

## **Echaw . . . a Creek, a Church, and a Land ~**

*Echaw* in early records was spelled in various ways: *Itshaw*, *Itchaw*, *Hitcha*, most probably given name to the creek by the Sewee tribe of Native Americans. *French Santee* authors tell us most transcriptions of French documents spelled it *Echau*.

Louis Gourdin (earlier spelled Gourdain) my emigrant ancestor, arrived in America before 1693. He lived at “The Point” when he was naturalized with other Huguenots residing at Orange Quarter in 1696/97. His parents were Valentin (died 1705) and Mary (Piedevin) Gourdin, who had married in 1650 and lived in Caucourt, Artois, France, and they had three sons.

Louis received a land grant in 1697/98 and settled at the headwaters of Echaw Creek, south of the Santee River (east of Jamestown toward what became Honey Hill), and in what was then Craven County. Louis Gourdin I received a number of land grants, the first for 200 acres in ‘97/98; the second in 1701 for 200 acres; the third for 9 acres joining his plantation in 1704; the fourth for 200 acres in 1709/10 and a fifth grant for another 200 acres in 1709/10; a sixth grant for 400 acres made on 7/27/1711 located on the south side of the Santee River, partly on an island and partly on the mainland, but not on Echaw Creek, but downriver close to Watahan on Manigault Creek. A memorial of 400 acres was made on 7/28/1711, located in Williamsburg County, at the junction of June Branch and Wee Tee Lake. Another memorial made in 1715 for 389 acres, this land bounded by other lands of Louis Gourdin on the north and west, east by Peter Boyer, and northeast by Henry Bunneau – making a total of 2,000 acres or better.

Tradition from France tells us that Louis wrote his parents twice that he “had a family, was wealthy, and would return to his native land when political and religious liberty was restored.”

Louis Gourdin, planter of Craven County, wrote his will, dated August 18, 1716, saying he “was sick and weak of body, but of sound mind and memory” for which he thanked God. He left “the plantation on which I reside with all the lands thereunto appertaining” to Louis II, his eldest son, “to be his exclusive property with right of disposal at his will.” He left Pierre (Peter) Gourdin, “my second son, the plantation and lands which I have on Manigault Creek.” He left Marianne “his eldest daughter” money “of which she may dispose at will” and a white horse named Galant. Also, to “each of his daughters Esther and Elizabeth” he left money “to be exclusively hers.” The remainder was to be divided between his sons Louis and Peter and “as most of my children above named are minors,” he appointed Elie Horry executor and administrator of his will, “praying of him to serve as a Father unto them.” Since he didn’t mention his wife in his will, she evidently pre-deceased him.

Peter, Louis's second son, sometime after the Indian War, left in his minority to take up the trade at sea and sometime prior to the year 1727 the ship he was on in the Spanish Main floundered at sea and he was lost.

Louis's other son, Louis Gourdin II, was born about 1700, probably at his father's plantation in Craven County, near Echaw Creek and near Santee River in St. James' Santee Parish. Louis II probably inherited the home tract of 200 acres that he gave to his son Isaac, when he died in 1755. Louis II's first grant was in 1733 for 620 acres located in St. James Parish, south of the Santee River on Wambaw Swamp, which he later sold to the Gaillard's: first 362 acres to Theodore Gaillard in 1741, and later 258 acres to Tacitus Gaillard in 1741.

Again in 1741, Louis II bought 863 acres in St. Stephen's Parish from Daniel Welshussen and wife, Catherine. This tract was composed of two original grants for 200 acres and 600 acres, 200 being in Santee Swamp and 600 acres more or less on high ground. Louis II moved from his Echaw Plantation to this plantation, located about two miles northeast of (what became) Pineville, and died there in 1755. His wife, Marianne, was living at the time of his death and he left provision that she could remain there the rest of her life.

In 1754, Louis and Marianne sold 58 acres of this plantation, later known by the name of Windsor, to Theodore Gaillard I. It was bounded east and north by the Charleston Road / Murray Ferry Road, and west by the remaining 805 acres. Theodore Gaillard 1<sup>st</sup> was interested in owning and operating the ferry across Santee River, and this purchase helped him to own the land approaching the ferry, which he received permission from the Colonial Governor to operate in 1756.

Later grantees for the old Echaw property in 1773 were Oliver Cromwell and Louis Dutarque. Then, the will of Edward Jerman in 1792 devised all his property to his three sons, Thomas Satur Jerman, Samuel Bonneau Jerman, and James Edward Jerman. The Echaw tract went to James Edward Jerman, who died intestate in 1830. The tract then went to his wife, Rebecca A. Jerman as part of her dower interest in his estate. In 1851 Rebecca Jerman left "Echaw Plantation" to Mary Rebecca Jerman as long as she remained unmarried. Then after a long legal suit between some of the Jerman family, Echaw sold to William Henderson in 1872, then 1324 acres to G.W. Coleman, then in 1888, 825 acres of this was sold to Evan L. Wilkins. G.A. Norwood, Jr. bought the Wilkins property in 1896 and in 1913 conveyed three tracts (one of which was "old Echaw") to Atlantic Coast Lumber Corp., which in turn 307 acres became part of Francis Marion National Forest.

**Echaw Church:** This ancient church site is located about seven miles east of Honey Hill, South Carolina. In 1714, when Charles Craven was Governor, an Act was passed for the construction of a Chapel-of-Ease in St. James' Parish, Santee, at

Echaw. In 1731, when Robert Johnson was Governor, another Act was passed abandoning the Chapel-of-Ease at Echaw and directing two Chapels-of-Ease to be erected at different places in the parish. Again, in 1742, while Lt. Governor Bull was acting as Governor, another Act was passed directing the Chapel-of-Ease for the upper part of St. James's Parish to be built at or near the place where the old chapel at Echaw, which was destroyed by fire, stood.

The earliest records show the following wardens of this last church at Echaw as David Palmer and Isaac Le Gran; the vestrymen as John Mayrant, Edward Jerman, Daniel Horry, John Gendron, Jr., Alex Chavin (Chovin, Chouvin), and Isaac DuBose.

Today, this Echaw Church property is privately owned, with access only by permission. Some of the ruins of the old churches and tombstones can still be seen on the Echaw site. It may also be noted that Echaw was one of the first of two places allowed by the Lord Proprietors to hold High Court outside the city of Charles Towne.

**Echaw Creek** – “Jean Pierre Pele was living on Echaw Creek in 1703 when Louis Gourdin received a grant to his south,” so told in *French Santee* by Susan Bates and Cheves Leland. More details in 1704 on Echaw Creek tell us Mr. Jean Pierre Pele was proposed as one of the commissioners “to make or cause to be made, one good substantial and sufficient bridge” over Echaw Creek. The locals wanted a bridge due to: . . . the want of a convenient road, highway and bridge over the creek commonly called Echaw Creek in Craven County which doth greatly incommode most of the inhabitants of the said county, upon all occasions of rendezvous, and also upon them joining themselves together on the Lord's Day . . . on common road or highway 16 foot wide from the plantation of Philip Gendron inclusive to the plantation of Daniel Huger inclusive.

An act to build a bridge was passed in 1709, but instead of a bridge, a ferry was placed at Echaw Creek, “for the transportation of man and horse, from the plantation of Captain James Le Grand, alias Longbois, to the plantation of John Peter Pelet.” Every male above the age of sixteen years was required to aid in making and maintaining the common road or send a servant in their place.

Keith Gourdin

Resources/references: Various collections from the library of Keith Gourdin, and portions courtesy of Susan Baldwin Bates and Harriott Cheves Leland's book *French Santee, A Huguenot Settlement in Colonial South Carolina*.