

Fort Defiance

Chronicle

Winter Issue

December 2022

Fort Defiance
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JOIN NOW!

Friends of Fort Defiance support the day-by-day operations of the site. The organization's by-laws state: "**Membership in the Corporation shall be open to all persons, organizations, institutions, foundations, and corporations who are interested in or in sympathy with its purpose. Prospective members shall apply to the Corporation and upon acceptance by the Membership Committee of the Board, as well as payment of annual dues to the Corporation, they shall be enrolled as members in good standing.**"

Members are for the calendar year. Categories of membership, depending on the amount of donation are available: Patriot/Individual \$20; Militia/Family, \$40 (family is defined as two parents and their dependent children); Lieutenant/Supporter, \$75; Captain/Patron, \$100; Colonel /Sponsor, \$500; General/Benefactor, \$1,000 and up.

Benefits are available for the Friends. For those who have a family membership, family members are defined as spouse and dependent children. All donors shall receive a free admission which includes a tour of the house. Captain/Patron, Colonel/Sponsor, or General/Benefactor will be admitted free to special events, if they make a reservation for the event when reservations are required. Colonel/Sponsor and General/Benefactor may have free use of the grounds, but reservations must be made in advance. All contributors receive a **10% discount** for items purchased in the gift shop, and for events for which there is a charge.

Gifts for matching funds or specific projects are also appreciated, and they are considered separately from donations to the Friends of Fort Defiance. All donors are recognized in the Fort's newsletter.

All contributors will receive "Fort Defiance Chronicle" the newsletter published six times per year. The newsletter which is mailed, one per family, promotes upcoming events at the Fort, keeps the supporter abreast of what projects are being planned and promoted, and includes one or two historical articles that relate to the Fort or the Lenoir family.

Consider giving a membership as a gift at Christmas or for some other important occasion in the life of a family member or a friend. Fort Defiance will notify the recipient of the Donor's thoughtfulness.

All renewals received from this point will be credited to **2023** memberships unless the donor specifically requests 2022 membership..

Checks should be made payable to Fort Defiance, Inc., and mailed to P. O. Box 686, Lenoir, NC 28645, or hand delivered to the Fort. A form can be found on the last page of this newsletter.

**Annual Membership Meeting
October 15, 2022**



The Friends of Fort Defiance Annual Membership Meeting was held on October 15, 2022. Board members in attendance were Tina Triplett, Monty Minton, Bob Kogut, and Sandra Watts. Entertainment was by board member Doug Davis. Members in attendance were Donna Minton, James Pennell, Steve McCord, John Hawkins, Monty Combs, Brenda Combs, Karen Barlow, Lissa Holsclaw and Wanda Prince.

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 18th and 19th Centuries; and to promote the use of said properties and information for the education and pleasure of the general public.

CHRISTMAS 1829

On December 25, 1932, *The Charlotte Observer* published an article by Maude Minish Sutton entitled “N. C. Christmas and New Year of 100 Years Ago,” describing Christmas at Fort Defiance. This article is an adaptation with a few modifications and comments. In actuality, the Christmas she is describing is 1829, which was 103 years earlier. The source of the information is letters, diaries, and a recipe book.

The mistress of Fort Defiance at that time was Selena Avery Lenoir, wife of Thomas Lenoir, and a daughter-in-law of General William Lenoir. Her job was running the household which included preparing for the holidays.

Baking was a huge part of the preparation. The pastry at The Fort included two cakes that were special favorites of the gentle hostess. One was “Lady Abbess Tea Cake” made of a paste of three ounces of almonds, a quarter of a pound of butter, two ounces of sugar, pounded in a mortar with a little rose water till it became a thick paste. It was to be spread on a buttered tin and baked in a “slack oven” till it turned pale brown. It was to be served with eggnog.

The other cake that was especially recommended was made of a variety of fruits and a pound each of rice flour and wheat flour. The old mortar in which the rice was pounded is still at The Fort, as is the old water mill at the mouth of Buffalo Creek where the flour was ground. (*The mill is no longer in existence.*) The cake was to be made with a glass or two of brandy (“peach is best”) and served with “Rutland pudding.” The recipe for the pudding is more anti-prohibition than the cake.

One especially dainty dessert was to be cooked thus: “Set the skillit [*sic*] a good distance from the; fire on hot ashes. Do not use coals. Renew the ashes till it is good done.” The preparation of the gastronomic delights for which The Fort was noted was no easy task.

The recipes are delightfully quaint. But few indeed are the housewives of today who would dare attempt them. Cream, eggs, and the other necessary supplies for cakes and desserts are called for in amounts that would sadly deplete a housekeeping budget in 1932. (*Remember that in 1932 the county was in the throes of the Great Depression.*)

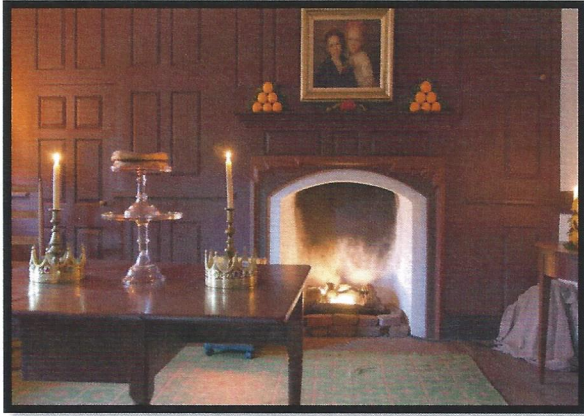
From selecting the turkeys which were to be killed for Christmas, and, preparing with her own hands, a gift for every slave on the plantation, to entertaining with exquisite grace and dignity the guests that came, there was nothing she could not do well. The diary records a long list of guests, and a series of events that show constant activity.



Thomas Lenoir took the gaieties of Christmas calmly, as indeed he took all of life. He resided at the bountifully spread table, read the Christmas prayers, and welcomed the arriving guests, and handed out presents to the servants. On the eve

of this long-ago Christmas, he stood on the wide piazza and looked up the valley to where the Blue Ridge was dark against the sunset and his thought dwelt sadly on the absent members of the family, who were missing the festivities of home. A daughter who was attending school at Salem had been gravely ill, and it was determined that she should not make the trip home for Christmas due to the extremely cold weather.





The young men who were guests at The Fort on Christmas 1829 were an interesting group. They were not unlike their descendants of today. They had all the faults and virtues of young men of every age and condition. They had missed the thrill of the Indian wars and the Revolution, but many of them were to take part in the exciting drama of the pioneer life in the outlying districts of the southwest. They were given to self-indulgence, fun loving, gay, and wasteful of time and energy. They had the boundless ambition which has characterized every young American since our land was first settled and they were many of them to realize the height of their ambitions. Some of them were to be heard of later as statesmen in the new lands, others won wealth and

renown here at home. A guest list of the visitors at The Fort during the holidays in 1829 would be a roster of the good and great North Carolina at the time.

The duration of the holiday was determined by the time the “backlog” in the big fireplace in the parlor burned. It was a specially prepared backlog. Cut from the trunk of a big hickory tree, it was lain for three weeks in the water. On Christmas eve, it was borne in on the shoulders of four sturdy men and put on the fire. As long as one tiny chunk of it remained between the big wrought iron andiron, it was a holiday. They described it as “taking Christmas.”

Christmas 1829 was much different from Christmas 1932 when the article was written. It is good on Christmas 2022 to reflect on Christmas in another era.

Christmas Letter from Loula Lenoir to Walter Lenoir

Jan 10th 1877

Dear Uncle Walter,

I received your nice letter Monday and was very glad to get it. I hope you are well this cold time. We had a large Christmas tree in the hall. Bessie got a big rag doll as big as a real baby. I got a traveling satchel and Bessie and Baby and I all got picture books. The last night of the old year every child in the house was sick. You must not think that Santa Claus has neglected you. Bessie wanted to tell you but she thinks it would take her too long, you got cloth to make you a coat and pants. Mother says she wishes that they were made and you had them on. We wanted to send for Mary Lenoir but the day we were to send it rained and the next day it snowed. Cousin Tom Norwood arrived safely last Friday week. We heard he was to leave the ninth, there has been no passing since he came, the snow has been too deep. Tommie and Walter have caught a good many partridges—they have 20 alive in a box. You must write to me soon. Please excuse this as I haven't tried to write in a long time. Hope you will come to see us soon. I send you a kiss and a heart full of love.

Your Loving

Loula





Al & Adrienne Johnston

Porsche Club of America

On September 24, 2022, the Hurricane Region (Raleigh East) of the Porsche Club of America stopped for a visit. There were 18 cars of various types on a two day mountain drive. The group was led by Terry Love and John Merhar. The club is based in Morganton, NC. Among this group was Al Johnston and his wife Adrienne. Al is a 4th great grandson of William Lenoir. He and his wife live in Washington, NC.



New Books For Sale

New books have arrived at the Visitor Center. Book titles include, *The Making of a Confederate; Walter Lenoir's Civil War Diary*, by William Barney, *Captain Lenoir's Diary: Tom Lenoir and his Civil War Company*, by Carroll C. Jones, *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution*, by Charles Woodmason, Mary Bohlen's *Heritage Cooking*, *The Battle of Kings Mountain: Eyewitness Accounts* by Robert M. Dunkerly, *Before They Were Hero's At Kings Mountain*, by Randell Jones and more. Items for children such as wooden dice game, revolutionary kits, checkers and Jacob's Ladders. Other items include brass compasses, brass telescopes, and ink wells. These are just a few things with more to come.

1850 Recipes taken from Cornelia Isabella Lenoir Cookbook

Soft Ginger Bread

2 large spoonsful of butter or lard (or half of each) melt it in a tin pan. Dissolve a large tablespoonful of [Illegible] in a pint of sour cream – pour it in the melted butter, then pour in a pint of molasses. 1 dessert spoonful of ginger, have your flour sifted & add to the mixture till you have a very soft dough, roll it tolerably thick & bake quickly. **(2 eggs may be added).**

Another [Receipt] – 1 pint of molasses, ½ a pint of melted lard, 1 tablespoonful of ginger, 3 pints of flour & 1 ½ tablespoonsful of soda dissolved in ½ a pint of sour cream or buttermilk.

Nothings

White of 2 eggs, 1 egg shell full of sugar, & one of milk, a piece of butter the size of a hickory nut, flour enough to make a dough. Roll them & fry in lard.

Board Highlights

The Friends of Fort Defiance Annual Meeting was held October 15, 2022 beginning at 1:00.

Refreshments were served which included homemade banana pudding donated by Cindy Parlier.

Board members present was: Monty Minton, Doug Davis, Tina Triplett, Bob Kogut, and Sandra Watts. Members present were: John Hawkins, Steve McCord, James Pennell, Donna Minton, Karen Barlow, Lissa Holsclaw, Monty Combs, Brenda Combs and Wanda Prince

A moment of silence was given in memory of Michael Wayne Bernhardt of Mooresville. Mike was a supporter of Fort Defiance in many ways.

Chairperson Sandra Watts, updated the members on

- ◆ Approximately 800 visitors toured the house since January 1, 2022.
- ◆ Number of members of Friends of Fort Defiance total 26.
- ◆ The accomplishments in the last two years; 2020, new gate, new roof on the picnic shelter, 2021 upgrade bathrooms, 2022, driveway repairs, purchase of shingles for all three buildings, upgrade the Visitor Center, painting of the summer kitchen, inventory of items, and identification of trees.
- ◆ Grants received in the last two years came from the Marion Stedman Covington Foundation (roof), Hogan Family Foundation (new gate, driveway repairs, upgrade to the Visitor Center), Stevens Family Foundation (roof) and the Bernhardt Furniture Foundation (upgrade bathrooms and upgrade Visitor Center). Grants pending to Blue Ridge Energy, upgrade heating and air in the Visitor Center).
- ◆ John Hawkins was recognized for his many hours of volunteer time.

The meeting was then opened up for questions, comments or suggestions. The house was opened for members to visit.

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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