optimistic (fingers crossed), we can accomplish this by the end of 2021. You can help by suggesting sources of funding or with your personal donations for the project.

I would also like to take this time to thank the Board of Directors for all they do and their willingness to work together and their commitment to the success of Fort Defiance.

Sandra Watts

Boy Scout Troop 377

We are grateful to Boy Scout Troop 377 of Mooresville for the assistance. Boy Scout Troop #377, led by Mike Bernhardt, replaced the roof on the picnic shelter on December 19-20. The troop has 44 members who have participated in programs of outdoor fun, leadership training and community service. Six members have become Eagle Scouts in the past year, and three scouts are currently working toward that goal.



Board of Directors



Doug Davis

My name is Doug Davis and I am a native of Caldwell County. I am a lover of history, music, and art. I began 19th century reenacting while in high school. My focus has been on just about all Caldwell County History, from the Revolutionary War up through the great floods of 1916 and 1940 as well as the Carolina and Northwest Railroad. Because of this, I soon found myself as the President of the Collettsville Historical Society.

As a student at West Caldwell High School, I had the honor of being taught by Mrs. Edith F. Carter. I was blown away by her art and illustrations of the Tom Dooley story. I decided to pursue a career as an art teacher. I graduated from Appalachian State in 2000 and I am currently the art teacher at Gamewell Elementary School.

Music has always been a part of my life. When I was very young my neighbor would have bluegrass jams in his basement on Sunday afternoons. I would hear them and run up there to listen. It was magical. I made myself learn the guitar by ear. Later I picked up the mandolin and banjo. I also tinker around with the fiddle and dulcimer. I taught mandolin classes for six years with the Junior Appalachian Musicians through the Caldwell Arts Council. Music, as with reenacting, can take you away to another time and place and it adds so much to a historical context



Stephen Rauchfuss

My name is Stephen Rauchfuss and I was born in Baltimore, MD. At age two, my family moved to Happy Valley where I still have a residence. I graduated from Lenoir High School in 1972 and then attended North Carolina State University as well as CCC&TI. Over the years, I have worked numerous sales jobs and currently work at Recycling Associates. I'm married to Lynn Hall and we have two dogs Scout and Callie. Both are rescue dogs. I am an active member of the First United Methodist Church in Lenoir as well as the June Greene Sunday School Class.

My community involvement consists of past district Committee Chairman of the Boy Scouts, past President of Lenoir Jaycees, present board member of the Patterson School Foundation in addition to many Lenoir and Caldwell County festivals and functions

THINGS OF INTEREST ON HIGHWAY 268

The person who travels Highway 268 will find several points of interest along the route. The road begins when one turns east off Highway 321 North onto Highway 268 East. After a one-mile stretch, Highway 268 turns right, or, as local people say, "goes down the river." The other road is designed as the "George Younce Highway" and continues on north through the village of Patterson until it re-enters Highway 321 North.

The mill village of Patterson began about 1850. It became an incorporated town in 1905, but it is no longer an active municipality. Yadkin Baptist Church, the oldest church in Caldwell County, organized about 1779, originally about a mile farther downstream, is on the Roby Martin Road. Harper's Chapel United Methodist Church, built by James C. Harper in 1872, a memorial to his son who died in the Civil War, is beside Happy Valley School. Blue Ridge Tissue is the site of the Patterson mill that was burned during Stoneman's raid in 1865.

Going back to Highway 268, and heading "down the river." All the places mentioned are along Highway 268 or in close proximity.

In the 1920's, the Happy Valley Lake Estate Company began to develop a resort that was never completed. The boat house converted into an apartment building, was destroyed by fire a few years ago. There are no visible reminders today.

The Happy Valley Green Way begins at this point goes along the Yadkin River.

"The Fountain," was built about 1808, by Col. William Davenport, a son-in-law of General Lenoir.

On Indian Grave Road, just off Highway 268, is Clover Hill, built about 1840, by Colonel Edmund Jones, another son-in-law of General Lenoir.

The Chapel of Rest, a community Episcopal Church, was also the chapel for the former Patterson School. It has been restored and is opened daily for visitors and meditation. Services and concerts are held a few times a year. The current building was erected in 1918.

The Palmyra Plantation, owned by Samuel Patterson, became Patterson School, an industrial boarding school for boys in 1909. Many of the school's buildings still stand. Some of the dorm rooms are available for overnight occupancy.

Indian Mounds that were excavated in the 1880's by the Smithsonian Institute are near the mouth of Buffalo Creek.

Fort Defiance, built between 1788 and 1792, is further down the highway. Over 300 artifacts and furnishings that belonged to the family are displayed. It is open at set times.

Laura Foster, alleged victim of Tom Dula, is buried in a

field beside the highway.

The Blackstone Post Office, located on the Shuford family property, can be seen from the road.

The burial site of Henry Donahue, the oldest known marked grave in Caldwell County, is not visible from the road.

A short side trip on the Grandin road leads to the site of the once-thriving lumber town of Grandin. The boarding house, now a private residence, is standing.

Riverside, built about 1862, by John Langston Jones is also on Grandin Road. It was purchased by Colonel George Folk who conducted the Blackstone law school on the premises.

Mariah's Chapel, a community Methodist Church from 1873 until recent years is across from Riverside. The building is on the National Registry of Historic Places. Occasionally services, concerts, and other events are held there.

The village of Ferguson is named for Capt. Lindsey Ferguson, nineteenth century resident. Whippoorwill Village, (a.k.a. the Tom Dooley Museum) is one mile past Ferguson. Tom Dooley's grave is on private property.

Many people find the Kerr Scott Reservoir enjoyable for picnicking, hiking or camping.

The Wilkes Heritage Museum, which documents the county's history, is in the old Wilkes Courthouse.,

The Chapel of Rest, Fort Defiance, Mariah's Chapel, Whippoorwill Village and the Wilkes Historical Museum are the only places which are open to the public. Some have limited hours, and some charge admission. While Highway 268 is not designed for fast travel, it is a scenic and enjoyable ride.

Written by John Hawkins

1789, 23rd Dec. "Sent a hogshead of tobacco by Wm. J. Moore to Mr. Adams at Fayetteville which I expect to go towards some brass locks and 200 ft of glass 10 by 8 inches, and some paint which he promised to send for, for me. I likewise sent 680 lbs. tobacco which Mr. Moore is to sell if he can and if not leave it with Mr. Adams and get 24 bu. Salt.

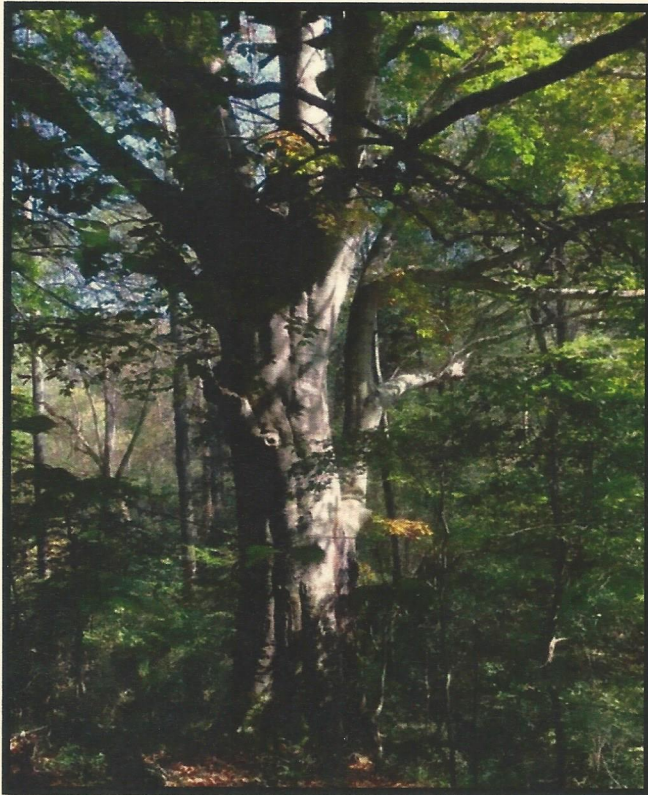
William Lenoir

Walking the Grounds

Chestnut Tree

It is not known with certainty when or from where General William Lenoir obtained the European Chestnut trees located at his home. There can be a case made for the original trees being acquired on a trip in 1792 to Fayetteville, NC retrieving merchandise from Mr. Robert Adams, a Fayetteville merchant whom Lenoir dealt with for many years. Many of the household items located at the Fort were ordered from Mr. Adams. On this trip Lenoir obtained Bald Cypress trees from the eastern swamps which were planted at the home-site. One of these trees remains in the yard to this day. Another possibility is the Chestnut trees were acquired on a trip Lenoir made to Philadelphia in 1795 where again he returned with various household items. It is evident from the General's writings that he was planting extensive fruit and nut orchards in the early days of the plantation after moving into his new home in 1791.

One of the original trees remains standing at Fort Defiance. In addition there are two smaller descendants of this tree in the yard of the old home.



American Beech Tree (*Fagus grandifolia*)

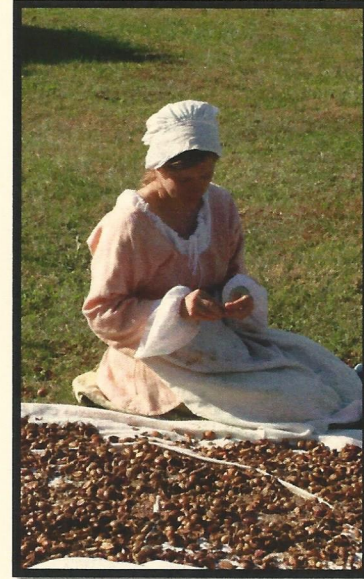
In November of 1997, Allen Caldwell of the NC Cooperative Extension Service -Caldwell Center, nominated our American Beech Tree to be listed on the North Carolina Register of Big Trees, in recognition of its being the largest of its species in this area. The letter stated "Based on the measurements submitted, this tree does qualify as a Co-Champion."

In August of 2005, the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources upgraded the tree to a Champion. At that time, it measured 191 inches in circumference, 109 feet in height with a crown spread of 92 feet.

It's a must see for visitors to the grounds.

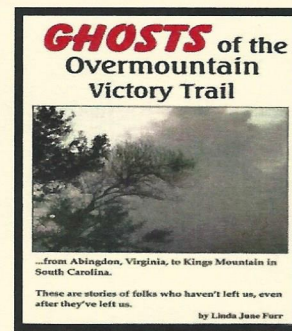
Volunteers

People with a love for history or who have a special skill are needed as volunteers at Fort Defiance. Opportunities are available for all ages and abilities. Dressing in 18th century clothing is optional although expected if working during events with the public. Clothing can be provided. Volunteer activities include but are not limited to cleaning, clerical, and being a docent. A new volunteer process will be starting soon as well as a training day. If interested, contact Kristen Robbins, Director, via email at fortdefiancenc@gmail.com or Phone 828-758-1761



Highlights

- * Boy Scout Troop No. 377 of Mooresville, under the leadership of Mike Bernhardt, camped on the grounds and removed the roof from the picnic shelter the weekend of October 3. They plan to return the weekend of December 19 to begin the reconstruction of the roof. Plans are to have the picnic shelter ready for use by Spring.
- * The Board of Directors voted to allow photo shoots of the grounds of Fort Defiance. Individuals or groups who wish photos made can schedule appointments by contacting the Site Director. The cost is \$40, and those using the site must furnish their own photographer
 - * A new book is available in the Fort Defiance Gift Shop. *Ghosts of the Overmountain Victory Trail*, by Linda June Furr. Many people know the history of the Battle of Kings Mountain, but few are aware of the eerie sightings of "the people who haven't left us even after they've left us." The book sells \$10.00



- * The Hogan Foundation has funded a gate for the driveway to the site. It has arrived and has been installed.



FRIENDS OF FORT DEFIANCE

The following members have joined since the last newsletter:

Patriot/Individual

Wanda Prince

Lieutenant/Supporter

Stephen Rauchfuss

Militia/Family

Mr. John Hawkins
Nell Fisher & Bill Karr

Colonel/Sponsor

Captain/Patron

Mary Kincaid
Dr. John w. & Hanna Thuss
Joe & Frances Delk
Lucy F. McCarl

General/ Benefactor

Interested in becoming a Friend of Fort Defiance? Memberships are available for individuals, families, and corporations who are looking to support local history. 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 and a copy of the bi-monthly newsletter via mail or email.

Anyone wanting to become a member should send dues in payment to Fort Defiance, P. O. Box 686, Lenoir, NC 28645.

Contact Kristen Robbins at fortdefiance@gmail.co or 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/Patriot** **\$100-499**

_____ **Colonel/Sponsor** **\$500-999**

_____ **General/Benefactor** **\$1000-up**

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code _____

E-Mail: _____

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 10 AM - 4 PM

November-March Saturday & Sunday 10 AM - 4 PM

Admission

\$7 per Adult

\$5 for children (Ages 6 -15)

Like us on Facebook and Follow us on Instagram.

Holiday Hours

The site will be closed the weekends December 25th, 26th and 27th for Christmas and New Years January 2nd and 3rd.

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



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