



Beaufort County 250 Committee
Revolutionary Era Biographies

*Charles and James
Davant
Hilton Head Island
Planters and Patriots*

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SC250
ANNIVERSARY
American Revolution

BEAUFORT COUNTY
SOUTH CAROLINA

Charles and James Davant

Born: 1750 on Edisto Island (Charles), 1744 on Edisto Island (James)

Died: 1781 on Hilton Head Island (Charles), 1803 in Savannah (James)

Of mixed English-Huguenot parentage, the Davant brothers moved from Edisto Island to Hilton Head Island when they were children. Settling initially on their father's plantation, Point Comfort, on the land southeast of the mouth of Broad Creek at the Calibogue Sound, they became indigo planters and raised families in the years before the Revolutionary War. As the eldest son, James inherited his father's plantation at his death, while Charles purchased land along the northwest shore of Broad Creek, which he named Two Oaks Plantation.

In the late 1770s, James Davant enlisted in the Patriot militia. When the British attacked Savannah and Charleston, he saw combat in the defense of both cities. At the same time, Charles Davant served in a mainland patrol unit of the Lower Granville Regiment under Colonel Benjamin Garden. Luckily for both brothers, they managed to avoid the blunder and mass surrender of the Patriot defeat at Charleston. After the demobilization of the South Carolina military forces, they returned to Hilton Head, rejoining the local militia to continue resistance against Royalist forces.

It was after their return to Hilton Head in the Fall of 1781, that the Davant brothers caught word of a Loyalist militia under Captain Martinangele of Daufuskie Island operating in the area. Then, a raid on October 19 burned several Patriot homes along Skull Creek, and a regular patrol was mounted by the Hilton Head militia. Three days later, after receiving a report about a raiding party targeting Hilton Head for further raids, the militia sent patrols along the southern shores to intercept any approaches from Daufuskie. Late in the night, they concluded that the information given to them had been unreliable, so they returned to their homes. At the same time, the Loyalist militia in question, accompanied by a British detachment from Savannah, had quietly rowed with padded oars up Broad Creek, positioning themselves for an ambush of the next Patriots they encountered.

Shortly afterward, having not found any evidence of a raiding party, the patrol had disbanded at the muster house at the headwaters of Broad Creek, and Charles with his comrade, John Andrews, rode toward their homes on the far side of Broad Creek. When the pair reached the cattle gate, named Big Gate, that closed off the road along the western bank of the creek, Davant learned down to unlatch the gate and Captain Martinangele sprung his trap, firing upon them. At least one of the

shots struck Charles, mortally wounding him, and Andrews was also wounded in the fire. Charles glimpsed his attackers and managed to hang onto his horse while it galloped the nearly two miles to his home, Two Oaks. Having heard shots in the distance and the approaching hoofbeats, his wife rushed out to meet him. With his dying breaths, he identified his attackers, saying “Get Martinangele”.

The Hilton Head Patriots wanted revenge for their fallen brother. Members of John Leaycraft’s “Bloody Legion”, including Charles’ brother James at the lead and Israel Andrews, brother of the wounded John alongside him, crossed Calbogue Sound at night on December 23. Creeping silently to the Martinangele home, a party of eight entered the house and, finding Captain Martinangele in bed, killed him in an act of retribution. Their quest achieved, and Charles avenged, they plundered the home, set it aflame, and returned to protect their families.

Out of all who resisted the British on Hilton Head Island, Charles Davant was the only known killed-in-action casualty on the Island of the entire war. The tale of the Davants highlights the loss and violence of war, as well as the deeply personal nature of the fighting that plagued the Lowcountry during the American Revolution. James would go on to father eight children and manage Charles’ land to become one of the largest landowners in Hilton Head’s history, having 6,500 acres under sea island cotton cultivation at the time of his death.

Source

- <https://heritagelib.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Davant7.pdf>
- <https://www.locallifesc.com/5-minute-history-alcohol-in-hilton-heads-past/>
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