

# Fort Defiance

## Chronicle

Spring Issue

April 2022

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

### Board Of Directors

Sandra Watts

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**Secretary**

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Stephen Rauchfuss

Doug Davis

Tina Triplett

Monty Minton

### Site Director

Coleman Eugene  
Trantham

### Newsletter

### Committee

John Hawkins

Sandra Watts

Kelly Coffey

Barbara Freiman



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### Lunch & Learn

Bring your chairs and your lunch and plan to spend the day. These events are free to the public.

**June 11, 2022—William Caldwell**, Park Guide, at the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail with the National Park Service will be giving a program entitled "**That Heathen Race: Backcountry Growth and Cultural Distinction.**" The settlements along the Carolina backcountry and spilling over the Blue Ridge Mountains were a unique culture formed through conflict and competition. Where did these settlers come from, what brought them to the frontiers, and how would they impact the course of the American Revolution? A information table will be available from **11:00 to 2:00** with the **program beginning at 12:00.**

**June 25, 2022—Garrett Jackson.** Like many of the Founding Fathers, William Lenoir is known for many pursuits: a soldier, politician, public servant, farmer, and yes, land surveyor. **Garrett Jackson**, whose ancestor Elijah Isaacs built the original Fort Defiance, has taught Colonial Period land surveying and geography to school groups and at public demonstrations since 2007. Using period replica instruments to help the audience understand the toils and excitement the early settlers had with surveying the land, he will show you how a basic understanding of geometry is all one needed to know in order to create boundary lines and divide up the land. He will discuss survey jobs taken on by William Lenoir and how the occupation was one of the most lucrative professions of the Colonial and Federal periods. **Program will begin at 12:00.**

**July 9, 2022—John Hawkins** entitled "**Down in the Valley**". How did Happy Valley get its name? What is the difference between Happy Valley and Yadkin Valley? Long-time Valley resident, **Eliza Bishop**, will be present also to share her knowledge. **This program will begin at 12:00.**



**LENOIR  
GOLF CLUB**

Register Now!

# Fort Defiance Charity Golf Tournament



June 17, 2022

**Four Person Scramble**

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

900 Registration

Tee Times

Closest to the Pin

1000

Hole-in-one Contest

1010

Sponsored By

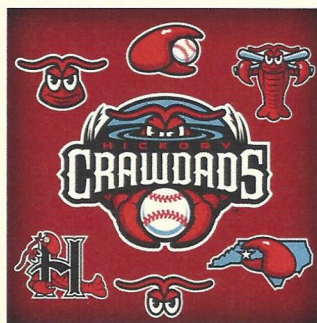
1020

1030

1040

1050

1100



Platinum Package

4 Person \$180

Gold Package

3 Person \$140

Silver Package

2 Person \$95

Bronze Package

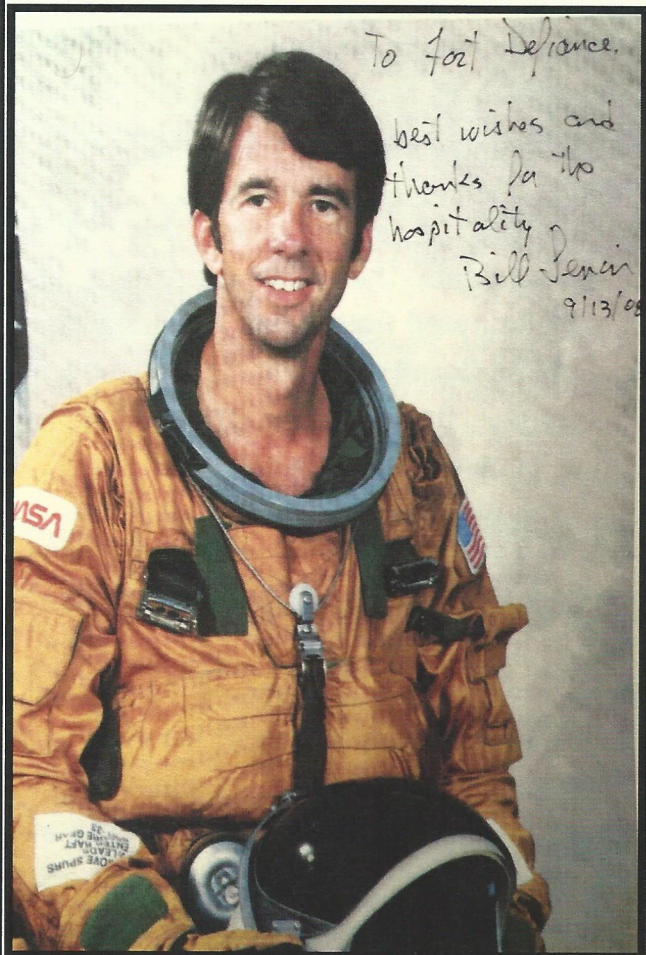
1 Person \$50

**Contact Any Fort Defiance**

**Board Member or Email**

**fortdefiencenc@gmail.com**

## THE GENERAL AND THE ASTRONAUT



*"In 1790, it took General Lenoir 20 days to take his tobacco wagons from Fort Defiance, his home on the Upper Yadkin River in Caldwell County, to Richmond, Va.*

*"In 1970, one of his descendants, William B. Lenoir, may take a trip to the moon in about a fourth of that time.*

*"Astronaut William B. Lenoir is a member of the sixth group of astronauts now in training at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston, Tex. He is a sixth-generation descendant of General William Lenoir.*

*"His descent is through the general's eldest son, William B. Lenoir, who migrated to what is now eastern Tennessee before Tennessee was a state, and founded Lenoir City."*

So begins an article by Margaret Harper, who was one of the people who worked diligently for the restoration of Fort Defiance. The article, which is not dated, found its way into several area newspapers. A letter to Miss Harper from William B. Lenoir, dated 17 December 1969, states that he is enclosing some information that she might find interesting. He does not state what the information included; perhaps she used it for her article which was probably written in the early 1970's.

A *Lenoir News-Topic* article dated November 15, 1982, written by David Freeman, gives the astronaut's genealogy from General Lenoir's oldest son, William Ballard Lenoir, and his wife, Elizabeth Avery. His great-grandfather was Benjamin Ballard Lenoir, Sr., through Benjamin Ballard Lenoir, Jr. The astronaut, who was born in Miami, Fla., on March 14, 1939, is the son of Samuel Staples Lenoir. He attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he graduated with a bachelor's, master's, and doctorate in electrical engineering. He was selected as a scientist-astronaut by NASA in August 1967. Freeman's article was written in connection with a scheduled five-day space mission which would have included the first spacewalk since 1974. The mission had to be cancelled because of problems with bulky spacesuits. While Lenoir did not get his moment in space at that time, he and his fellow space shuttle astronauts were pictured in the *Lenoir News-Topic* with Caldwell County congressman, James T. Broyhill, who presented the astronaut with a copy of the newspaper with Freeman's article.

Harper's article indicated that it was hoped that Lenoir would cut the ribbon for the grand opening of the restored Fort Defiance. For unknown reasons, when the grand opening finally occurred in September 1978, he was not present. The late Allen Poe, a Lenoir descendant who is



known for his genealogical knowledge of many western North Carolina families, told Freeman that Lenoir had visited Caldwell County several years prior seeking information about his family. When Lenoir visited in 1983, he is quoted as saying he had never been to the town before.

On April 13, 1983, a *Lenoir News-Topic* story by Van Denton announced that the astronaut was scheduled to visit Caldwell County on April 29, sponsored by the Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce. Congressman James T. Broyhill had arranged for the visit and would accompany Lenoir, serving as his guide. A full day's events, began with a reception attended by about sixty people at the Chamber office on Main Street at 8 a.m. He visited the William Lenoir

Middle School, named for his great-great-great grandfather, Happy Valley School, and Gamewell Middle School. At each of the schools he narrated a film presentation on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) space program. At the William Lenoir School, he left his shoe print in cement as a permanent reminder of his visit. At Happy Valley School there was a parade in his honor, and he was made an honorary member of the Happy Valley Book Club. The students also presented him a "Space Care Package" for his next shuttle mission which included among other things a Mars candy bar, a Moon Pie, and a can of N. C. State soda. He fascinated students at each school with tales about the weightlessness of space and the beauty of seeing the earth from above.

At Fort Defiance, he was given a guided tour. Among the Lenoir descendants who were present were Mrs. Andrew Lenoir, who with her husband was the last of the Lenoir family to live in the Fort; Shirley Lenoir, daughter-in-law of Mrs. Andrew Lenoir; Mildred McDowell Jones, founder of the Fort Defiance Restoration Project, and Jim and Marie Hogan. Of the restoration, he is quoted as saying, *"I would like to have spent more time there. They have done a very good job with the restoration."* The Board of Directors presented him with gifts including a framed photograph of the restored house, and a nail from the original structure.

Much was made of the astronaut's visit and his connection with the man for whom the Town of Lenoir is named. Van Denton stated in an April 30, 1983 article that Lenoir knew his roots were here but had never had the chance to visit. He told a luncheon crowd at the Lenoir Rotary Club meeting at Cedar Rock Country Club, *"I have never been to Lenoir before in my life, but I don't feel like it's the first time, or that I am talking to strangers. I feel you're all friends or family."* He was presented a key to the city by Mayor Robert A. Gibbons.

A *Hickory Daily Record* article by Clarke Morrison, dated April 30, 1983, quotes Lenoir as saying. *"With respect to the comparisons between the pioneering of my great-great-great grandfather and myself, I think I had a lot easier time of it. I had a lot more people behind me."* He gave credit to NASA for their support.

Lenoir also received an invitation to the reunion of the Lenoir family which was planned at Fort Defiance for the summer of 1984. A letter dated 4 June 1984 to Joan Rogers, clearly indicates

that he, his wife, and daughter were planning to attend. The following letter to the editor, date unknown but apparently sometime in 1984, seems to verify that they were in attendance.

*“My family and I would like to express our deepest appreciation for the warm hospitality and sincere welcome that everyone showed to all of us during the recent Lenoir family reunion.*

*“Lenoir and Caldwell County have a rich heritage not matched by many other city-county areas in our country, but more important is the vision shown by the local government bodies and their leaders in providing the support necessary to preserve this heritage, not only for us, but for future generations as well.*

*“The many volunteers who gave so selflessly of their time are living examples of what makes our country so great. With no exceptions, Fort Defiance is the best restoration of any kind that I have seen. I am proud to be a Lenoir and to have roots in Lenoir, Caldwell County.*

*Liz, Samantha, and I wish to express our heartfelt thanks to everyone who was so kind to us. For the next reunion, my son, Bill, Jr., hopes to join us. On the light side, I hope I didn't break too many cameras at Fort Defiance.”*

Lenoir visited Fort Defiance again on September 13, 2008. A newspaper publicity article which appeared two days before his visit stated that the price of admission would include a barbecue luncheon, photo and autograph sessions, and a talk by the astronaut about his experiences in space. He was again presented with a key to the city. This visit did not garner the newspaper publicity of his previous visit and did not attract a large attendance.

His 2008 visit proved to be his last to the home of his great-great-grandfather. It is ironic that a man who had traveled into outer space would die because of head injuries from a bicycle accident. His death occurred on August 26, 2010, in Sandoval County, New Mexico, where he had been residing.

*Adapted by John O. Hawkins from various newspaper accounts.*

### **Space Explorer Visits Pioneer's Grave**

*Photo taken from the Lenoir News-Topic*

*April 30, 1983*



## A VIEW OF THE GARDENS



By 1817 a wonderful garden existed south of the house. A brick walk led from the back porch through the yard to the boxwoods and white rose bushes which the General had planted for Ann. In the center of the garden stood a large hemlock tree around which was laid a brick walk surrounded by boxwoods creating a “nook” as it was called, a favorite place for young lovers. From the garden a path lead into the “grove”, a beautiful flat wooded area containing many old, large hardwood trees, thus giving it the name as it was often referred to “the nut grove”.

As the years passed, the ladies of each generation continued to tend the garden, constantly adding to and changing the variety of flowers. By 1881 the walk leading from the house was flanked with “spicy pinks, sweet lilies, calla, and laurustinus”. The “secluded nook”, under the old hemlock, was at the end of this array of blooms. At the entrance to the grove were “roses and lilacs, and morning glories ran in mad riot over everything”. Other flowers included “white roses, sweet violets, pansies, phlox, jonquils, gladioluses, chrysanthemums, petunias and fair maids”. Just outside of the “nook” Rufus planted a Yellow Transparent apple tree and later pear trees were added.

## WISH LIST

1. Volunteer to help with website.
2. Office and Housekeeping supplies, i.e. printers ink for HP Office Jet Pro 8600 Premium, business envelopes, paper, file folders, cleaning supplies, toilet tissue, paper towels, soap, etc.
3. Volunteers—regular and occasional—docents, administrative skills as well as special skills such as grounds care, building repair, or cleaning.
4. Bottled water or soft drinks and snacks for volunteers.

## Board Highlights

- ◆ Board members in attendance were, Sandra Watts, Tina Triplett, Ike Forester, Bob Kogut, Doug Davis, Steven Rauchfuss, Bill Karr, Nell Fisher and Site Director Eugene Trantham.
- ◆ Eugene reported to the board the different contacts he had made since being hired as the new site director. He has several ideas for fundraisers one of which being a golf tournament at the Lenoir Golf Course. He also discussed the need for additional items for sale in the Visitor Center and will need the board to help.
- ◆ Tina Triplett discussed the inventory of books and textiles. There are several books that have not been located and the textile inventory is complete. A few of these items are missing as well. The textiles have been stored for protection in acid free boxes with acid free tissue paper .
- ◆ Repairs to the driveway will begin at the end of March. Randy Faw has been hired to do the work. Once the work has been completed, the old gate will come down.
- ◆ A quote to replace the light fixtures and wiring to the picnic shelter as well as the Visitor Center will be coming. Grant opportunities will be sought to help cover the expense.
- ◆ Work on the roof and repairs to siding should begin soon. The committee is actively looking for shingles for the roof and the boards for the siding are being donated.
- ◆ Plans to start painting the summer kitchen are in the works.
- ◆ The heating and air conditioning of the Visitor Center needs repair or needs to be completely replaced.

# FRIENDS OF FORT DEFIANCE

The following members have joined for 2022:

## Patriot/Individual

## 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

## Colonel/ Sponsor

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

## General/ Benefactor

Building Lab. LLC  
Barbara Freiman

## Matching Funds Contributors

Steve and Jean Branch  
Eliza Bishop  
Liza Plaster  
Monte & Brenda Combs  
Joe & Francis Delk  
Brenda Bernhardt  
Mike Bernhardt

## Specified Donations

Mike Bernhardt (Driveway)  
Hogan Foundation (Driveway)  
Covington Foundation (Roof)  
Stevens Family Foundation (Roof)

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 card 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 Fort Defiance at [fortdefiance@gmail.com](mailto:fortdefiance@gmail.com) or call 828-458-1671.

-----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 \_\_\_\_\_

# **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)

**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

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