

Guardian Of History

Published by *The Daniel Island News*, 07/21/2026

Gourdin leads charge to honor Berk. Co., Revolutionary War patriots, sites

BY: ELIZABETH BUSH, BETH@THEDANIELISLANDNEWS.COM

Driving past the place where the U.S. Highway 52 and the 52 Bypass converge in Moncks Corner several years ago, something caught the eye of Berkeley County native Keith Gourdin.

Planted on the roadside, near the centuries-old live oaks that adorn a portion of the former Epsom Plantation property, Gourdin spotted a "For Sale" sign. His heart sank at the thought of it turning into a commercial or residential development.

A lover of all things history, particularly America's Battle for Independence, Gourdin knew this place was special. The nearly five-acre parcel is close to several significant Revolutionary War activities, such as the Battle at Moncks Corner and the Skirmish at Biggin Church. It also sits adjacent to the corner that inspired the town's name.

"This is an extremely important location," said Gourdin. "I thought, 'We cannot let this place be sold. It's got to be put into a conservation trust of some kind.'"

Gourdin took the matter to the Town of Moncks Corner and to Berkeley County government, stressing the significance of the site and the "golden opportunity" to do something meaningful to showcase its Revolutionary War history. Both entities agreed and joined together to purchase the property in 2025. It has since been dedicated as a new public space dubbed "Revolutionary Park" and is now a part of the Berkeley County Greenbelt.

As this project was unfolding, Gourdin was already hard at work on another history-related endeavor that he began in 2018. He and his friend, the late Charles Baxley, former director of SC250, had been talking about the upcoming celebration of America's 250th anniversary. By the time the momentous event arrived, Baxley

wanted to be sure all Berkeley County patriots who served were recognized, as well as significant sites documented.

"I've really taken his request to heart in trying to determine what was in Berkeley County," Gourdin said. "'What happened? Where did it happen? Where were the sites?' And so that's why I went in and started digging."

Gourdin is not a veteran himself, but he has many ancestors who were - including Revolutionary War hero Gen. Francis Marion, his fourth great-granduncle. Gourdin took the research he had and added to it, while joining forces with other history-minded individuals and groups, such as the Berkeley 250 Francis Marion Commission, the Berkeley Museum, the Col. Hezekiah Maham SAR Chapter, the Huguenot Society of South Carolina, and the Daniel Island Historical Society.

He compiled as many stories as he could and turned them into educational materials and historic markers. Much of his work is showcased on the website, bygoneberkeley.com. To date, nearly three dozen Revolutionary War sites have been identified in the county, including a location known as Addison's Ferry Landing on the Cainhoy Peninsula, where more than 700 Continental reinforcement troops arrived from New York in April of 1780.

"The more I studied, the more I started asking questions, reading, researching... we came up with so many more sites," Gourdin said. "So, as of today, when we include Addison's Ferry, we've got 33 sites in Berkeley County. I don't know that there's anybody else in the state that's got that number!"

Gourdin's list of patriot names was modest at first. But by late June of this year, the tally had grown to 386. It is constantly evolving as new information is discovered. He is calling on community members to keep searching their own family lines.

"Who were these heroes that were in their families that we don't even have listed? I think it should give our older residents of the county more incentive to try to find out."

Fittingly, on July 1, just days before the nation celebrated its much-anticipated sescentennial, the names Gourdin and his team collected were displayed at the new Revolutionary Park in Moncks Corner. It was a proud moment for Gourdin.

"If you put them in the ground, bury them, and you don't do anything, they are forgotten," he said. "You bring them back to life by doing this, because there they are. If we can memorialize these names, then they will not be forgotten."

Plans call for enhanced signage and interpretive trails to be added to the park down the road.

"It's a really good start," Gourdin said.

Daniel Island Historical Society Board Member Tory Sullivan serves alongside Gourdin on the Berkeley County Greenbelt Commission and has witnessed the impacts of his contributions.

"His passion is infectious!" Sullivan said. "There is so much important information about Berkeley County history locked in his mind. One of the things I admire most is his ability to activate others in the cause. Keith is shepherding and propelling us all forward to enlarge the story and expand what we know and understand about our collective past."

Gourdin, who turned 87 this month, is showing no signs of slowing down his historic pursuits. In addition to his Revolutionary War efforts, he is also working to collect the names of all Black veterans in his home community of Pineville, so they, too, can be properly recognized.

There will no doubt be more stories to tell, more lives to honor, and more places to discover. And Gourdin will be front and center for it all, as long as he is able.

"We've lost so much," Gourdin said. "This is crazy for us not to try to preserve as much as we can."



