

Honoring the Historic Village of Pineville ~

As many of you know by now, my desire to locate historic markers for all places relevant to our county's historic sites is very strong. Places and events throughout the county need to be recognized and signage placed for telling the story of our rich history.

Several years ago, on March 28, 2008, one such place identified with a marker was the Village of Pineville. After over two years of struggles, my wife, Betty, and I (and mostly Betty) were able to determine the best and most accurate wordage defining the historic village.

Our *Berkeley North Historical & Cultural Association* group felt that local folks should be given the opportunity to help in sponsoring the marker, after all, about \$2,000.00 had to come from somewhere, just to get the marker ordered

Planning for the installation and unveiling of the historic marker was going to be an interesting feat to conquer: who should be the keynote speaker for the event? Many names were discussed, should it be a politician, a historian, someone local to the village, who would be the most interesting for the friends, family, and villagers who were to attend? Much discussion followed . . . for almost two weeks. Then, all of a sudden, it came. The answer was on the marker wordage. Three of six first families of "Pinevillians" were from the Porcher family. Richard Dwight Porcher, Jr. (my 3rd cousin) was the ideal candidate for speaker. Question: would he do it?

"Richard, we're planning an installation and unveiling of the Village of Pineville historic marker, as soon as the marker comes in and we get it installed. Will you consider being our keynote speaker?" "Yes, be glad to. Just let me know the date and time and what you want me to talk about," was his reply, "and make sure you remind me a couple of days in advance of the event." Great! That's taken care of.

In the meantime, we'll get our list together and get the word out to all of the villagers. Who else is needed. We determined three others for the program: S.C. Senator Larry Grooms, S.C. Representative Joseph Jefferson, and Father Jeffrey Richardson, Vicar for the Pineville Chapel and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. I would moderate the program.

The marker came in. The date was set: Friday, March 28, 2008. Richard was notified and briefed (on Wednesday) on the presentation topic most desired. "Fine!, no problem," was the reply. "I'll be there." The marker was erected.

Beautiful start to a day of excitement and joy. The event was organized and moderated by Keith Gourdin. Father Jeff Richardson was to give the opening prayer. He's here. Senator Grooms is here. Representative Jefferson is here. Where is Richard? It's ten minutes to start time. Now it's five minutes 'til! He drives up, gets out his truck and calls for Keith. "What do you want me to talk about?" "Richard!!! I told you Wednesday evening! How your ancestors and the others started the village, how they lived in that day and time, what was life like in 1793, etc." "OK, gotcha!"

Historians, friends, and many families gathered at the Pineville Chapel to witness the event. Berkeley North Historical & Cultural Association Chairman Keith Gourdin set the stage, welcoming everyone. "Two hundred fourteen years ago, our village of Pineville was founded. This village was one of the first to be formally laid out after the American Revolution, and subsequently evolved into a permanent village with over sixty houses. The village had the Pineville Academy (1805), a public library, known as the Pineville Library Society (1810), the existing Pineville Chapel (1810), and a racecourse (established in 1791). Only three of the buildings and the church survived the passing of the of the Union armies in April of 1865, the others were burned or abandoned," said Gourdin.

After Gourdin's welcome, Father Jeff Richardson gave a beautiful, and most appropriate, opening prayer. Special remarks were given by Senator Larry Grooms, where he told of when he and his father tested an ultralight airplane at the Gregg-Gourdin Airstrip (actually the Pineville International), just across the road here. Groom's small plane reached an altitude of 300 feet, and he soared over Pineville from St. Stephen to Eutawville and back.

S.C. Representative Joseph H. Jefferson, Jr., whose grandfather Isaiah Jefferson was postmaster in Pineville from 1926 to 1945, reminded the audience of the importance of honoring the past.

Dr. Richard D. Porcher, Jr., gave a most interesting and defining history of Pineville, the first "summer village," or sometimes called the "summer retreat," where the early settlers, who had settled near the river, went to avoid "the fevers" from May through October (trying to avoid the mosquitos; though at that time they didn't know that was the cause of the (Malaria) fever. He talked about some of the famous scientists who live and/or worked in Pineville. Thomas Walter wrote *Flora Caroliniana*, a major catalog of plants in the Lowcountry, in 1788. Henry William Ravenel, a renowned botanist, attended the Pineville Academy. Dr. James McBride,

a physician and scientist in Pineville, as a classmate of John C. Calhoun at Yale. Frederick A. Porcher, historian, attended the Pineville Academy.

Porcher said with pride that his ancestor, Philip Porcher, of Oldfield Plantation, gave money for the establishment of the Pineville Chapel in 1810.

The unveiling of the marker was performed by the historic marker benefactors: Ron and Iris Neal, Henrietta and Alfred Acton, Larry and Nina Gilbert, David and Scottie Hoffman, David and Pat Scarsella, and Keith and Betty Gourdin.

The historical marker unveiling event came to a close with the benediction, given by Rev. Alfred Acton, and refreshments prepared by Betty Gourdin were served in the churchyard.

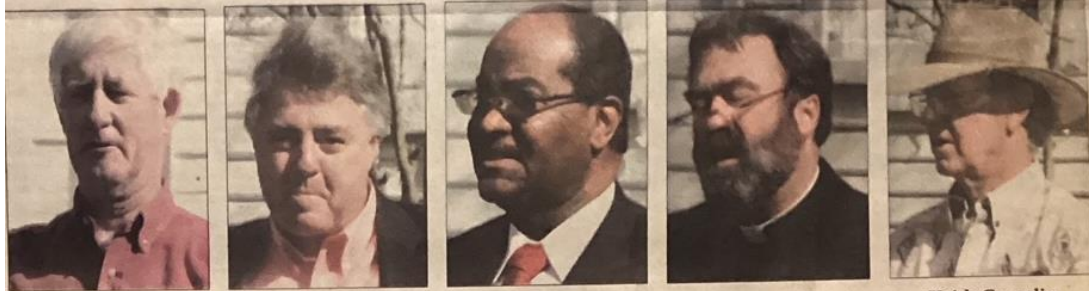
Gourdin shared with those in attendance a drawing of the *Pineville Historic District*, as defined by the National Register of Historic Places, and provided by South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

The *Pineville Historic District* was named to the National Register on February 10, 1992, and includes 15.2 acres, four historic buildings, and three outbuildings, constructed between 1810 and 1925. It includes the Pineville Chapel (1810), the Gourdin House (1820), the Robert Marion, Sr., House (1905), and the J.K. Gourdin House (1925).

History of pineland villages indicate that Pineville (originally spelled Pine Ville) was the first established, followed by villages i.e., Cainhoy, Eordesville, Eutawville, Honey Hill, Pinopolis, and yes, Summerville and others.

If you are interested in a historic marker being located at an appropriate site in Berkeley County, don't hesitate to give me a call. We have many historic sites that are unknown in our county. Let's change that.

Keith Gourdin 843-509-3408 keithg@homesc.com



Dr. Richard Porcher II

S.C. Sen.
Larry Grooms

S.C. Representative
Joseph Jefferson

Father Jeff
Richardson

Keith Gourdin



Beulah G. Stuart (l) and Rebecca Gaillard are the granddaughters of Marcus Gaillard, the carpenter who renovated the Pineville Chapel in 1933.



Historic Marker Benefactors: (l-r) Ron and Iris Neal, Betty and Keith Gourdin, Henrietta and Alfred Acton. Absent were Larry and Nina Gilbert, David and Scottie Hoffman, David and Pat Scarsella.

Photos made at the unveiling of the Village of Pineville Historic Marker