



# Fort Defiance *Chronicle*



Winter Issue

February 2025

**Fort Defiance**

**P.O. Box 686**

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### Board Of Directors

Sandra Watts

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Tina Triplett

**Vice President**

Nell Fisher

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Bill Karr

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John Church

Kayleigh Corey

### Newsletter

### Committee

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Kelly Coffey

Barbara Freiman

## Lenoir Rangers Return March 22 & 23, 2025



The Lenoir Rangers will be back at Fort Defiance for a two day living history event on **March 22 & 23, 2025**, beginning at **10:00 am** each day. Demonstrations will include musket firing, drill demonstrations, musket ball making, period fishing kit, militia kit and 18th century cooking. The **event is free** with exception of a tour of the historic home . Standard fees apply, adults \$7.00, children 6-14 \$5.00 and age 5 and under are free.

## Let's Have A Tea Party!



**April 19, 2025**, General William Lenoir and wife Ann cordially request the presence of your company at a tea party event. The event will include tea with recollections of local historical characters who will relate how the "shot around the world" shaped their lives. The event also includes a tour of Fort Defiance and a self-guided tour of the cemetery, grounds, exhibits, and demonstrations. Additional information will be posted to the \_\_\_\_\_ website at [www.historicfortdefiancenc.org](http://www.historicfortdefiancenc.org) or follow the Fort Defiance Facebook page

Event by  
Fort Defiance  
Carolina Emerald Chapter NSDAR  
Rendezvous Mountain Chapter NSDAR  
Tucker's Barn Chapter NSDAR  
**Colonial Attire/Hat or Fascinator is encouraged**



**Kayleigh Corey**  
**Board of Directors**



Fort Defiance welcomes new board member, Kayleigh Corey. Kayleigh has lived in Caldwell County for six years and works full-time as a personal banker with First Citizens Bank. She graduated from UNC Greensboro in 2018 with a degree in archaeology and anthropology, focusing on classical studies. Over the last nine years, she has worked on five archaeological projects in various countries, both in the lab and the field. She works with the Exploring Joara Foundation in Morganton, N. C., and hosts “lab nights” at the foundation’s Wall Center, allowing members of the public to come to identify, clean, and sort artifacts while learning about the Berry site. The Berry site is located in Burke County and is home to the Spanish conquistadors’ Fort San Juan and the Native American village of Joara. She helps direct archaeological excavation, teaching others how to excavate and identify artifacts in the field. Since moving to Caldwell County, she has grown to love the community and looks forward to serving on the board.

**Mooresville Boy Scout Troop 377 Returns**



**Brookston Hall**

In October 2024, Brookston Hall from Mooresville Boy Scout Troop 377 began working toward his Eagle Scout. Being a Eagle Scout rank represents the highest rank attainable in the Boy Scouts of America and signifies a significant commitment to leadership, community service, and personal development. He worked with Appalachian State University student Tucker Terrell to clear the wooded area behind the picnic shelter and near the Champion Beech Tree—this required equipment such as two skid steers, chain saws, and much hard work. The area was cleared of small saplings, dead trees, and other debris, making it more accessible for Appalachian State University to use ground-penetrating radar to locate the slave quarters and cemetery. This also made the wooded area more accessible to visitors and added a new area of the grounds to explore.



**Geophysical  
Prospection  
Of  
Unmarked Burials  
and  
Slave Cabins at Fort  
Defiance, NC.**

Tucker Terrell is a senior majoring in Environmental Geology at Appalachian State University. His research at Fort Defiance is supported by a grant from the Office of Student Research at Appalachian and a departmental scholarship. He will write and defend his senior thesis before graduating in May 2025.

The methods are focused on ground-penetrating radar (GPR), which can create images of the subsurface based on contrasts in the soil properties. GPR is the gold-standard technique for finding potential unmarked burials. Collecting the data is similar to mowing a lawn. The researcher rolls the GPR cart along the ground in straight lines one foot apart which would indicate anomalies indicating that the ground had been disturbed in some way.

Meaningful GPR data must be collected in grid format, so clearing the land was necessary to detect anomalies. The small size of the brush covering the study area indicates that the potential cemetery was cleared as recently as the 1960s, with only a few large hemlock trees left standing. Eagle Scout candidate Brookston Hall and his troop were instrumental in conducting the land-clearing operation.

The Lenoir family papers describe the history of Fort Defiance, detailing the lives of the enslaved population over a 75-year period from 1788 to 1863, when Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation ended slavery. These documents mention the existence of four slave cabins located on the Southeast section of the two-acre property. The Lenoir papers also describe the burial of two long

held slaves within the "Negro Cemetery." The location of these burials has been lost to time. While a few piles of fieldstones were discovered, only one headstone remains on the bluff to indicate burials.

The geophysical study's purpose is to map these unmarked burials and the outbuildings where enslaved people were lodged. Although the records do not explicitly state the number of burials, the history of Fort Defiance suggests up to forty enslaved persons were residing there at any given time. High mortality rates related to childbirth were common, suggesting that the cemetery may contain dozens of burials ranging from adults to infants.

The search area was defined through several methods. Firstly, the documents place the cemetery South of the plantation house and the four cabins. Also used was geo-referenced historic aerial photographs of the site from 1964 that show two of the four cabins standing South of the house in a clearing. Initial investigation in the woods revealed several depressions aligned roughly East to West that may represent the settling of earth used to backfill the burials. Enslaved people often planted periwinkles to mark their burial grounds ephemerally. This plant was abundant in the area.

This research is intended to recover vital pieces of Fort Defiance's history that have been lost. Relocating the burial grounds will allow descendants of the enslaved population to reconnect with their heritage.



IN OBSERVANCE OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH



**Did You Know My People?**

Leslie Dula McKesson ©2024

A dialogue with Fort Defiance's  
Champion American Beech Tree

Did you know my people, Great Champion?

Did you see the brown-skinned, dark-eyed people  
who moved about the land you grow on  
with heads bowed and gazes lowered?

Do you remember their names and their faces?

Did you watch them toil in sun and snow;  
grist mill, sawmill, forging iron and metals?

Did you see them plant farm and field,  
reaping harvests owned by other men?  
turning flax to thread for warp and weft on ruler's looms?

Moving in and out of the big house,  
driving carriages, tending to animals  
said to be their equals?

Did you watch dusky young couples slip out of their cabins at mid-  
night  
to kiss under your canopy  
as soft winds danced through your branches?

Did they stand at your feet and lift newborn babes to the sky,  
giving them to their God  
so no man could own their souls?

Did you watch them hold hands and circle around you--  
lining out mournful prayer songs, remembering the lost,  
burying the dead in periwinkle-covered graves?

And what did they think of you, Mighty Beech?

Did they wish they were like you;  
independent, strong, impervious to pain?

Did they take the lash as you took the axe?  
Were their cries muted  
or did they cause your leaves to quake?

Did they imagine maimed limbs emerging new  
like budding branches? Did their flesh bear scars like your gnarly  
knots –  
bumps, holes and scratches that time engraved to prove its power?

Did they stand beside you and shut their eyes,  
dreaming their feet could pierce the cool black soil like roots  
filling hungry bellies and soothing sun-scorched skin?

Did they long for rhizomes to lace their bodies to the ground  
so they couldn't be moved  
or sold?

Or did they yearn to run, far from where you are?

Did they admire the beauty of your bronze October leaves  
while their exquisite brown tones spoke of bondage?

Did they lift rippling arms like sturdy branches toward Heaven  
blocking the rod?  
contending for humanity?

Did their tears glisten in the sun like dew on your foliage  
when they thought about the freedom that might only come  
in the presence of God?

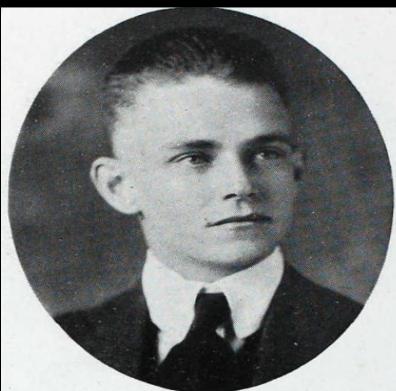
Did they hope their earthly journey would be unbroken like yours—  
birth, breath, growth, reproduction, death?

Did they know you stood watching,  
silently,  
carrying unspoken stories across generations?

Did they know your wordless witness would secure their secrets  
as long as you remain?

Tell me, Ancient Champion,  
Did you know my people?

Rufus Theodore Lenoir III  
aka "Teddy"



Rufus Theodore Lenoir, III, was the son of Rufus Theodore Lenoir, Jr. and Clyde Lyndon Lenoir and grandson of Rufus Theodore Lenoir, Sr., and Sarah Gwyn Lenoir. He is often referred to as "Teddy," so for this article, he will be called Teddy.

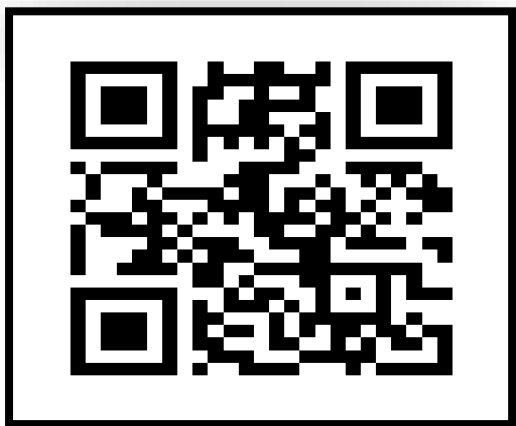
Teddy was born on September 7, 1899, in Caldwell County. He attended school at Chapel Hill and graduated in 1920. The 1920 Yearbook, known as the "Yackety Yack," states that "Ted is an exceedingly rare and unique individual of the Class of '20. He has met many obstacles during his four years with us, the most important being the failure of his eyes to respond to intensive study, the S.A.T.C., and English IV. He has conquered them all with the same determination and sand. 'Ted's' chief hobby is civil engineering; his favorite pastime is telling jokes; his specialty is math, which he absorbs with the ease of a master, coaching a little for diversion. The only thing about his future that worries him is whether he will ever be able to get audiences and subjects for his practical jokes when he gets down in South America as an engineer."

By September 18, 1929, Teddy was registered at the Consulate in Barranquilla, Cumbio, and would eventually go to work for Pato Consolidated Gold Dredging, Limited, as a mining engineer at Pato, Antioquia, Columbia, at its El Bagre Camp.

His cause of death is listed as hemolytic jaundice complicated by tropical anemia, and his remains were interred at Zaragoza Catholic Cemetery, Municipality of Zaragoza, Antioquia, Cumbio. He died at age 47 on July 30, 1946.

#### INVENTORY OF THE EFFECTS OF RUFUS THEODORE LENOIR

- ◆ Pair of shoes, size 39, "Corona" brown, new
- ◆ Pair of shoes, size 39 "Corona" tan, new
- ◆ Paris shoes, size 39, tan, used
- ◆ Pair of slippers, size 39, brown, used, worn out
- ◆ Pair of Indian sandals, old
- ◆ Helmet, light green, "tropper", new
- ◆ Boxes of matches, El Indio
- ◆ Bottle of fruit salts "Heno"
- ◆ Aluminum shaker (in the shape of a glass)
- ◆ Pair of spectacles with metal, broken, and case
- ◆ Pair of spectacles, plastic, and its case
- ◆ Case of spectacles (black)
- ◆ 7 pairs of drilling trousers, assorted colors, used and marked #50
- ◆ 3 shirts, assorted colors, used, marked #50
- ◆ 3 towels, used, marked with #50
- ◆ 2 pairs of pajamas, used, marked #50
- ◆ 9 handkerchiefs, assorted colors, used, marked #50
- ◆ 3 suits of underwear (undershirt and underpants) used, marked #50
- ◆ 2 cloth caps, used, marked #50
- ◆ 1 listening apparatus for prospecting
- ◆ 1 metal box containing articles described in the inventory, padlocked with two keys
- ◆ 1 accounting book, with a page written on, color brown
- ◆ 1 flashlight, nickel plated, for 4 batteries, empty, in fair condition
- ◆ 2 leather straps in fair condition
- ◆ 1 shaving machine, plastic
- ◆ 1 brush in fair condition
- ◆ 1 bundle of books and personal papers of the deceased
- ◆ 1 leather suitcase, brown, in fair condition
- ◆ Post stamps: in half-cent stamps: 0.11 pesos  
In five-cent stamps, 1.10 pesos  
In quarter-cent stamps, 0.4 pesos
- ◆ Currency: in five-cent coins .35 pesos
- ◆ 1 set of false teeth
- ◆ 1 haversack
- ◆ 1 copy of an ordinary mining society contract made among the deceased, George Whitworth, and Bernardo Correa
- ◆ 7 pairs of socks, assorted colors, market #50
- ◆ Passport, papers, and documents of identification as a foreigner
- ◆ 1 sisal bag
- ◆ 1 thermos bottle
- ◆ 1 alarm clock
- ◆ 1 watch (Ferrocarill make)
- ◆ 1 typewriter "Continental" model No. 340. Serial #R.133826
- ◆ Technical books
- ◆ 1 hand-level, Model K & E #5701
- ◆ Packet of miscellaneous correspondence
- ◆ Columbian currency \$824.85



Help keep the story of General William Lenoir and Fort Defiance alive by becoming a member of the “Friends of Fort Defiance! Memberships allow the site to provide visitors and school groups a unique experience while visiting Fort Defiance. By renewing an existing membership or becoming a member, the site can continue the goal of preserving and interpreting Fort Defiance’s history. **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. Please make checks payable to **Fort Defiance** and mail them to Fort Defiance, 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. Your continued patronage is essential to the success of Fort Defiance.

**Thank you!**

### Board Highlights

- ◆ Fort Defiance board meeting was held on January 15, 2025 at 5:30. Board members present were: Sandra Watts, Ike Forester, John Church, Monty Minton, Steve Rauchfuss, Bob Kogut, Doug Davis and Kayleigh Corey.
- ◆ President Sandra Watts welcomed new board member Kayleigh Corey.
- ◆ The minutes of the last meeting along with the treasurer’s report were accepted as presented.
- ◆ President Sandra Watts shared with the group that 27 memberships have been renewed so far for 2025.
- ◆ Fort Defiance will participate in a Town Hall meeting with the Overmountain Victory National Trail to discuss the ongoing work to tell the story of the enslaved.
- ◆ Two events have been planned so far for 2025.
- ◆ Bob Kogut shared with the group that he is working on the planning of the Third Annual Celtic Festival. October 11, 2025 is the target date.
- ◆ Ike Forester informed the group that his collection of Lenoir Family papers he had, had been gifted to Appalachian State University. They will be digitized and the Fort will receive a copy. These documents will be available to be used by the students and the general public.
- ◆ Artwork project continues with the expectation it will be delivered by spring. There will be 3 pieces of art instead of one large one. 77% of the funds needed for this project has been raised.

# FRIENDS OF FORT DEFIANCE

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

## Patriot/Individual

Alvin Johnston  
Margaret & Rick Martine  
Virginia Foxx  
Jim & Judith Thompson  
Jean Lenoir  
Lee Taylor

## Militia/Family

Lucy McCarl  
Joey Lee Holsclaw &  
Lissa Taylor Holsclaw  
Betty Buss  
Jeff & Rita Jones  
Liza Plaster  
Kelly Coffey  
Frank Shufford  
Karen Barlow

## Colonel/ Sponsor

## General/ Benefactor

Brenda Bernhardt  
Barbara Freiman

## Specified Donations—Thank You

Bernhardt Furniture Foundation  
Broyhill Family Foundation  
Lenoir Service League  
Stevens Family Foundation  
Blue Ridge Energy Foundation

## Lieutenant

## Captain/Patron

Kim Browning  
Tina Triplett  
Larry & Barbara Pendry  
Myra A. Dickerson  
Joe & Francis Delk  
Jerry N. Brooks  
Monty & Brenda Combs  
Jane Johnston Smith  
Douglas L. Pegram  
William F. & Denise F. Howard

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 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)

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.



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Fort Defiance  
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Lenoir, NC 28645