NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

1. NAME

COMMON: Fort Defiance

AND/OR HISTORIC: 

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Lenoir vicinity

CITY OR TOWN: Lenoir

STATE: North Carolina

CODE COUNTY: 32 Caldwell

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)

☑ District ☐ Building
☐ Site ☐ Structure
☐ Object

OWNERSHIP

☐ Public ☐ Private
☐ Both

Public Acquisition:

☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered

STATUS

☐ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied

☒ Preservation work in progress

ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC

☐ Yes: ☐ Restricted
☐ No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Agricultural ☐ Government
☐ Commercial ☐ Industrial
☐ Educational ☐ Military
☐ Entertainent ☐ Museum
☐ Religious ☐ Scientific

☐ Transportation ☐ Other (Specify) ☐ Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Caldwell County Historical Society, Inc.

ADDRESS: c/o Miss Margaret Harper, Box 673

CITY OR TOWN: Lenoir

STATE: North Carolina

CODE: 32

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

Caldwell County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

Post Office Box 757

CITY OR TOWN: Lenoir

STATE: North Carolina

CODE: 32

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:

☐ Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: 

STATE: 

CODE: 
The main block of Fort Defiance is a two-story frame structure measuring approximately 28 feet x 40 feet with interior end chimneys. Though many of the exterior features were changed over the years, it is certain that it was originally a five-bay house with a one-story shed porch across both front and rear.

There are four rooms on each floor. The long center hall commonly found in dwellings of its size and date was omitted at Fort Defiance. A small entrance-stair hall was employed with the space that would normally have been included in a full length hall given to the principal room. This unusual four room plan is also found on the second floor. There are no doors between the rooms on the east side of the second floor and those on the west. Each side is served by its own stair.

Among the papers of William Lenoir is a contract between him and John Goldsmith and T. Anthony, brickmasons. Among the particulars of the contract are entries for the use of 1200 bricks for "Laying Brick floor & Etc. about Brick Room" and 1350 bricks for "Filling in Walls about." The former refers to the brick floor of the interior kitchen on the first floor and the latter to the brick nogging which filled all the exterior walls.

In 1823 a wing was added to the west end of the house. This contained two first floor rooms and one in the finished attic above. This wing was built as a separate dwelling by General Lenoir for his personal use. It had no direct access to the main section which at that time became the home of Lenoir's son and his family. Traces of the original marbleizing of the trim in the wing have survived. At a later date this wing was moved to the rear of the house and remodeled. It has been restored to its original position and form as one of the first steps of the restoration program now underway.

On the interior Fort Defiance contains several exceptionally fine mantels. Much of the interior trim was altered when the house was remodeled.

On the grounds are the remnants of an extensive boxwood garden, the site of the early fort from which the place takes its name, and the Lenoir family graveyard.
### Statement of Significance

Fort Defiance was the home of Revolutionary War leader William Lenoir. Lenoir was born in Virginia in 1751 but moved to North Carolina shortly thereafter. An ardent and influential revolutionist, he was active in "patriot" associations and as a captain at the battles of King's Mountain in 1780 and Haw River in 1781. After the war Lenoir continued his military service by becoming a major general of the state militia. He became a member of the Council of State which adopted the Constitution of North Carolina, served in both houses of the legislature, and was elected president of the Senate. He was a delegate to the Convention of 1788 which rejected the constitution of the new United States, and to the next one in 1789 which adopted it. Lenoir was also president of the first Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina and the library there contains hundreds of Lenoir family items.

Built by Thomas Fields for General Lenoir over a four-year period (1788–1792), the house "Fort Defiance" takes its name from an early frontier fort which once occupied the site. Until 1965 Fort Defiance had continuously been in the possession of the Lenoir family. In that year Andrew and Fannie T. Lenoir conveyed the house to the Caldwell County Historical Society, under whose direction the present restoration is being undertaken.

Because of the prominence of the Lenoir family, the vast amount of original documents concerning the plantation furnished by the Lenoir family papers in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the unusual design and structural features of the house, Fort Defiance should be one of the most interesting historic places in the state when its restoration is perfected.

Caldwell County Records, Caldwell County Courthouse, Lenoir, North Carolina. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Estate Papers, Census Reports.)

Caldwell County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Estate Papers, Census Reports.)

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National [ ] State [X] Local [ ]

Name: Dr. H. G. Jones
Title: Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date: June 26, 1970

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date:__________________________________________

ATTEST:

______________________________________________
Keeper of The National Register

Date:__________________________________________

Lenoir Family Papers, 1753-1929. The Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Wilkes County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Estate Papers, Census Reports.)

Wilkes County Records, Wilkes County Courthouse, Wilkesboro, North Carolina. (Subgroups: Deeds, Wills, Estate Papers, Census Reports.)