

Francis Marion

c. 1732–1795



WHY HE MADE HISTORY Francis Marion was a skilled Revolutionary War soldier who earned the nickname *Swamp Fox* for the skilled tactics he used.



As you read the biography below, think about Francis Marion's contribution to the American Revolution. What made him different from other soldiers?



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The British expected to win the Revolutionary War quickly. When it was obvious that the colonists would not end their rebellion easily, the British shifted their strategy, turning to the South, where they believed Loyalists would come to their aid. What they encountered instead were bands of fierce Patriots who struck quickly and then disappeared into the woods and swamps. The most famous of these Patriot fighters was Francis Marion.

The son of a South Carolina planter, Marion Francis was the youngest of six children. At age 16 Marion left his father's plantation for the sea. On a return voyage from the West Indies, his ship was rammed by a whale and Marion spent the next week in a small boat waiting to be rescued. He swore off the sea forever and moved back to his father's plantation in South Carolina. Later he bought his own land, which he called Pond Bluff.

Marion enlisted in the colonial militia in 1756. Several years later, he distinguished himself in a battle against members of the Cherokee nation by leading 30 men against the enemy's main position.

When the Revolutionary War began in 1775, Marion was elected to the provincial congress of South Carolina. He became a captain in the Continental Army, and after helping capture Fort Johnson, was promoted to major. Over the next few years, Marion continued to serve in key positions, often protecting Charleston, South Carolina, from the British. When Charleston finally fell to the British, Marion was at home recuperating from a broken ankle and so avoided capture on the battlefield.

By 1780 Marion's troop was one of the only Patriot forces remaining in South Carolina. Too small to face the British head-on, Marion's forces concentrated on guerrilla raids to disrupt enemy communications, capture supplies, and free prisoners. Because his militiamen emerged from the swamp, attacked quickly, and disappeared back into the swamp before the victims could respond, Marion was nicknamed Swamp Fox by the British.

The Revolutionary Era**Biography**

After the war, Marion served as a member of the South Carolina Senate until 1791. He also served as a delegate to the state Constitutional Convention. Marion died at his plantation in 1795 and was buried in the family graveyard at his father's plantation.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. **Identify** How did Francis Marion come by the nickname Swamp Fox?

2. **Interpret** What problems did the British encounter when the war effort moved to the South?

ACTIVITY

Francis Marion is remembered for the role he played as a soldier in the American Revolution. Write a short essay about a soldier who has been recognized for his or her brave efforts in a more recent war. What kind of tactics did this soldier enlist to achieve success in the line of duty?