

# **Gourdin-Gourdines of Charleston Important Influence on City and Surrounding Area**

by

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**O**n your next visit to Charleston, South Carolina, you should take advantage of the opportunity to explore the downtown area and become acquainted with the residents and activities of our ancestral kinsfolk who were, in part, the builders and developers of Charleston. If you've never visited Charleston, then you should place this high on your priority list of things to do. This article will provide you with some historical and genealogical information that, hopefully, will help make your next visit to Charleston, and the surrounding area, a more enjoyable and rewarding experience.

## **Gourdin's Early Beginnings in Charleston**

**T**he City of Charleston was established in 1670, and almost from the beginning the Gourdin family has played an important role in the economic and social development of Charleston District (now Charleston and Berkeley Counties) and the surrounding area. The original Gourdin (Louis the Emigrant) was a Huguenot who emigrated from France during 1693-95. During the 1500s and 1600s Huguenots were persecuted mercilessly by leaders of the Catholic Church so, during the latter part of the 1600s several hundred thousands Huguenots fled France in search of freedom and a new way of life.

Prior to the American Revolution (1775-83), the Gourdins were awarded vast grants of land from the Colonial Government, and with the aid of slave laborers they accumulated great wealth growing rice and indigo. By the time of the Civil War (1861-65) the Gourdin family was one of the wealthiest families in South Carolina, owning nearly 200,000 acres of land and more than 600 slaves.

## **Coming Street – a Haven for Gourdine-Gourdines of African Descent**

**D**uring the early 1800s, Theodore Gourdin (born 1765) was the patriarch of the Gourdin family. He was the great-grandson of Louis the Emigrant. It is highly probable that all Gourdins and Gourdines, with origin in the low country of South Carolina area, are descended from the Theodore Gourdin extended family or from slaves owned by the family.

**D**uring the late 1800's and early 1900's a great number of Gourdin-Gourdines of African decent resided in and around the City of Charleston. Those who resided in the rural area around the City were usually farmers who either owned their farms or were employed as farmers or field hands. Gourdin-Gourdine men who resided in the city participated in a variety of occupations including - barber, carpenter, cook, laborer, painter, and waiter, while women were usually employed as cook, babysitter, housekeeper, and seamstress.

**A** fair number of the men were employed in professional jobs. For example, during, at least the 1860s, Rev Erasmus Gourdin was the pastor of the Graham Chapel Church. He resided with his family at 222 Coming Street. Donald Fraser who attended our Virginia Beach reunion in 1997 is the great-grandson of Erasmus. Erasmus died on July 14, 1893,

## **GG-America (cont'd)**

and is buried at Zion Cemetery near Charleston; and during 1888 to 1926, Edward Gourdine was employed by the Chasm D D & M Company and for Riverside Iron Works as a ship carpenter. He resided with his wife Maggie and family at 93 Comings Street (and other places over time). Edward died on August 20, 1928.

**A**lso, during 1909-1930, Samuel Gourdine was employed with the Anderson Lumber Company, progressing from a laborer to the position of foreman. He resided with his wife Elizabeth and family at 14 Kirkland Lane and later at 55 Coming Street

**L**ikewise, a good number of Gourdin-Gourdine women were employed in professional jobs. Amelia, Julia, Mamie, and Matilda Gourdin were employed or worked independently as seamstresses; Ester Gourdin was a bookkeeper and resided at 20 President Street; and Julia, Letsy, Ruth and Mattie Gourdin were school teachers. Julia was a teacher at the prestigious Avery Institute. The Institute is still functioning until today and is the best source of information on Black life in Charleston.

### **Life in “Colored Communities” in Downtown Charleston**

**G**ourdin-Gourdines resided throughout the City of Charleston, but mostly in the downtown portion of the city. The names of many of the streets where our kinship resided more than a hundred years ago are still in use today - Calhoun, Cannon, Church, Coming, Congress, Duncan, King, Laurens, Line, Nassau, Pitt, President, Queen, Rutledge, and Tradd. Most of the Gourdin-Gourdines of African decent resided in areas referred as colored communities. One these communities was centered around the intersection of Coming and Calhoun streets where more than a dozen Gourdin-Gourdine families resided during the latter part of thee 1800s.

**I**n 1871, Robert and Daphney (Singleton) Gourdin resided a 2 College Street, near the intersection of College and Calhoun streets - one block east of Coming Street. Robert was the son of Theodore and Daphney was his mulatto concubine. They had at least seven children – four boys and three girls. Two of the boys, William and Paris, are the ancestors of most of the Gourdin-Gourdines from Georgetown and Williamsburg counties – specifically the Oceda area.

**S**ome other kinfolk who resided in Charleston during the latter part of the 1800s were William Gourdin who was a baker with the E.F. Bose Company. He resided at 643 Coming Street; and David Gourdine who was employed as a coachman for Dr. H. B. Horlbeck. He resided at 113 Wentworth Street.

**D**uring the early years of the 1900s Arthur Gourdine was employed by the Molony & Carter Company and resided at 14 Alexander Street with his wife Ellen; Amelia Gourdine earned a living as a dressmaker, working from her residence at 60 Mill Street; Frank Gourdine was a foreman with A. F. Pringle & Company. He resided at 45 Line Street; and James Gourdine was employed by the Logan-Robinson Fert[ilizer]. He resided with his wife Lillian and his family at 76 Washington Street.

**F**urther, during 1948, Alexander Gourdine was employed as a ship fitter at the Charleston Navy Yard, and resided with his wife Florence at 60 Mill Street, within a short walking distant from the Navy shipyard.

**GG-America  
(cont'd)**

**Legacy of Gourdin-Gourdines and Extended Families Remains Strong Today**

**M**ost of these street names are still in use today. Coming Street where a good number of Gourdin-Gourdine families resided, is still a prominent street and stretches more than twenty blocks and runs right down the middle of downtown Charleston.

**T**oday many Gourdin-Gourdine families reside in Charleston and the immediate surrounding area. A few examples are: Alfred & Mable Gourdine, 1940 Grimball Road, James Island; John & Carol Gourdin, 1350 Roddington Street, Mt. Pleasant; Virginia Gourdin, 14 Tradd St, Charleston; Andrea Gourdine, 1838 Grimball Rd, James Island; Kent & Susan Gourdin, Mt. Pleasant; and Sidney & Tieshka Gourdine, 7925 Saint Ives Road, Charleston.

**I**n all, more than 100 households in South Carolina are headed by a Gourdin-Gourdine. When households headed by members of our extended family are included in the count this number can easily be tripled or quadrupled. Of these households, more than seventy-five percent reside within twenty-five miles of Downtown Charleston. So this is indeed an excellent time to make and renew acquaintances during our visit to Charleston.

**M**any of the cemeteries in the Charleston area where Gourdins(e) were laid to rest include - Bonneau, Calvary, Centenary, Emanuel and Monrovia. The Old Bethel United Methodist, established in 1807; Emmanuel AME; Louis Christian; Friendly Union Society; Fielding's Brown; Humane and Friendly; Unity and Friendship Society; Brotherly Association, established in 1856; Old Emmanuel; Old Morris Brown; Reserved Fellowship; Morris Brown; and Trinity AME.

**S**o during your leisure time when you decide to visit downtown Charleston, be sure to take a stroll along some of the streets where some of our kinship strived and prospered more than a hundred years ago.

**EXCERPT:** [\*Gourdin-Gourdine Quarterly Newsletter\*](#)