

# Fort Defiance

## Chronicle

Summer Issue

August 2022

### Fort Defiance

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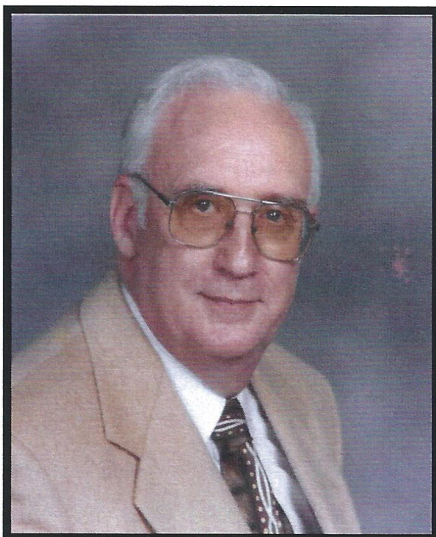
John Hawkins

Sandra Watts

Kelly Coffey

Barbara Freiman

### Lunch & Learn Events Continue— 1940 Flood & Happy Valley Historic Sites



John Hawkins

**John Hawkins**, local historian and native of Caldwell County will be guest speaker on Saturday, **August 13, 2022, at 12:00 p.m.** This will mark the 82nd anniversary of the 1940 flood.

On August 13, 1940, in the mountains of western North Carolina an event of epic proportions occurred that is still discussed today. Even those who were not old enough to have first-hand memories of it, or who were born after the flood occurred, have stories to tell. The little Watauga County community of Stony Fork was one of the hardest hit. Stories from that community sound like a Hollywood movie. Some of the players were relatives of John Hawkins, including his grandmother and an aunt's husband, who narrowly escape with their lives. His parents, who were living in Caldwell County, also had their experiences. Most of the information presented will be Watauga County-related. Those who know Caldwell or other counties stories are invited to attend and to share during the question-and-answer time.



Eliza Bishop

**Eliza Frazier Bishop** will be the speaker at Fort Defiance on Saturday, **August 27 12:00.**

The topic is "A Verbal Tour of the National Registered and the State Study Places in the Happy Valley Area". Information includes backgrounds of the properties which made them eligible for inclusion to the prominent listing of National Registration of Historic Places. Most of the registered places are connected to Highway 268, a designated North Carolina Scenic Highway, with others on the Grandin and the Tom Dula roads. Nine of the places were named in the National Register in 2004. The Patterson School Historic District includes two homes, the Chapel of Rest, the Jones-Patterson Cemetery, and all buildings at The Patterson School for the total of nine properties. Three places were already on the NR listing making the twelve places along the Caldwell section of Happy Valley an exceptional historic area for the state. The study of the properties and nominations were made possible through a grant written by Bishop. Senator Donald Kincaid, past supporter of grants for The Chapel of Rest and the Caldwell Heritage Museum, presented the grant to the NC Senate and secured its approval.

# Members Only

## FORT DEFIANCE MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The Fort Defiance Board of Directors cordially invites the members of the "Friends of Fort Defiance" to the annual membership meeting scheduled for Saturday, October 15, 2022 at 1:00 p.m. See what's new and reacquaint yourself with the old. The meeting will be held at Fort Defiance. An invitation will be mailed to each member with RSVP requested. Food and beverages will be served.

### Pictures from the Lunch & Learn Series



Thank you to all the speakers and visitors who participated in the Lunch & Learn Programs. William Caldwell with the National Park Service, Garret Jackson, John Hawkins and Eliza Bishop were the guest speakers. Board members Doug Davis, Tina Triplett, Bob Kogut, Stephen Rauchfuss, Nell Fisher, Bill Karr and Sandra Watts were in attendance. Tours of the house were available for visitors after the lecture.



THE

### HOUSE CALLED FORT DEFIANCE

William Lenoir came to the Yadkin Valley, which he called “the sweetest spot-on earth,” about 1783, after purchasing two adjoining plantations on opposite sides of the 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 Lenoir’s first lived in a log house on “Old House Hill,” thought to have been built by Snoddy.

The other place across the river was purchased from Snoddy’s brother-in-law, Joseph McCorkle, of Rowan County, and included the former war-time stockade called Fort Defiance. Lenoir began the construction of the house called “Fort Defiance” on the McCorkle tract in the spring of 1788, and the family was occupying it by 1791. (See the Articles of Agreement between Thomas Fields and William Lenoir on page 5 of this newsletter.)

In 1822, Thomas Lenoir, who had been living in Haywood County, moved home to Fort Defiance at the invitation of father to help manage the large plantation. Thomas had six children, whom William Lenoir described as “rude and disruptive,” which made living in the house difficult for the older generation. So, an addition, which Lenoir called an “apartment,” was added onto the original house for the use of William, Ann, and their unmarried daughter, Myra. The first floor of the addition is open to visitors, but the second floor is not accessible at this time.

Even though they lived under the same roof, each family functioned as a separate unit. It is interesting to note that there is no door inside the house between the two residences. The only access to either dwelling is by the front or the back porch. The two families had an agreement that when one needed to visit the other, they were to knock at the door and wait to be invited inside. Each took their own meals in their own quarters.

The original Fort Defiance took over four years to build. The apartment was added in a matter of six months. Mrs. Lenoir died in 1833, Myra died in 1836, and William died in 1839. After William’s death, Fort Defiance became the property of his son, Thomas.

About 1898, Laura Lenoir Norwood, great-granddaughter of William Lenoir, abstracted certain facts from his journals and letters. Listed below are some items regarding the house called Fort Defiance. The *italics* are comments from the newsletter staff.

**LAURA LENOIR NORWOOD'S TRANSCRIPTIONS**

1789 23 Dec. Sent a hogshead of tobacco by Wm. J. Moore to Mr. Adams at Fayetteville which I expect to go toward some brass locks and 200 ft. of glass 10 by 8 inches, and some paint he promised to send for, for me (i.e., to England). 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." (Hauling it to Fayetteville). *[See the note following the next entry.]*

1789 March 13<sup>th</sup> Received a letter from Mr. Adams of Fayetteville, dated 17<sup>th</sup> Feby, informing me that he had rec'd of me by John Moore a hogshead of tobacco., etc." *[Should this date be 1790, or is the previous one 1788? Given that he is ordering locks, window glass, and paint, suggests it is early in the building of the house.]*

1780 March 22. I (Laura Norwood) find an old agreement by which Oliver Roberts agrees to build for General Lenoir two stack chimneys and under pin the house and wall up the cellar, and showing the house at Ft. Defiance to be nearly done, etc. (L. N.) *[The year is obviously incorrect. It is probably 1789 or 1790. The reference to "nearly done" suggests it is 1790 since the house was occupied sometime in 1791.]*

1791 I (Laura Norwood) find a copy of an old letter written by Robert Adams, a merchant in Fayetteville, N.C., giving directions about importing from England some articles of furniture for the house at Ft. Defiance, such as carpets and looking glasses. The letter is dated 13<sup>th</sup> July 1791. General Lenoir says, speaking of the looking glasses, of which were six: "I should be glad to have my name nicely set on each glass or frame."

In 1793, August 2, Hugh McDonald, clerk for R. W. Adams, writes and says the articles have been packed and sent by George Howard's wagon to Ft. Defiance. He sends a bill dated 1792, and his letter is dated 1793, so it must have taken over a year to get the things across the ocean. The bill has charge for shipping and for duty on importation. McDonald says: "I shall be glad to know these fine things may reach you safely." Two of the looking glasses still survive the wrecks of time and are here now (1898) being over 100 years old, but the largest and finest one – which I remember hanging in the "hall" or large room of the house – has been broken. *[Two of the mirrors are still on display in the house in 2022.]*

1816 April 15. Finished bringing water in pipes from the mountain to my house. *[One of the water "pipes" can still be seen in the Smoke House.]*

1822 October 6<sup>th</sup> I agree to give Solomon Turner \$25 in cash to build a chimney to the west end of my new building. I am to have the bricks, etc. ready and the foundation laid, and he is to come tomorrow five weeks, if I do not write him, I cannot be ready at that time. He says we will not differ about the price of building the kitchen chimney. *(Probably Lenoir was going to have sales make the brick for the addition.) [Could the word "differ" be a misreading of "dicker"? Was a kitchen chimney replaced or was a new kitchen chimney added at this time?]*

Nov. 11, 1822. Solomon Turner and Washington Hicks came to begin a stack chimney at the west end of the new apartment of my dwelling house. *(This is the fireplace that is in the addition.)*

1837 June. The Fort dwelling house as covered with white pine shingles. N.S. the yellow poplar cover lasted just 22 years. *[This suggests the house had been covered about 1825. Did the original 1790 shingles last for 35 years?]*

The purpose for Laura Norwood's transcriptions is not known. There is no common theme. However, it is good and easy quick reference.

Nancy Alexander quotes another diary entry from October 28, 1822: "Paid this Sumter \$116.00 for work he and his boys has done on my new addition to the West end of my Fort House." The Sumter is Thomas who had a business in the Patterson area that employed six men in the manufacture of furniture.

*The house was occupied by six generations of Lenoirs. In 1964, the Caldwell County Historical Society purchased the house and began the restoration. In 1971, Fort Defiance, Inc., a non-profit board, was formed, and they led in the completion of the project. The house was opened to the public in September 1977.*

THE CONTRACT

Transcribed as written from a copy of the 1788 contract

Articles of Agreement between Thomas Fields and William Lenoir Both of Wilkes County North Carolina \_\_\_ Made the 18th day of March A. D. 1788.

Witnesseth that he the said Thomas Fields Hath agreed to Build a house Forty feet Long & Twenty Eight feet wides Two stories high with four Room in each Story, fore the said William Lenoir in the following manner (To wit) The said Lenoir is to get all the lumber except the shingles and said Fields is to frame said house with proper Girders and every thing/that/necessary thereto

To lay all the lower Floors in the first and second stories with Plank Tongue & grooved\_\_To do all the weath-er-boarding Plain'd, Jointed & Beeded & c.—To [Sheath] the Roof with Square edged Plank and to get good thick shingles from the stump Joint them to a Gauge Round them and nail them on Cornish said Leave with Modillions & c———make sixteen 18 light window, Frames worked out of the solid wood & [Illegible] Shutters of six panels to each window & the Sashes make Nine 6 panel Doors & frames & c——Run up one pair of Stairs well Bannistered & a small pair Cased up & c. put Wash Boards and chair Boards in the necest manner Round all the Rooms and hang all the Doors and windows —which is all to be Done in a Proper good nice and workman like manner on or before the 25th Day of December Anna Dom 1789—

For which work the aforesaid William Lenoir agrees to gives up [the rent[ that Thomas Read is to [pay the] Plantation whereon he now [lives this] year; and to give up said plantation to said Fields for the next year; and to make or Cause to make a good and sufficient Deed for the said land to the aforesaid Fields when he compleats the work above mentioned—And said Lenoir agrees to give said Fields one barrel of Corn this spring and five hundred pounds of Beef next fall; & five Barrells corn & 5 [lbs] pork next winter. And to let said Fields have the use of the fort field to tend in corn next year. (reserving to said Lenoir all the apples & half the cherries) And said Fields to take good care of all the fruit Trees & Return said plantation at the year's end in as good order as he Receives it— And said Lenoir likewise agrees to pay said Fields Eight pounds By when the foresaid work is finished.

And he the said Thomas Fields and he the said William Lenoir Do hereby Obligate themselves to each other to pay all Damages that shall be sustained by either not complying fully and [Factually] with their Respective agreements above mentioned. In Testimony where of We have hereunto Enterchangeably set our hand and Seals the day first above written.

Sign'd Seal'd & Delivered in Presents of

Thomas Fields (Sealed)

Mary Lenoir her [Illegible] Kezia King [mark]

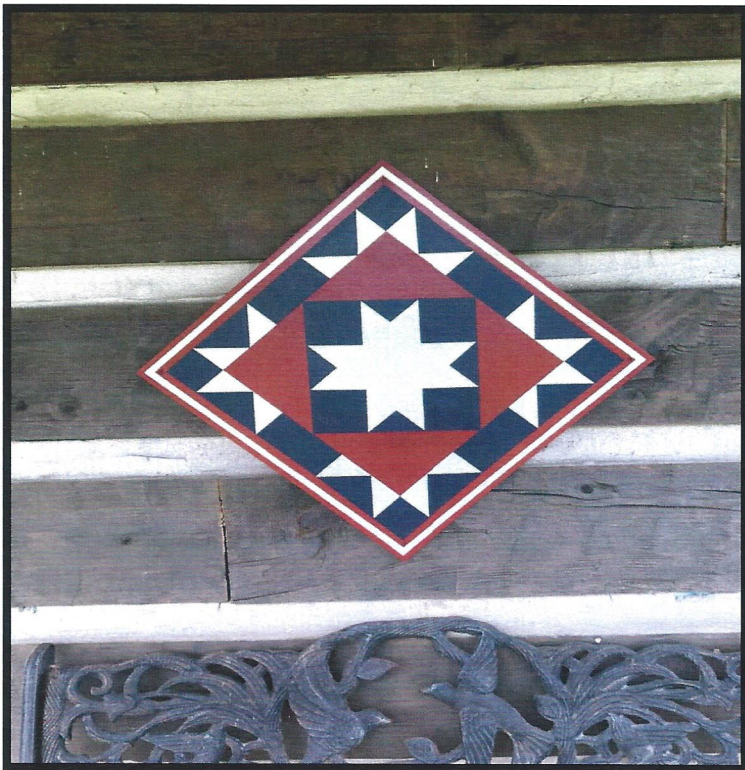
William Lenoir (Sealed)

6th April 1789. I Thomas Fields have received five hundred Weight of Pork & Six Barrells of Corn of William Lenoir on Account of the within Contract & Articles of agreement [Illegible] me.

Thomas Fields

THOMAS FIELDS

Thomas Fields was born about 1747 in Albemarle Co., Virginia, to Richard Fields and Elizabeth (Murrell). He is probably the Thomas Fields who is listed in an Apprentice bond on 21 November 1763, in Fredericksville Parish to John Coleman to learn to be a carpenter and joiner. He married Elizabeth "Betty" Coffey, born about 1749, daughter of Thomas Coffey and Jane (Graves) about 1767. They came to Wilkes County (now Caldwell), NC, in the late 1770's with Betty's brother, James Coffey. Thomas was the was the first clerk of the Church of Jesus Christ at the head of the Yadkin (now Yadkin Baptist Church of Patterson), and he probably built the first two buildings, known as Coffey's Meeting House, where the church met. He was also the builder of Fort Defiance, home of William Lenoir. He is probably the T. Field, one of the commissioners, who requested that William Lenoir draw the plans for the town of Wilkesboro in May of 1800. His Wilkes County, NC, will was written 10 January 1807 and probated February 1807 which indicates his death occurred in early 1807. His wife, Betty survived and died about 1811. The will, which mentions "my seven children," is witnessed by William Lenoir, Jonathan Boone, and "Friend" Eli Coffey.



Thank you to board member Tina Triplett for making and donating the barn quilt square that adds a pop of color to the Visitor Center.

### Board Highlights

- Members present—Tina Triplett, Monty Minton, Stephen Rauchfuss, Nell Fisher, Bill Karr, Doug Davis, Bob Kogut and Sandra Watts.
- Report of activities and events for May and June were discussed. The Lunch & Learn Series have been very well attended and have been quite successful.
- Tina Triplett gave an update on the inventory and reported on the upgrades to the Visitor Center. Painting the interior of the Visitor Center will begin in the fall. She and Doug Davis also volunteered to paint the picnic tables.
- The Summer Kitchen painting project is nearly complete, pending the repair of some boards to the back side of the building.
- Sandra Watts reported that improvements to the driveway are complete. Grant for replacing the central heating and air for the Visitor Center and replacing wiring and lighting to the picnic shelter is in process.
- Monty Minton has narrowed down the search for shingles for the main house, the siding should be completed in roughly two weeks. Bids will be taken for the installation of the siding and painting.

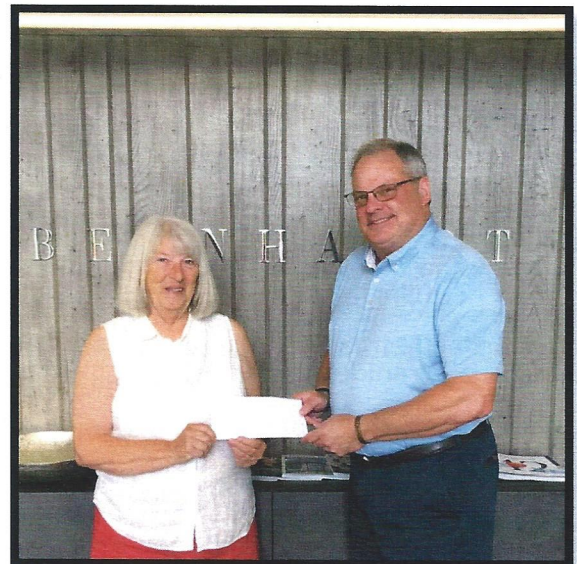
### SITE DIRECTOR WANTED

- Must have a love of history and good people skills.
- Will be responsible for guided tours of 18th century home of General William Lenoir.
- Work with the board on fund raising and coordinating events.
- Must be familiar with Microsoft products.
- Some clerical and light cleaning duties are required.
- Summer hours are 21 per week, 6 hours Thursday, Friday, and Saturday and 3 hours Sunday. Winter hours are 12 per week, 6 hours Saturday and 6 hours Sunday. May have additional hours for special events and board meetings.

If interested, send resume to Chair Person

Sandra Watts at 828-758-1671

or email [fortdefiancenc@gmail.com](mailto:fortdefiancenc@gmail.com)



### THANK YOU

Board Chair, Sandra Watts, receives grant funding on behalf of Fort Defiance from William F. Howard, III, Treasurer, of the Bernhardt Furniture Foundation for upgrades to the Visitor Center

# 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

## 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

## Specified Donations

Covington Foundation (Roof)  
Stevens Family Foundation (Roof)  
Bernhardt Furniture Foundation (Upgrade 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 \_\_\_\_\_

# **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.



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