



Fort Defiance

Chronicle



Winter Issue

February 2023

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

fortdefiancenc@gmail.com
historicfortdefiancenc.org

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March the 25th and 26th Fort Defiance will host a group of reenactors from Davidson's Fort in Old Fort, North Carolina who will be portraying Lenoir's Rangers. They will be demonstrating a muster, blacksmithing, musket firing, drilling, sutler, games and toys and encampment of the North Carolina Militia under Major General William Lenoir in the late 1700s. Admission is \$10.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children ages 6 to 14 and children under 5 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.



Women on the Frontier

A special springtime event will be held on Saturday, April 15th from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Experience what life was like for women on the North Carolina frontier. Living history volunteers will be demonstrating the skills of everyday life such as cooking, sewing, the use of herbs, laundry, dyeing and the education of girls. There will be no charge for the main event, admission to the house is \$7.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children ages 6 to 14 and children under 5 are free.



The Dark Skin Lenoirs by William LeNoir and Rosalind Lenoir Zackery



William LeNoir

My family sir name is Lenoir due to it being customary during slavery for slaves to take or use the last name of their master. As the documented descendants of four generations of enslaved people owned by General William Lenoir and other members of his family, we were offered the opportunity to provide some details about their presence at Fort Defiance. It is my opinion that there are still efforts to portray the antebellum period of American history using fictional or glamorized details about the relationship between slave and master. Fortunately for my family the existence of The Lenoir Papers has provided us with a more realistic view of what life was like for the dark skin Lenoirs.

Our families knowledge of the Papers came about as a result of a social media post and response between Ike Forester and Gwen Walker Cradle, who ironically are both fourth generation descendants of the families in question. Details of life at Fort Defiance are relayed through letters shared among the General's family as well as legal documents such as property listings and estates of the family which include the slaves that were owned along with births, deaths and monetary value.

The connection between our two families begins with the purchase of a female slave Nancy and her three children from Capt. William Dula in 1812. During the late 1700's and mid 1800's Fort Defiance operated with 25 to 46 slaves in the area now known as Caldwell County. According to the



Lenoir Papers, the General viewed slavery as a protection for the slave due to the uncertainties of freedom for Black people. Male slaves performed tasks related to field work and tending to livestock while females served by spinning yarn, sewing, making cloth as well as being house servants. The General was said to prefer buying young slaves due to the price and if they had the desired temperament he would train them in skills such as

smithing, carpentry and leatherwork which increased their value. There are details of marriages that were allowed among the slaves, one being our great grandmother Deliah, the great grandchild of Nancy and a male slave named Andrew. Andrew was listed as the son of a well thought of



Rosalind Lenoir Zachery

female slave named Jenny. Two other significant marriages were those of Uriah and Maria, great grandchild of Nancy as well as a marriage between Romeo and Caroline a sister to Uriah. The marriage of Uriah and Deliah was not looked upon favorably but Uriah was said to be a valuable slave owned by Walter Lenoir in Haywood County and consent was given.

The Papers also mention injuries, illness, births and deaths that occurred among the slaves, as well as attempts to provide medical attention. Of course there are details of the use of the lash or whip for discipline along with the admission of not being easy to do but necessary to maintain control. Deliah was mentioned as the subject on more than one occasion. The Papers refer to a book Making of a Confederate that speaks of Uriah and Andrew accompanying Thomas Lenoir in the Civil War.

Mr. Forester said he was motivated to share the information with us to reveal the truth and help us with our family puzzle. Gwen my cousin, Rosalind my sister and Sasha Mitchell a cousin are a few family members who have reviewed portions of the Papers. There's still a great deal of information we have yet to see including mention of a land grant or gift to Uriah. Perhaps it will be possible to share more history of the dark skin Lenoirs at another time.

Lenoir Wolf Bounty Certificate Sheds Light on Eradicated Predator

By Kelly Coffey

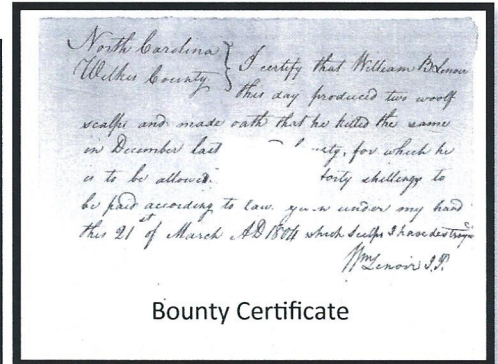
Records of William Lenoir and his family are valuable not only for what they tell us about the Lenoirs and Fort Defiance, but also for what they incidentally reveal about life for everyone else in western North Carolina in the 18th and 19th centuries. Family documents address customs, food, crops, trade relationships, clothing, etc.- even wildlife.

The North Carolina State Archives contains a bounty certificate stating the following:

North Carolina}
Wilkes County}

I certify that William B. Lenoir this day produced two wolf (sic) scalps and made oath that he killed the same in December last ----(illegible) for which he is to be allowed ----(illegible) forty shillings to be paid according to law ----(illegible) under my hand my hand this 21st of March AD 1804 which scalps I have destroyed

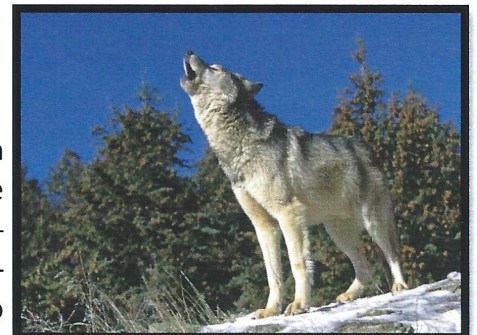
Wm Lenoir J.P. [Justice of the Peace]



Bounty Certificate

The person who killed the wolves was William Lenoir's oldest son, William Ballard Lenoir. William Lenoir was certifying his son's kill in his role as Justice of the Peace.

Wolves are native to almost all of North America, including western North Carolina, and could be found here through the 1700s and much of the 1800s. The range of two wolf species overlapped in our region- the gray or timber wolf (*Canis lupus*) and the red wolf (*Canis rufus*). While gray is the predominate color in the timber wolf, they can actually range in color from white to black and every shade of gray in between. Similarly, while the red wolf obviously has a reddish coat, its color can vary as well.



Woman fights wolves & wins

The document above illustrates the troubled relationship between wolves and humans that goes back centuries, even millennia. Wolves voraciously killed livestock of the early American settlers. A dramatic account of attempted wolf depredation was told by a woman named Francis Davis in the early 1800s. Francis was alone in a sugar camp near the head of the Linville River in what is now Avery County. Maple sugar was a common sweetener in the early days, with settlers establishing "sugar camps" near maple tree groves, often in remote locations. There they would tap the sap and spend many days and nights boiling it down to crystals. While Francis was tending the fire in camp, one of her cows nearby gave birth one evening. Soon a pack of wolves appeared, ready to pounce on the helpless calf. Francis spent the rest of the night bravely holding off the wolves with firebrands until they finally left before daylight.

Such incidents led settlers to strike back at wolves with much ferocity. Their goal was complete extermination. States passed legislation allowing counties to offer bounties for wolves killed, the proof being the scalps. A *Lenoir Topic* article in 1890, reminiscing about times earlier that century says, "Scalps were legal tender and were good against the county just as much as paper and other claims are today."

Wolf hunting a profitable enterprise

The Lewis family was the first to hunt wolves in what is now Watauga County. They took the scalps of wolf pups (which were worth the same as an adult) but refused to kill mature wolves so that they would keep reproducing. Such a strategy was lucrative for the Lewises, but somewhat defeated the purpose of the county offering a bounty. Apparently, people were always looking for ways to overexploit or cheat the bounty system. William Lenoir notes on his certificate that he destroyed the scalps, probably because of the likelihood that they could be stolen and turned in a second time to collect the bounty.

Within a couple of decades after Lenoir wrote that bounty certificate, wolves became increasingly scarce in settled areas. An 1885 *Lenoir Topic* article states:

About the year 1826 the last drove of wolves came through this section. They came in by the way of Green Mountain...up to King's Creek, passed down Zack's Fork...then went in the way of Johns River. There was said to be a dozen or over. They did no damage on this side of the mountain. All the dogs and men in the neighborhood went after them but without effect.

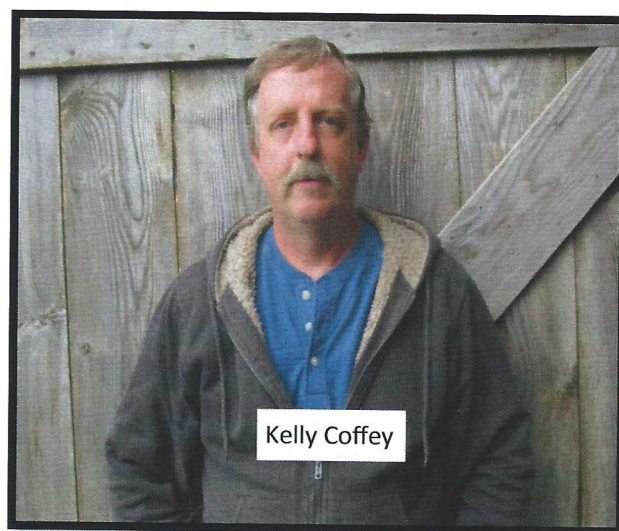
Wolf encounters in more remote areas continued throughout the rest of the century, however. The last authenticated killing of a wolf in western North Carolina was in Hay-

wood County in 1887. Nevertheless, sporadic undocumented reports of wolves in North Carolina lasted into the 1930s. Other eastern states saw a similar decline in wolves to the point of extirpation, though wolves survived (barely) in the West to the present. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) listed the gray wolf as endangered for many years, but its numbers increased and it was recently delisted. Licensed hunts have even been authorized. The FWS has attempted to reestablish the red wolf in eastern North Carolina, but the population remains extremely low. Conversely, a gray wolf reintroduction program in Yellowstone National Park has been judged a resounding success. Yet, the wolf remains controversial in many locations, with ranchers concerned about predation.

Gone for good

An historical overview of wolves anywhere in America has a built-in bias against the animal. There were no defenders of wolves in the past, given their destruction of livestock. Only today, when 98% of the population is removed from the farm, can we appreciate the wolf's beauty, intelligence, majesty, and important role in wildlife ecosystems. It's a shame that we could never coexist, and even today, coexistence seems possible only if wolves live in the most remote areas of the continent, far from any livestock.

There's no indication that we will ever see wolves in the wild again in western North Carolina. A faint vestige remains, however, in the names of geographic features- Wolf Ridge (Watauga County), Wolf Knob & Wolf Branch (Wilkes County), and several others elsewhere in these mountains and foothills.



For more stories about western North Carolina's wild-life, history, folklore, and geography, visit my website at www.blueridgelore.org. I'm working on a longer version of this article with fascinating details about wolf behavior, Cherokee relationships with wolves, and other wolf encounters that I will post on the website when finished.

Blue Ridge Energy Members Foundation



Fort Defiance, Inc. is a recipient of grant funding from the Blue Ridge Energy Members Foundation in the amount of \$7,500.00. President, Sandra Watts, Site Director Bob Myers and volunteer Rebekah Myers accepted the check on behalf of Fort Defiance. These funds will be used to upgrade central heating and air in the Visitor Center, upgrade interior lights from florescent to LED and install lights under the picnic shelter.

2023 Memberships are due, see page 7 for details.



Memberships can now be paid by credit card through our website, www.historicfortdefiancenc.org. Be sure to fill out the membership form in its entirety and while you are visiting the site, be sure to subscribe so that you can be notified of any upcoming events or blogs that are posted on the website.

Board Highlights

- ◆ The Board of Directors meet on January 10, 2023 at Fort Defiance. Members present were: Steven Rauchfuss, Monty Minton, Ike Forester, Tina Triplett Doug Davis, Bob Kogut, Nell Fisher, site director Bob Myers and Sandra Watts.
- ◆ Site Director Bob Myers reported on events that are in the works for the summer. Dates so far are March 25, April 15 and June 10. Details are being finalized. He also stated that the hemlocks have been treated for wooly adelgid .
- ◆ Tina Triplett reported that improvements continue to be made to the public area of the Visitor Center. She has also been working on the website.
- ◆ Sandra Watts informed the group that the funds had been received from Blue Ridge Energy for the upgrade of the heating/air and lights of the Visitor Center and picnic area. A grant request has been submitted to the Cannon Foundation. A representative of the foundation is planning a visit in February. Works will also begin on the restoration of the family cemetery and requested funds to replace some signage. Provided everyone with a to-do list that needs to be accomplished before springs and things to consider long term.
- ◆ Monty Minton thinks that the roofing project will start mid February. The siding for the house has been primed and ready to install and expressed his concerns on certain things in the basement.

FRIENDS OF FORT DEFIANCE

Your support is vitally important to the operation of Fort Defiance. **THANK YOU!** The following members have joined for **2023**:

Patriot/Individual

Oscar L. Doberiner
 R. Kelly Coffey
 Helen Neil Fisher
 Bill Karr
 Iredell County Extension Master Gardner Assoc. (in memory
 Of Michael W. Bernhardt)
 Julie Mullis
 Matt O'Bryant

Militia/Family

Wanda Prince
 Liza Plaster (in honor of Steven Rauchfuss)
 Charles & Carol Bernhardt (in memory of Michael W. Bernhardt)
 Joanne M. Schwind (in memory of Michael W. Bernhardt)
 Kathryn H. Hamrick (in memory of Michael W. Bernhardt)
 Margaret M. Broyhill
 Jean Branch
 Betty Buss
 Lissa Holsclaw (in memory of revolutionary ancestor Colonal Isaac
 Lee)

Lieutenant

Captain/Patron

Myra A. Dickson
 Brenda Combs
 Monty Combs
 Caron Josey Hobson
 Rutzinski Family (in memory of Michael W. Bernhardt)
 Nathan & Julie Dixon (in memory of Michael W. Bernhardt)
 Joseph P. Logan (in memory of Michael W. Bernhardt)
 Alvin Johnston
 Evelyn Hartshorn Beam
 Mary A. Kincaid

Gemstone District Roundtable (in memory of Michael W. Bernhardt)
 Roger & Jan Clary (in memory of Michael W. Bernhardt)
 Jane J. Smith
 Tina Triplett
 Steve McCord

Colonel/ Sponsor

Keith & Carrie Harrison (in memory of Michael W. Bernhardt)
 Scott & Karen Glover (in memory of Michael W. Bernhardt)
 Samuel L. & Sandra B. Ramsey

General/ Benefactor

Barbara Freiman

Matching Funds Contributors

Steve and Jean Branch
 Eliza Bishop
 Liza Plaster
 Monte & Brenda Combs
 Joe & Francis Delk
 Brenda Bernhardt
 Mike Bernhardt
 Myra A. Dickson
 C. Yorke Lawson

Specified Donations—Thank You

Stevens Family Foundation (Cemetery Restora-
 tion)
 Bernhardt Furniture Foundation (Upgrade Visi-
 tor Center)
 Hogan Family Foundation (Visitor Center)
 Blue Ridge Energy (upgrade heating & air)

Please Join Friends Now

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.

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

-----Detach here-----

<input type="checkbox"/> Patriot/Individual	\$20-39
<input type="checkbox"/> Militia/Family Family is defined as two parents and their dependent children.	\$40-74
<input type="checkbox"/> Lieutenant/Supporter	\$75-99
<input type="checkbox"/> Captain/Patron	\$100-499
<input type="checkbox"/> Colonel/Sponsor	\$500-999
<input type="checkbox"/> General/Benefactor	\$1000-up

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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