



Joseph Horner/Carolina Morning News

**REMEMBRANCE PLANS:** Austin Thoman of the Sons of the American Revolution visits Hilton Head's Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery where Charles Davant, a Hilton Head planter killed at the end of the war, is buried.

# Recognition sought for war casualty

## Charles Davant was Hilton Head's only loss in American Revolution

By Jim Littlejohn  
Carolina Morning News

HILTON HEAD ISLAND — Charles Davant was Hilton Head Island's only military casualty of the Revolutionary War, and the local Sons of the American Revolution want to commemorate that fact.

Davant was fatally shot Oct. 22, 1781, while patrolling Hilton Head Island against possible British and Tory raids.

Ironically, this was three days after British Gen. Lord Cornwallis surrendered to Gen. George Washington at Yorktown, effectively ending hostilities in the war for American independence.

The Hilton Head Island chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution plans to request that Mayor Tom Peeples designate Oct. 22, the 215th anniversary of Davant's death, as "Charles Davant Day," said group spokesman Austin J. Thoman.

Another element of the commemoration might include a re-enactment of Davant's ambush, Thoman added.

Six months before the ambush, according to Hilton Head historian Robert E.H.

Peeples, John Leaycraft and a group of patriot soldiers captured and executed Daufuskie Island Tory leader Capt. Richard "Tory Dick" Pendarvis and Lt. William Patterson.

It took Daufuskie Loyalists several months to plan a retaliation, but in mid-October the Daufuskie Royal Militia raided Hilton Head Island and burned every residence along Skull Creek.

To prevent a recurrence of this type of raid, Davant and other islanders started patrolling the marshes and waters on the Daufuskie side of Hilton Head on Oct. 22, the night of the ambush that killed Davant.

The South Carolina Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Hilton Head Historical Society are all involved in gaining further recognition for Davant, a private in the South Carolina militia and a planter on Hilton Head.

The three groups have ordered a 12-inch by 24-inch bronze marker with the dates of Davant's birth and death and detailing the circumstances of his ambush. They plan to erect the marker on Davant's grave in the Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery, located at the

intersections of Mathews Drive, Folly Field Road and U.S. 278, sometime in February, Thoman said.

Other improvements also are planned, he said. The 200-year-old cemetery, especially the wrought-iron fence around the Kirk-Baldwin plot, is in "a terrible state of disrepair," he said.

The local SAR chapter received a \$5,000 grant in October from the Hilton Head Foundation to begin the first phase of repair. More money is needed to complete the project, estimated to cost \$17,000, Thoman said.

The SAR chapter also is interested in finding out more about the so-called "Bloody Legion," a group of Davant's fellow militiamen who, a few weeks after the ambush, raided nearby Daufuskie and killed both Phillip and Abraham Martinangele. Davant had identified them as his killers before he died, Thoman explained.

The members of the group who raided Daufuskie were identified in a Charleston newspaper of the period as being "a band of

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CAROLINA MORNING NEWS Jan. 29, 1996

# Islander killed in Revolution remembered

By JIM LITTLEJOHN

Assistant Editor

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Davant was attacked and shot Oct. 22, 1781, while patrolling Hilton Head Island against possible British and Tory raids.

Ironically, this was three days after British Gen. Lord Cornwallis had surrendered to Gen. George Washington at Yorktown, effectively ending hostilities in the war for American independence.

The Hilton Head Island chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution plan to request that Hilton Head Island Mayor Tom Peeples designate Oct. 22, 1996, the 215th anniversary of Davant's death, as "Charles Davant Day," said group spokesman Austin J. Thoman. Another element of the commemoration might include a re-enactment of Davant's ambush, he added.

Six months before the October ambush of Davant, Hilton Head historian Robert E.H. Peeples relates, John Leaycraft and a group of patriot soldiers captured and executed Daufuskie Tory leader Capt. Richard "Tory Dick" Pendarvis and Lt. William Patterson.

It took Daufuskie Loyalists several months to plan a retaliation, but in mid-October the Daufuskie Royal Militia raided Hilton Head Island and burned every residence there along Skull Creek.

It was to prevent a recurrence of this type of raid that had Davant and other islanders patrolling the marshes and waters on the Daufuskie side on Oct. 22, the night of the ambush that killed Davant.

The South Carolina Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, as well as the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Hilton Head Historical Society, are all involved in gaining further recognition for Davant, a private in the South Carolina militia and a planter on Hilton Head.

The combined groups have ordered a 12- by 24-inch bronze marker detailing Davant's dates of birth and death and the circumstances of his ambush. They plan to erect the marker on Davant's grave in the



Austin Thoman of the Sons of the American Revolution visits the Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery where Charles Davant, an Islander killed at the end of the war, is buried. Photo by Joseph Homer

Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery, located at the intersections of Mathews Drive, Folly Field Road and U.S. 278, sometime in February, Thoman said.

Other improvements are in the offing, he said. The 200-year-old cemetery, especially the wrought-iron fence around the Kirk-Baldwin plot, is in "a terrible state of disrepair," he said.

The local SAR chapter received a \$5,000 grant in October from the Hilton Head Foundation to begin the first phase of repair. More money is needed to complete the project, estimated to cost \$17,000, Thoman said.

The area Sons of the American Revolution chapter also is interested in finding out more about the so-called "Bloody Legion," a group of Davant's fellow militiamen who, a few weeks after the ambush, raided

nearby Daufuskie Island and killed both Phillip and Abraham Martinangele. Davant had identified them as his killers before he died, Thoman explained.

The members of the group who raided Daufuskie were identified in a Charleston newspaper of the period as being "a band of banditti."

Peeples described the Bloody Legion assault in "A History of Daufuskie Island and Melrose Plantation."

"At Christmas 1781 the Bloody Legion crossed to Daufuskie in strength. Pvt. Israel Andrews killed Capt. Philip Martinangele. Philip's brother Abraham was killed in his bed while holding his infant daughter," Peeples wrote.

The raiders included Leaycraft as commander, Israel Andrews, James Allen, Isaac Baldwin, Lewis

Bono, John Bull, William Chiswell, James Davant, Isaac Davids, Jan Erving, John Erving, John Fend, Charles Floyd, Nathaniel Gamba, Patrick McMullen, John Mongin Sr., John Mongin Jr., Christian Rankin, Meredith Rich, Thomas Roberts, David Ross, Daniel Savage, and William Scott.

Thoman said that other than Davant's brother, James Davant, and Isaac Baldwin, little is known of the other members of the Bloody Legion.

"We would like their descendants to give us any information available," Thoman said. "We believe that an appropriate marker plaque of the Bloody Legion Roll of Honor should be erected either on Daufuskie Island or near the site of the former Militia Muster House on Hilton Head."