



# Fort Defiance

## Chronicle



Winter

February 2026

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

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historicfortdefiancenc.org

Webmaster Ben Triplett

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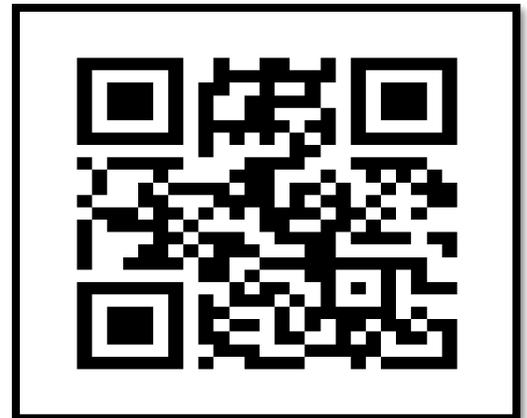
Barbara Freiman

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By becoming a member, or renewing an existing membership, you help keep the story of General William Lenoir and Fort Defiance alive. Memberships allow the site to provide visitors and school groups with unique experience. The site can also continue its goal to preserve, research and enhance the land, buildings and artifacts of Fort Defiance. **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 and send a check payable to **Fort Defiance** to Fort Defiance Inc, P.O. Box 686, Lenoir, NC 28645, or pay by using the QR Code or visiting the website at [www.historicfortdefiancenc.org](http://www.historicfortdefiancenc.org) to show support. Continued patronage is essential to the success of Fort Defiance!

The purpose of the Corporation is to preserve, research and enhance the land, buildings, and artifacts of Fort Defiance; to publish and disseminate information about life in what is now Caldwell County, particularly in its Yadkin Valley region during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries; and to promote the use of said properties and information for the education and pleasure of the general public.





## New Year, New Site Director

Fort Defiance is excited to announce that beginning in February, Cassandra Douglas will become the new Site Director at Fort Defiance.

Cassandra began her ties to Western North Carolina while attending Appalachian State University's undergraduate program in Public History and later its MA program in Museum Studies. During her studies, Cassandra worked at the Watauga Medical Center as a team leader for Environmental Services, where she honed her ability to guide a team through unexpected challenges. While earning her MA, Cassandra was part of a class project focusing on museum education that brought her to Fort Defiance. This experience led to a deeper connection with the area and a desire to pursue a career focused on connecting people to Fort Defiance's history. She is excited to work as the site director for Fort Defiance and to engage people with the site.



Like any non-profit organization, volunteers are a vital part of the success of the organization. A variety of volunteer roles are needed at Fort Defiance. Activities such as everyday tasks to volunteers who only want to help with special occasions. Do you enjoy dressing up in 18th-century clothing? We have a place for you. But do not worry, you do not have to dress up to volunteer. There are volunteer opportunities for everyone! Ask, and we can find a place for you!

### Volunteer opportunities:

Dressing in costume for events, becoming a Docent, helping run the Visitors Center, stocking the gift shop, doing grounds work, cleaning the historic house, researching, educating, hosting group events, and helping to create the newsletters.

For more information about volunteering or to learn how to get involved, please contact us at [fortdefiancenc@gmail.com](mailto:fortdefiancenc@gmail.com) or call Fort Defiance at (828) 758-1671.

**CALL US TODAY**



### Lenoir's Rangers Spring Muster

On Saturday, April 11, and Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Lenoir's Rangers will be holding their annual spring muster. In honor of the 250<sup>th</sup> birthday of the United States, visitors will learn what role the Overmountain Victory patriots played, and the importance of the Overmountain Victory Trail. Demonstrations will be held throughout the day, including black powder demonstrations, drilling, 18th-century camp life, and open-fire cooking, among others. Items will be available for purchase in the gift shop. Also on the grounds will be the Dragonfly Trader with various 18th century things for sale.

This is a **FREE** event. Guided house tours will be offered throughout the day at the regular admission fee: adults \$7.00, children 6-14 \$5.00, and children 5 and under are free. Donations are always appreciated.

Picnic shelter and picnic tables are available so bring a lunch and spend the day.

### Colonial Christmas

On Saturday, December 15, 2025, Fort Defiance hosted its annual Colonial Christmas Event. Music was provided by Board of Directors member Doug Davis, who performed a selection of Christmas music on the guitar and dulcimer. The house was decorated with lots of fruit and greenery from the grounds by the Tucker's Barn Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution of Caldwell County and the Wilkes County Rendezvous Mountain Chapter. Guests were treated to refreshments in the summer kitchen by Board of Directors member Tina Triplett, and volunteer Ben Triplett was on hand to run the gift shop. The traditional burning of the holly was performed at 2:00 p.m. The "burning of the holly" refers to various traditions, primarily at the end of the Christmas season (Epiphany, Jan 6th) or on Shrove Tuesday, symbolizing the end of winter, cleansing, renewal, and the driving away of evil spirits, using the holly's fiery appearance and its association with protection.



Board of Director Doug Davis

## The Other Faces of Fort Defiance

While the history of slavery can be uncomfortable to confront, it is crucial to acknowledge the experiences and contributions of enslaved individuals in shaping our society. The Lenoir Family Papers are significant not only for their historical value but also for their genealogical importance. For African Americans seeking to trace their ancestry dating back over a century, such family papers can be an invaluable resource. By examining the Lenoir Family Papers, researchers can learn about individuals' origins, occupations, names, family structures, ages, and, most importantly, gain insight into their daily lives. These documents offer a unique window into the past, shedding light on the journeys and resilience of those who came before us.

Below is information obtained and transcribed by board member Ike Forester and provides a good example of the information that is available. The transcription was written as it appears in the original documents.

January 15, 1773 – Agreement between Henry Collier & William Lenoir for the sale of “one negro woman named **Jude** about forty-two years old, Guinea born” to Lenoir.

April 1, 1812 – Sale of “a negroe woman named **Nancy** about twenty-seven years old and her three youngest children (to wit) **Fereby** about six years old the 24<sup>th</sup> Dec. last, **Liddy** four years old the 24<sup>th</sup> Dec. last, **Letty** about six months old. Also a negro boy named **Jack** between eleven & twelve years old” to William Lenoir by William Dula of Wilkes Co., NC.

**October 9, 1848 – To Thomas Lenoir (William Lenoir's son) visiting the Haywood County farm from daughter Sarah Joyce Lenoir (Aunt Sade) at Fort Defiance (note- I feel that Sarah, Mary & Sile must be slaves as there are no Lenoirs of those names who would have been living at the Fort at that time other than Sarah Joyce Lenoir who was the author.):**

“It is unpleasant to commence my letter with bad

news, but when I think how much worse it might have been, there is no ground for complaint, but great reason to be thankful. As **Sarah** was returning from Lenoir on Wednesday evening, the carriage tongue came out, while they were coming down the hill on this side of Gen. Patterson's Brickyard branch, & the carriage ran upon the horses & Nelson jumped several times & kicked once & upset the carriage by running it on the back of the road. **Sarah** was hurt bad enough to have kept anybody else in bed a week or two, but she was up and at breakfast next morning, without having any Doctor, except Mother & Sister Jane, to [?] her wounds.

She had a deep cut over her right eye, and the brow & one just in the edge of the hair above that, & two bad bruises, one above her left eye & the other above her right knee & two slight scratches on her face. The blood settled about her left eye, making it very black for a day or two, but has almost disappeared, & she says she will be well & have forgotten it before you get home. **Mary & Sile** came over with her. **Mary's** arm was hurt smartly. Poor little **Sile** was hurt very little, but she & **Mary** were frightened almost to death. **Romeo** strained his ankle, he does not know how, & can't walk well enough to plow; but has not stopped working. The body of the carriage is a perfect smash but the running gear is not injured. The horses worked as well as if nothing had happened. Gen. Patterson's boys were going home from his Buffaloe field & were not far off when the carriage turned over. They helped turn the carriage up and one of them brought **Sile** home in his arms; she was so much frightened, she declared she could not stand up. **Sarah & Mary** walked home, all arriving between sun-down and dark. And as for how we all looked & what was done I will leave you to imagine. **Sarah's** brow may be disfigured slightly but not enough to be noticed much. **Isaiah** cut himself slightly with an axe and took cold in it through [?], and I suppose suffered a great deal from it for two or three days.”

Part of the mission at Fort Defiance is; "to publish and disseminate information about life in what is now Caldwell County, particularly in its Yadkin Valley region during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries".

This will begin a 3 part series of newspaper articles about various things pertaining to Fort Defiance, the Yadkin Valley and surrounding areas.

This article was found in the Western Carolinian (Salisbury, North Carolina). The newspaper is dated Tuesday, March 2, 1824, and the article is on page 3. The article itself appears to have been written on February 14, 1824.

### Tuition on good Terms

The subscribers have employed **Mr. Wm F. Thomas**, a young man, who comes well recommended by the Rev. Mr. Mushat, his teacher, and the Trustees of the Pleasant Grove Academy, to teach the Latin and Greek Languages, and a part of the sciences, for one year, commencing with the 15<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1824, at 20 dollars per scholar. The school will be continued, if suitable encouragement can be had, for several years. Comfortable boarding for 40 or 50 scholars can be had, for from 50 to 60 dollars, in respectable and decent families, and the price does not vary.

We flatter ourselves that this situation combines as many advantages for an institution of this kind as perhaps any one in the western parts of either of the Carolinas. It is near Fort Defiance, on the Yadkin River, in a wealthy and fertile settlement, where provisions of every kind can be had on the most favorable terms. For health, none can exceed it; and for moral character, but few excel. Every attention will be paid to preserve the morals and good treatment of the Students. Addresses made to the Post Master at Fort Defiance, Wilkes County, N. C. will be duly attended to.

Edm. Jones

February 14, 1824

Thos. Lenoir

Benj. Howard

John Witherspoon

Carolina Watchman (Salisbury, North Carolina)

Tuesday, November 29, 1825

Published on page 3

### BONNETS O' BLUE

#### NEW BI-WEEKLY LINE OF FOUR HORSES

Post Coaches from Salem N. C. to SHOWN'S X  
ROADS,

Carter, Tennessee

This line passes through the pleasant Villages of Wilkesborough and Jefferson, in Ashe County—crosses the Blue Ridge at the head of Redy's River, where the Gap is very favorable and presents one of the most interesting displays of Mountain scenery that the Southern country affords. The stages leave Salem for the West immediately after the arrival of those from Raleigh, N. C. and Washington City, and arrive at Shown's X Roads in time for the Knoxville Stages. At Wilkesborough, this line branches by a stage running twice a week to Morganton passing by Fort Defiance, up the delightful Valley of the Yadkin.

Western Carolinian, (Salisbury, N. C.)

Tuesday October 5, 1830

Published on page 1

From Salisbury by Spring Grove Sherills Ford, Mountain Creek, Lincolnton, Wilfongs Mills, Morgantown, Lower Creek, and Fort Defiance to Wilkesboro 150 miles and back once a week.

Leave Salisbury every Monday at 12 noon, arrive at Wilkesboro every Thursday by 5 p.m.

Leave Wilkesboro every Friday at 5 a.m., arrive at Salisbury every Monday by 9 a.m.

Fort Defiance was the post office for the area for several years.



**William Lenoir Assaulted**  
**Weely Raleigh Register, Raleigh, NC**  
**April 22, 1834**

At the late term of Wilkes Superior Court (Judge Strange presiding), a cause of considerable interest was tried between the State and Alfred Dooly and others for malicious mischief upon the property of **General William Lenoir**. The case was that **Gen. Lenoir** had been appointed a Commissioner under a late act of Assembly, to make a Road from the Valley of the Yadkin across the Blue Ridge to the Ashe line. The settlement along the proposed route being very sparse, hands were obliged to be called from a considerable distance: a snow storm happened on the day appointed, the men became much dissatisfied and protested against going on with the work, but the Commissioner had been schooled in the ear of the Revolution and thought eighty odd years of age, was not to be turned back by trifles; so he said *onward!* As he had at King's Mountain and at other places where men's souls were tried. The hands became exasperated, and on that night, they attacked the hut where the old gentleman slept with stones, thrust sharp sticks at him through the cracks of the cabin, cut and disfigured his horse and carriage, and otherwise abused his property. For this treatment, he complained to the Court, and four of the party were convicted, namely: **Alfred Dooly, Jesse Triplett**, and two young men named **Welch. Dooley**, who was the ringleader, was imprisoned. The others were fined, after a severe reprimand from the Judge for such a disgraceful attack upon the venerable gentleman who had gone from his fireside at his age, (83) and in such an inclement season to discharge a public duty *in the wilderness*, and that too without a cent of compensation.

The old gentleman appeared in Court as a witness, and it was somewhat surprising to observe in what a perfect degree he still enjoys his faculties, mental as well as corporeal. The following week we saw him at Ashe Court, whither he had ridden on horseback over the highest of the Blue Ridge. Verily, the men of olden time seem to have been *made of better stuff than we!!*

### Board Highlights

The board of directors met on Thursday, January 15, 2026 at 5:30. Attending members were Steve Rauchfuss, Kayleigh Corey, Tina Triplett, Monty Minton and Sandra Watts

- ◆ Sandra Watts gave the site directors report. 445 people visited the site from October 1 through December 14, 2025. Fire extinguishers were inspected by Burgess and all were in working order. The Living History Days in October and the Colonial Christmas event were well attended. The site was closed on December 15th and will reopen on February 7th at regular winter hours.
- ◆ Upcoming events planned so far in 2026 will be Lenoir's Rangers will return April 11th and 12th for their spring muster. A group of students have booked for a tour also in April. The site will participate again in 2026 with the Overmountain Victory Association's school days in the fall. The date for the 4th Annual Celtic Festival is to be determined.
- ◆ The group discussed various things to upgrade, improve or implement by way of grant funding opportunities in 2026.
- ◆ Sandra Watts suggested that one of the goals of 2026 is to increase volunteer participation.

# FRIENDS OF FORT DEFIANCE

Your support is vitally important to the operation of Fort Defiance. **THANK YOU!** The following members have joined for **2025**:

Please Renew now for 2026

## Patriot/Individual

Mark Coltrain  
Orrin Robbins  
Karen Barlow

## Colonel/ Sponsor

Tom Tighe

## General/ Benefactor

Brenda Bernhardt  
James Pennell  
Barbara Frieman

## Militia/Family

Lissa Holsclaw  
Karen Barlow  
Kelly Coffey

## Lieutenant

Ellen Cowen & Keith Seramur  
Britton King  
Lucy McCarl

## Captain/Patron

Jennie G. Deal  
Dr. Myra A. Dickerson  
Monty & Brenda Combs  
Cindy Day  
Douglas L. Pegram  
Jerry Brooks  
Thomas Allen & Virginia Foxx  
Douglas Pegram  
Al & Adrienne Johnston  
Tina Triplett

## Specified Donations—Thank You

Broyhill Family Foundation  
Bernhardt Furniture Foundation  
Stevens Family Foundation

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. Payments can also be made by credit card on the Site's website, [www.historicfortdefiancenc.org](http://www.historicfortdefiancenc.org).

_____ Patriot/Individual	\$20-39
_____ Militia/Family Family is defined as two parents and their dependent children.	\$40-74
_____ Lieutenant/Supporter	\$75-99

_____ Captain/Patron	\$100-499
_____ Colonel/Sponsor	\$500-999
_____ General/Benefactor	\$1000-up

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

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

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

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

# Please Come Visit Soon!

Fort Defiance is located 1.8 miles East of 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

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