

St. Thomas & St. Denis Parish ~

Three hundred odd years are not a very long time, and yet owing to the neglect of recording details, much interesting and valuable parochial history has been lost, and the generations of families broken and confused. Had the Rectors or Registrars given a thought to the probable wishes of posterity, our records would doubtless be full and minute.

Much indebtedness is due Langdon Cheves, Esq., whose kind aid and efforts, and especially in the preparation of the history of the Beresford Family, has made this booklet (*The Annals and Parish Register of St. Thomas and St. Denis Parish, in South Carolina from 1680-1884, Collected and Arranged by Robert F. Clute, Rector*) possible. As others peruse this note (as well as the balance of the Annal & Parish Register), hopefully, new material and facts may come to light, brightening history.

Note: one should recognize that not everyone interested in local history has *The Annal & Parish Register* in their possession, so here, now, are a few notes about this parish and its Register:

- The three cemeteries: (1) The Brick Church—the Parish Church; (2) The Old Ruins—Charity Meeting—Methodist Church; and (3) Pompion Hill—The Chapel.
- Like many of the colonial churches, quite possibly the Parish Church and Pompion Hill Chapel were never (officially) consecrated, other than by the devout worship of successive generations.
- There were a few entries of free Negroes in the first Register, or until 1790. In the second Register, are the names, baptisms, confirmations, communions, marriages, burials, &c., of very many slaves, until the close of the war. The names of the owners are also recorded.
- St. Thomas and the other parishes were originally created Church of England, and not civil parishes, and so, continued until South Carolina became a State.

The peninsula formed by the Cooper and Wando Rivers was probably settled by a few families before Old Charlestown was removed to Oyster Point. Gradually, others found homes on the banks of both streams, until about 1680, when they had extended to the limit of navigation. These were chiefly from England. During the next five years, thirty-two French families settled in the interior, mostly from French Quarter Creek to the Cooper. The greater number had been sent to the Province by King Charles II, at his own expense, in two vessels, at the earlier date. They cultivated the vine, olive, and mulberry, and engaged in the manufacture of wine,

oil, and silk. A small church was erected in which divine worship was occasionally celebrated by the Rev. Prioleau and Rev. Dr. LeJeu. The services were well attended. The names in the Parish Register are reported to have been: Bonneau, Bochett, Bellin, Bremar, Brabant, Bossard, Carriere, DuPre, Dutarque, DeLonguemar, Durant, Duberdeaux, Dubois, Guerin, Joly, Jaudon, LeJeu, Leroux, Lesesne, Mouzon, Marbeuf, Poitvine, Roulain, St. Martin, Simons or Symonds, Syer, Sallens, Tresvin, Verine, Verone, Videau, and Warbeuf.

Pompion Hill Chapel was erected on the east side of the east branch of the Cooper. It was built of cypress, 30 feet square. The funds were contributed by Sir. Nathaniel Johnson and private subscriptions. The Cemetery, on the original map, was 400 feet square. It was the first church of England edifice erected outside of Charleston.

The Rev. Thomas reported to the Society that the people on the eastern branch of the Cooper, of which he had the care, numbered 80 Church and 20 dissenting families. Communicants 45; slaves about 200, of whom 20 can read.

St. Thomas Parish was laid off November 30, but its boundaries were first defined December 18, 1708: "To the northeast by the bounds of Craven County; to the south by the bounds of Christ Church Parish and the Wando River; to the west by the Cooper River to that tract of land commonly called the Hagan, inclusive; and to the north by the eastern branch of Cooper River to the plantation of Sir Nathaniel Johnson, Governor, exclusive; and then by an east line from the northmost part of said plantation to the bounds of Craven County." This was amended by an Act passed March 5, 1736-7; "bounded by the most northerly branch of the said eastern branch of the Cooper River."

The French settlement, called Orange Quarter, from the principality of that name in Avignon, France, fell within the boundaries of St. Thomas. As few of the people understood the English language, it was erected into a distinct parish and called St. Denis. It was thus practically made a Church of England Parish. Hence, the people, being poor, petitioned the Assembly for the public allowance for an Episcopal minister, who should give them the English Liturgy and French sermons. The church edifice was made the Chapel of Ease to the Parish Church on December 18, 1708.

Then, in 1784, by Act of State Legislature, the Vestry was allowed to sell the two glebes and purchase one more central. By the same Act, the old charter was renewed and the former corporate powers invested in the wardens and vestrymen for

the time being, and their successors. The title of St. Denis was renewed and joined with that of St. Thomas, as one parish.

The Parish Church, (now) called the Brick Church, was about three miles from Cainhoy, on the old Clement's Ferry Road, and was authorized by the Assembly in 1706. It was begun the next year and finished in 1708, which date was engraved on one of the bricks. The Glebe lands were 200 acres for the Parish Church and 420 acres for the Pompion Hill Chapel. The money allowed by the government for the Parsonage was insufficient and was placed at interest until it should amount to the sum required.

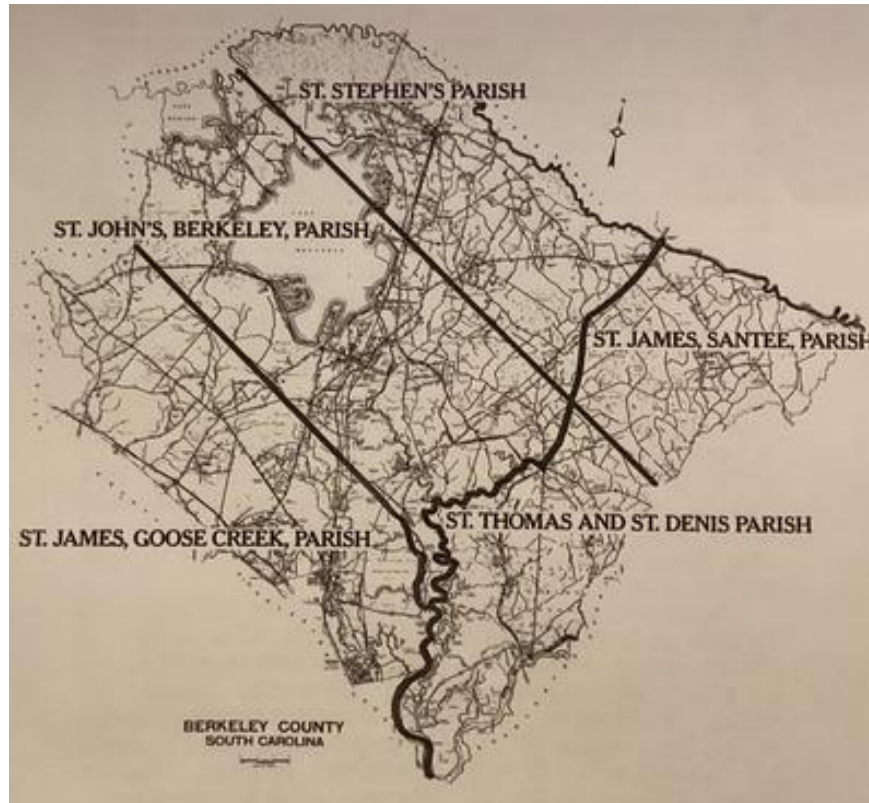
Much more can be, and needs to be, said about life in and of the early church in this Parish, but another time. Before closing this story, just a bit more; concerning the American Revolution action in the Parish.

The church plate was buried with that of the Rev. Robert Smith (afterwards first Bishop of South Carolina), by Mauder, his overseer, beneath a tree on his plantation, Brabant. Mauder, having been suspended from the same tree three times, to force the secret of the location of the silver, in vain, was released by the British officer. He declared that the sacredness of the communion vessels, only, restrained him from confessing. Two cups or chalices now remain (in 1884), one dated 1711, and the other, 1753. The plates are of this century.

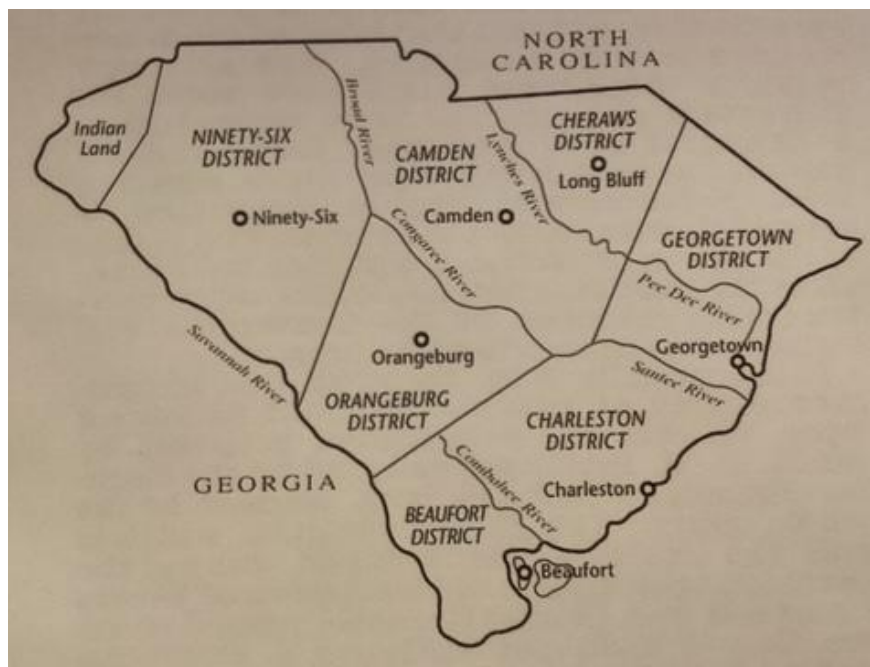
On Benevento Plantation, there was a sharp skirmish between a detachment of Marion's Brigade and a corps of Cavalry under Tarleton's command. An old inhabitant (in 1843) remembers to have seen the bones of the slain whitening in the sun. (French Quarter Creek runs between Benevento and Spring Hill plantations.)

Then, in 1781, Lt. Col. Coates, in command of 500 Infantry and 100 Cavalry, was attacked by Lt. Col. Lee with the Legion, and Lt. Col. Hampton with the State cavalry. Generals Marion and Sumter, coming up with reinforcements, continued the engagement. The Americans killed and wounded 40 of the British and took 140 prisoners, and a large quantity of baggage, several wagons, and more than 100 horses. Those who fell were buried by the roadside, from Quimby Avenue to Quimby Bridge. The Wando was the scene of many skirmishes. The British, at one time, fortified Cainhoy, and the Americans searched vessels passing up and down the river.

Resource: *The Annals and Parish Register of St. Thomas & St. Denis in S.C. from 1680-1884, Collected and Arranged by Robert F. Clute, Rector*
Edited by Keith Gourdin



In our search for Berkeley County American Revolution Patriots, the area includes these five parishes; the patriot would have “lived and/or had property and voting rights within one of these parishes.”



During this time period, what we now know as Berkeley County was (called/named) Charleston District (1769-1784).