FINAL

7.13.18
Francis Marion

Hello. Welcome to Marion Square, named for me, Francis Marion, recalled as a great hero of the American Revolution. (In the center of the park are hornworks or defensive lines which were built, but failed, to keep the British from occupying the city.

I was born in the rural area outside Charleston, in St. John's Berkeley Parish in 1732, the youngest of six children. Spending most of my time on my family's plantation, at the age of 25, I commenced my military career in the parish militia in 1756 joining the campaigns against the Cherokees Indians. I rose to the rank of first lieutenant.

At the start of the Revolutionary War, in 1776, I responded to the call of my new country. Commissioned as a Captain Brigadier General, I lead my force into a series of defeats as the British advanced in South Carolina. Deciding this wasn't the best way to fight such an army that had conquered much of the world, I tried things a little differently.

My small-scale hit-and run tactics disrupted supply lines, intercepted communications, and hampered the enemy considerably. We camped in out of the way places, to suddenly face our enemy in devastating ambushes when the British least expected it. If they sought to search us out, we could effectively vanish back in the dense low country forests and swamps.

Infuriated, the British ordered one of their best commanders, Sir Banastre Tarleton, to fight us. But Tarleton couldn't catch me either. After one particularly grueling and pointless pursuit through miles of swamp, he declared, "As for this damned old fox, the Devil himself could not catch him."

The name stuck, and I became known as The Swamp Fox. I rather like it. I continue to prove elusive, helped by the fact there were no portraits made of me in my own lifetime.

Despite my small stature and physical infirmities, I inspired many to write of my life. There will be more interpretations, I'm sure, but I hope always to remain just out of sight. Francis Marion. The Swamp Fox. Delighted to make your acquaintance.

Sources:
http://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/marion-francis/

Search

Marion, Francis

ca. 1732—February 27, 1795

Article Images

Written by Roy Talbert, Jr.

After the war a penniless Marion, whose plantation had been ruined, was awarded a gold medal, a full Continental colonelcy, and command of Fort Johnson in Charleston harbor.

Gen. Francis Marion. Georgetown County Library.

Soldier. Marion, of Huguenot descent, was born in St. John's Berkeley Parish, the youngest of six children born to Gabriel Marion and Esther Cordes. A planter, Marion in 1773 built his home, Pond Bluff, about four miles south of Eutaw Springs, a site now beneath the waters of Lake Marion. He commenced his military career in the parish militia in 1756 and joined the campaigns against the Cherokees (1759–1761), rising to the rank of first lieutenant. Having served in local offices, he was elected in 1775 to the First Provincial Congress. Commissioned a captain in

the state's Second Regiment in June, he participated in the capture of Fort Johnson in September. As a major, Marion distinguished himself at the Battle of Sullivan's Island (June 1776), after which he was commissioned a lieutenant colonel in the Continental army. Marion commanded the Second Regiment at the disastrous Franco-American attack on Savannah in autumn 1779. Away on sick leave due to an accident, he eluded capture when Charleston fell to the British in May 1780. Escaping to North Carolina, he and a small party linked up with Horatio Gates's army preparing for an invasion of South Carolina. Detailed to destroy enemy communication lines, Marion was not present for Gates's defeat at Camden in August.

With a militia commission as brigadier general, Marion organized a partisan force in the Pee Dee region. Between August and December 1780, in an otherwise dismal period for America, Marion gained national recognition for his actions at Great Savannah (August 20), Blue Savannah (September 4), Black Mingo (September 29), Tearcoat Swamp (October 26), Georgetown (November 15), and Halfway Swamp (December 12–13). While some counts place the number of "Marion's Men" at more than two thousand, his band generally consisted of considerably fewer than that and included Continentals. Marion's nickname, the "Swamp Fox," reportedly came from the infamous British officer Banastre Tarleton, who, unable to snare Marion, called him a "damned old fox" and swore that "the devil himself could not catch him." Marion's small-scale hit-and-run tactics disrupted supply lines, intercepted communications, and hampered the enemy considerably. In December 1780 he established a camp on Snow's Island between the Pee Dee and Lynches Rivers and Clark's Creek. Conditions improved by the spring of 1781, when Marion became a vital part of General Nathanael Greene's combined operations in South Carolina. In 1781 Marion's troops participated in the battles at Fort Watson (April 23), Fort Motte (May 12), Quinby Bridge (July 17), Parker's Ferry (August 13), and Eutaw Springs (September 8). His numerous command problems included Greene's distrust of the militia, his need for Marion's essential horses, an ongoing conflict over rank and command with General Thomas Sumter, and a feud between his subordinates Peter Horry and Hezekiah Maham. This latter feud came to a head while Marion was serving as a senator in the General Assembly at Jacksonborough and resulted in a defeat at the hands of the British at Wambaw Bridge in February 1782. Returning to command, Marion's brigade saw its last engagement at Wadboo Creek in the summer of 1782. Throughout the war, which in South Carolina was a brutally vicious civil conflict, Marion was said to be "humain and Mercifull" but was also known as a severe disciplinarian. Although small in stature, with knees and ankles "badly formed," Marion inspired great loyalty in his ill-clothed, ill-fed, and ill-equipped band.

After the war a penniless Marion, whose plantation had been ruined, was awarded a gold medal, a full Continental colonelcy, and command of Fort Johnson in Charleston harbor. He served in the S.C. Senate in 1783–1786, 1791, and 1792–1794 and was elected to the 1790 state constitutional convention. He continued as a brigadier general in the militia until his retirement in 1794. His finances improved when he married his cousin Mary Esther Videau on April 20, 1786. The union produced no children, but in less than a decade Marion's fortune grew dramatically. Near the end of his life he owned upward of eighteen hundred acres and seventy-three slaves. He died at Pond Bluff on February 27, 1795, and was buried in the family plot at Belle Isle in St. Stephen's Parish. His tomb escaped flooding by the Santee-Cooper project and serves today as a humble monument to the Swamp Fox. His comrade Peter Horry attempted to write a history of Marion's brigade, but it was hopelessly mangled by Mason Locke "Parson" Weems, the first of many to take enormous liberties with Marion's legend. See plate 12.

Bass, Robert. *Swamp Fox: The Life and Campaigns of General Francis Marion*. New York: Holt, 1959.

Rankin, Hugh F. *Francis Marion: The Swamp Fox*. New York: Crowell, 1973.

Simms, William Gilmore. *The Life of Francis Marion*. 1844. Reprint, Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries, 1971.

Share This SC Encyclopedia Content:

Citation Information
The following information is provided for citations.
Article Title Marion, Francis
Author Roy Talbert, Jr.
Website Name *South Carolina Encyclopedia*
URL http://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/marion-francis/
Access Date July 12, 2018
Publisher University of South Carolina, Institute for Southern Studies
Original Published Date June 8, 2016
Date of Last Update February 16, 2017

FINAL

7.13.18 –

George Washington

Thanks for stopping by.

So many monuments and memorials! There are cities and statues, parks and pedastals, high schools and highways – so many ways you have honored me across the country as your first President. I am humbled by them all.

And I am happy to be here in Charleston – a city of which I have such fond memories. I visited in 1791 as part of my Southern Tour, my first ever visit south of Virginia. Even as I took my oath of office, in April 1789, I planned a tour of all 13 states. I wanted to get out among the people rather than remaining in the then capital, Philadelphia. We had fought off the British and formed a new country together and I felt the people needed to see me – and I them to become better acquainted.

I chose to take the whole tour by land, though roads were poor, bridges rare and lodgings limited in those days. Despite these handicaps, we managed to keep to our rigorous itinerary over 3½ months and 1,900 miles without any injury, sickness, or loss of time.

But oh: we were glad to reach Charleston. We had scheduled a full week here - more time than anywhere else on our trip. The good people of this city put us up in wonderful style, at a townhouse on 87 Church Street, which you can still visit today as the Heyward Washington House. Next to Catfish Row, to gain fame about 150 years later as the setting for the great American opera Porgy and Bess. And they honored us in such fine fashion with a parade, grand balls, public dinners, teas, and may other festive activities.

Although I was the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, I never saw Southern battle sites. But in Charleston, I was able to absorb what the British occupation had been like in the city. By boat I visited Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island, where Americans made a heroic stand against the first British invasion attempt led by Sir Peter Parker in 1776. Fortunately, Sir Peter Parkers efforts were thwarted by Moultrie.

I was your first President, though never perfect. But together the people of this country started something great – and as one of the Founding Fathers of America I am proud to stand here amongst you as a figurehead. I watch as you continue the work we started and urge only this: that you always seek to improve your country.

Sources:
https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/the-first-president/george-washingtons-1791-southern-tour/

www.mountvernon.org.... as noted on writeup

Charleston was one of Washington's chief destinations. Tell us about his visit.

The Heyward-Washington home in Charleston (Rob Shenk)

Washington and probably the entire travelling party enjoyed the one-week visit to Charleston. The City rented and provided a staffed townhome on Church Street for the president's use. After weeks on the road, the Charleston stop was welcome relief for the travelers.

Hosted by the state's leading citizens, including Governor Charles Pinckney, Washington was entertained lavishly, but he also enjoyed some time to rest in his quarters, catch-up on correspondence, and ride Prescott through the sandy streets.

As was true throughout the tours, the president was entertained by Masonsand members of the Society of the Cincinnati, but, too, he greatly enjoyed an unusual occasion, a visit by Charleston's leading ladies who asked to see him at his residence. Apparently the ladies felt that their husbands dominated the president's time, and they wanted a proper visit. Washington recorded in his May 3 diary, " Was visited about 2 o'clock by a great number of the most respectable ladies of Charleston –the first honor of the kind I had ever experienced and it was as flattering as it was singular."

Though he was the top American general in the American Revolution, Washington never saw Southern battle sites, but in Charleston, he absorbed what the British occupation had been like in that city, and by boat he visited Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island, where Americans made a heroic stand against the first British invasion attempt in the summer of 1776.

Washington attended several church services, teas, dinners, and balls, visited the city's orphanage, and even climbed to the top of the St. Michael's Church steeple to take in a grand view of the charming city. Washington was quartered at 87 Church Street. Today the home is called the Heyward-Washington House and it is open for tour.

Are there any stories from this journey that you find especially interesting?

The mere physical success of the Southern Tour fascinates me. My mind's eye is excited by the images of that small group of men, many in bright red livery, making their way through the tall pine forests of North Carolina or through the dense vegetation and Palmetto trees of coastal South Carolina, or arriving in a tiny Charlotte where just a few buildings stood around the ramshackle courthouse in the town square. I love that Washington was able to pay two rare visits to Mount Vernon during the Southern Tour. But there are specific stories and lore aplenty.

Washington's own diary gives accounts of accidents while the group crossed the Chesapeake and Occoquan Creek. In North Carolina, the entourage stopped for breakfast one morning at a private home, mistaking it for an inn. Not until Washington went to pay the bill did he realize the mistake; the president was so flustered he reportedly gave the lady of the house a kiss on the cheek.

A bar tender in Wilmington, North Carolina advised Washington not to drink the water of that low coastal land and, Washington's hat blew off so many times traveling down the northern beaches of South Carolina that the strand there became known as Windy Hill Beach (now part of North Myrtle Beach).

A widely-known story from near Salisbury, North Carolina is that Washington concealed his identity during a stop at the Brandon farmstead where only a young girl, Betsy Brandon, was present. Betsy lamented that the rest of the family had gone to town to see President Washington, while she had been left behind to do chores and tend to the house. Washington assured her that he would make sure that she, too, would see the president if she would just serve refreshments to the travelers. The story goes that Betsy served up milk and snacks and that just before taking his leave, the old Virginian revealed to Betsy that she had been in the company of the President of the United States.

In the end, did Washington find the trip to be of value? Did he express any opinions about the southern states and their citizens?

The Southern Tour was a remarkable physical and political journey. Washington was able to stick to his rigorous itinerary over 3 ½ months and 1,900 miles without any injury, sickness, or loss of time. And, he fulfilled his desire to visit the 13 original states.

The president was pleased with what he saw, heard, and learned. Washington wrote in his diary, "The manners of the people, as far as my observations, and means of information extended, were orderly and civil. And they appeared to be happy, contented, and satisfied with the general government under which they were placed. Where the case was otherwise, it was not difficult to trace the cause to some demagogue or speculating character."

A few weeks after his July 6 return to Philadelphia, Washington wrote his old friend David Humphreys and offered some thoughts on his recently completed journey, "Each days experience of the Government of the United States seems to confirm its establishment, and to render it more popular—A ready acquiescence in the laws made under it shews in a strong light the confidence the people have in their representatives, and in the upright views in those who administer the government."

George Washington completed two terms as president and returned to Mount Vernon in the spring of 1797. He never went south of Virginia again—but I'm sure he never forgot the Southern Tour of 1791.

Shop: Order *George Washington's 1791 Southern Tour* Online

About Warren L. Bingham

Warren L. Bingham is a speaker, broadcaster, writer, and the author of *George Washington's 1791 Southern Tour* from The History Press. Bingham is the creator of *Carolina Color*, radio vignettes offering a historical perspective on North Carolina people, places, products, and events.

A student of Washington's Southern Tour for over 20 years, Bingham's other special interests are in the life of George C. Marshall and in the history of banking and insurance. Earning degrees at UNC-Chapel Hill and Hollins University, Bingham splits his time in Raleigh and in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina.

10 FACTS

10 Facts about President Washington

How much do you know about our first president?

LEARN MORE

INTERACTIVE MAP

Washington's World Interactive Map

George Washington traveled far and wide during his remarkable life. See all the places that he visited in our new interactive map.

The Confederate Defenders of Charleston

FINAL

This statue, which honors "**The Confederate Defenders of Charleston**," was erected in 1932, 67 years after the end of the Civil War. Around the base of the 25-foot tall monument are the words "Count Them Happy Who for Their Faith and Their Courage Endured a Great Fight." Representing the soldiers who manned Fort Sumter while defending the city is a young warrior clad only in a fig leaf and sandals. He holds a shield bearing the Seal of the State of South Carolina in his left hand with a short sword in his right. Charleston is personified not as a cowering Southern Belle but as a defiant Amazon willing to share the pain and suffering of her young defender. She holds Laurel leaves, which are the Warrior's reword, in her hand. While a chain near her left foot, but she is unfettered. The steps leading from the street are represent the seven states that formed the original Confederacy. Charleston was under blockade and bombardment from 1861-1865, 46 long months, the second longest period of siege in modern military history. Killing 52 and wounding 267.

The dedication in 1932 drew a crowd estimated at three thousand, including the only surviving Charleston Confederate veteran, Colonel William Robert Greer. The sculpture, designed by Hermon A. MacNeil, was officially sponsored by the Charleston Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. It was funded by the estate of local businessman and philanthropist Andrew Murray, who died four years before the dedication.

After Andrew Murray was orphaned as a child he was raised at the Charleston Orphan House. At age sixteen he was adopted by the owner of the Bennett Rice and Lumber mill on the Cooper River. Murray eventually became the president of the company. He served in the Confederate army, defending Charleston, part of the fight to reestablish white rule, during the war, and was a member of a state militia unit during Reconstruction. Late in life he became one of the city's most important philanthropists, contributing almost a million dollars to such causes as the Orphan House, the city schools, and The Citadel. Murray Blvd. on whose corner the monument stands, is also named for him.

"Andrew Murray, Philanthropist, Has Passed Away," Charleston *News and Courier*, December 21, 1928

"Memorial Bronze to Confederates Is Given to City," Charleston *News and Courier*, October 21, 1932

"A Walk in the Park" John Young, 2010

St. Andrew's Society (est. 1729) always leads the parade. While the procession made its way down Meeting Street to White Point, the Charleston Community Band, conducted by Commander J. Michael Alverson, USN (Ret.) entertained the gathering crowd.

J. Paul Trouche, president of the Palmetto Society, opened the ceremonies with a welcoming statement. Father James L. Parker, chaplain of the Maj. Gen. William Moultrie Chapter, gave the invoca- tion. The Color Guard of the Washington Light Infantry presented the colors. The Charleston Community Band played *the Star Spangled Banner*, and those assembled sang along.

Gen. Rogers made opening remarks, including recognition o those instrumental in the successful completion of the project. Roger and Vice Chairman Brailsford made special presentations to the Pos and Courier Foundation, the Society of the Cincinnati, Nationa Society of Colonial Wars and Charleston County Council.

Committee member and former South Carolina Gov. James Ed wards formally presented the monument to Mayor Joseph P. Rile Jr. In his acceptance remarks, the Mayor spoke of the Battle of Su livan's Island, the Declaration of Independence, and Moultrie's lif before, during and after the American Revolution. In speaking o the bravery and dedication of our forefathers, Riley compared the to nine members of the Charleston Fire Department who had die in a blaze 10 days earlier.

The Right Rev. C. FitzSimons Allison, Bishop of South Carolin (Ret.), gave both the dedication and blessing. Trouche, Brailsford Edwards and Riley tugged at four cords, releasing the blue drap covering the statue.

Five of the participating organizations — South Carolina Histor cal Society; Rebecca Motte Chapter, South Carolina Daughters of th American Revolution; Fort Sullivan Chapter, SCDAR; Sons of th American Revolution; and the Society of Cincinnati — one at a tim laid wreaths at the monument's base. The laying of each wreath wa punctuated by a cannon salute from the Waccamaw Light Infantr

6. Defenders of Fort Sumter

The stalwart, classical figures immediately give notice that those being honored performed feats of near-mythic proportions.

The Details

The memorial is an allegorical depiction of the Confederate de- fense of Charleston during the War for Southern Independence. A young warrior clad in only a fig leaf and sandals holds a shield bearing the Seal of the State of South Carolina in his left hand and a short sword in his right. He represents the soldiers who manned Fort Sumter in defense of the city.

Charleston is personified not as a cowering Southern belle but as a defiant Amazon willing to share the pain and suffering of her young defender. There is a chain near her left foot, but she is unfettered. She holds laurel leaves, the warrior's reward. To continue the allegory: The seven steps leading from street level to the pedestal represent the states that formed the original Confederacy before the firing on

Fort Sumter drew Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina into the Southern fold. The small, rough granite pieces around the pedestal are arranged in wave patterns. Further waves can be seen in the detail of the bronzes' base. However, it is here that the allegory ends. At the very bottom of the pedestal, a consistent pattern of alternating single and double stars can be seen, but symbolism is trumped by symmetry because the total equals 12, not the coveted 11 that could have represented all the states that eventually joined the Confederacy.

The 6-foot, 6-inch Bavarian granite pedestal is octagonal. The bronze figures stand 10-feet- 6-inches tall. The monument stands in the middle of a circular plaza with a 56½-foot diameter. Four concentric stone circles form a base for the pedestal and double as steps.

The sculptor, Hermon A. MacNeil (1866-1947) of Long Island, N.Y., (Inscription — H.A. MACNEIL — in the statue's base) was on hand for the 1932 dedication. Outside the art world, MacNeil was best known for designing the Standing Liberty quarter (1916-1930). But by 1932 his design had been superseded to commemorate the bicentennial of Washington's birth. The architect was Delano & Aldrich of New York. The Alexis Rudier Foundry of Paris (Inscription — Alexis RUDIER Fondeur PARIS — in the statue's base) cast the two bronze figures. The Dawson Engineering Company of Charleston performed the monument setting.

The monument is in the southeastern corner of the park, oriented toward the fort. The front of the pedestal bears the inscription.

TO THE
CONFEDERATE
DEFENDERS OF
CHARLESTON

FORT SUMTER
1861—1865

Encircling the pedestal in bas-relief are heroic figures bearing sandbags to repair the fort's broken walls. Below is an encircling inscription: "Count them happy who for their faith and their courage endured a great fight."

On the inside of the low wall that partially surrounds the monu-

ment, there is a barely visible inscription:

THIS MONUMENT WAS ERECTED WITH FUNDS
BEQUEATHED BY ANDREW BUIST MURRAY IN
TRIBUTE TO THE CONFEDERATE DEFENDERS
OF FORT SUMTER.
MCMXXXII

Andrew Buist Murray (1844-1928), wealthy Charleston businessman and philanthropist, designated $100,000 in his will for "the erection of a suitable monument to the defenders of Fort Sumter." Murray Boulevard is named in his honor.

Use the smallest of the nearby live oaks as a landmark to find the inscription, which is on the interior portion of the wall nearest that tree.

Note the slots in the wall for drainage. They don't help much, and the plaza, like much of the Charleston peninsula, floods easily and frequently.

The total cost of the monument was between $80,000 to $90,000.

The History

At 4:30 a.m., April 12, 1861, a shell fired from James Island signaled the start of the Confederate attack on the Federal troops at Fort Sumter. Two days later the troops surrendered and left, and Confederate soldiers took possession of the fort. They occupied it until the Confederates evacuated Charleston on the night of February 17-18, 1865. During those roughly 46 months, Confederate soldiers tenaciously held the linchpin to Charleston's harbor.

On April 7, 1863, the U.S. Navy attacked the stronghold with a fleet of nine ironclads. All nine were heavily damaged and the *Keokuk* was lost. (See Dahlgren Gun — White Point Garden.)

During the summer of 1863, fierce fighting ensued on nearby Morris Island as the Union Army and Navy attempted to dislodge the Confederate defenders from strategic Battery Wagner. The Confederates finally abandoned their increasingly untenable position on September 7, 1863. Union guns were moved closer to Fort Sumter, by then a mere half mile away, and a fierce artillery barrage began.

On September 9, 1863, convinced that the prolonged bombardment had broken the Southerners' will to fight, the U.S. Navy

launched a landing force aboard small boats against Fort Sumter's shattered defenses. The alert garrison easily repelled the attackers, capturing more than a hundred prisoners.

Slowly but surely, Union artillery battered the fort into a pile of rubble, but during pauses in the shelling, men emerged from their hidey-holes and repaired as much damage as possible.

During the Union siege approximately 45,000 projectiles, weighing an estimated 3,500 tons, were fired into Sumter's fortifications. Despite the heavy bombardment, the casualties were astonishingly small — 52 killed and 267 wounded.

The Dedication

The Defenders of Fort Sumter monument was dedicated October 20, 1932. Mayor Burnet R. Maybank (1899-1954) closed all city offices to allow municipal employees the opportunity to attend the event.

Prior to the ceremonies, the Merz Band entertained the crowd of several thousand. David Huguenin, chairman of the Fort Sumter

emorial Commission, was the master of ceremonies. The Right v. Albert S. Thomas, bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church South Carolina, gave the invocation.

The keynote speaker was Gerald White Johnson (1890-1980), hor and editorial writer for the Baltimore Evening Sun. He lauded allant defense of the fort and urged those in attendance to adopt ame spirit in the fight against communism and fascism.

he Washington Light Infantry's Colonel W. Robert Greer, the urviving Charlestonian from the Sumter garrison, paid tribute the monument's benefactor Andrew Buist Murray. He also ed his fellow defenders, referring to Fort Sumter as "this great Gi ltar of Charleston."

iver J. Bond, vice chairman, introduced four young women — Em Mayberry Walker, Lavinia Huguenin, Ann Stewart Barnwell and milla Floride Bissell — descendants of the stronghold's three com nders and engineer. As the band played the recessional, the you women unveiled the monument. At the same time, a Confede flag was placed at the memorial's base. James R. Johnson of C rleston explained that it was the last to fly over Fort Sumter.

Th band then struck up *Dixie*. Huguenin presented the monument Mayor Maybank, who delivered an acceptance speech. The Most v. Emmet M. Walsh, bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of South Carolina, gave the benediction. As the ceremonies concluded, an onor guard, composed of men of Citadel Cadet Corps, the Wash on Light Infantry and the Sumter Guards, escorted Greer and S en E. Welch, another Confederate veteran, from the site.

The Tri

For umter was named for Revolutionary War hero General Thoma Sumter (1734-1832), nicknamed "The Gamecock," an allusion his combative nature. After the Revolution he served in both t S. House and Senate. In an era not known for longevity, he died st months shy of his 98th birthday.

Fort Sumter was constructed on the "Middle Ground," a sandbar at the harbor's entrance. But before the fort could be built, an island had to be created to hold it. Initially, 10,000 tons of granite from the Penobscot River region of Maine were set in place, and an addition 60,000 tons of rock and stone were eventually laid atop that sub ucture until the site had an area of two-and-a-half acres.

13-Jul-18 FINAL

William Gilmore Simms

There are so many stories in this city. Let me tell you mine.

I came into this world on the 17th April 1806, the son of a Charleston merchant. When I was still an infant my mother died, and my devastated father left the city - unable to bear this "place of tombs".

But I always loved Charleston, just as I loved to hear his swashbuckling stories of travel and adventure. I guess storytelling was in my blood for my maternal grandmother, who raised me, told a good story too. I grew up captivated by her tales of Indians, pirates and the American Revolution.

I was " a voracious reader" and by 10 knew enough French, Latin, German and Spanish to dabble in translations. By 12, I completed the study of materia medica, and left college to become a druggist's apprentice. I began publishing poetry in Charleston papers when I was 16.

I was never one to hang around. Soon after, I joined my itinerant father in Mississippi frontier country, meeting the people and seeing the life of which I later wrote. I edited a magazine and published a volume of poetry at 19, married at 20, and was admitted to the bar at 21.

I wrote constantly - poetry, novels, essays, reviews – and almost always about life in the South. I became one of the country's most popular writers, with Edgar Allan Poe himself pronouncing me the best novelist America had ever produced. My wife and I made our home in Woodlands, our 3,000 acre plantation outside Orangeburg, SC on the Edisto River; I delighted in my family and writing life and my personal library, one the greatest in the state.

The Civil War consumed me, however. I felt my literature "overwhelmed by the drums, and the cavalry, and the shouting". My home and library were burned by Union troops, leaving me bereft and forced to write for poorly paying papers to feed my family.

And for many years afterwards, I came to be defined by a book I didn't even write! My scathing reviews of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* - along with my pro-slavery opinions - long outlived me. I became entombed by my own words, though few people now have read them!

I believed in South Carolina and spent my life honoring it in every way I could. Hopefully, even though not very well remembered or read, I hope to be remembered for that.

John Caldwell Guilds, *Simms: A Literary Life* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1992)

John M. McCardell Jr., "William Gilmore Simms," Walter Edgar, ed., *The South Carolina Encyclopedia* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 868-869

Search

Quick Browse: A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Simms, William Gilmore

April 17, 1806—June 11, 1870

Article Images Documents Links

Written by John M. McCardell, Jr.

Lacking much formal education, Simms was a voracious reader and an acute observer. From his reading and his travel he absorbed history as well as local legends and acquired material for the volumes he would later writ

W.G. Simms Bust, White Point Gardens, Charleston. South Caroliniana Library.

Poet, historian, novelist, editor. Simms was born on April 17, 1806, in Charleston, South Carolina, the son of the Irish immigrant William Gilmore Simms and Harriet Ann Singleton. His mother died when Simms was an infant. His distraught father moved west, leaving his son to be reared by a grandmother who told him stories of Charleston during the Revolutionary War and the exploits of his ancestors. In 1818 Simms's father sent a representative to Charleston to bring his son west. The twelve-year-old boy refused his father's entreaties and chose to remain in Charleston.

Lacking much formal education, Simms was a voracious reader and an acute observer. From his reading and his travel he absorbed history as well as local legends and acquired material for the volumes he would later write. In 1825 he took up the study of law in Charleston. Literature, however, remained his passion, and in that same year he helped found and edit *The Album*, which characterized itself as "a weekly literary miscellany." He married Anna Malcolm Giles on October 19, 1826. That same year he was admitted to the bar. The birth of his daughter Anna added to the young family's joy even as it stretched their meager finances and reduced the time available for literary pursuits. In 1829 Simms became editor of the *City Gazette*, a Charleston newspaper through which he railed against nullification and John C. Calhoun's doctrine of state interposition.

In the early 1830s Simms experienced a series of devastating personal setbacks. In 1830 both his father and his grandmother died. His house in Summerville burned to the ground. In February, 1832, his wife succumbed to a lingering illness. Alone but for his four-year-old daughter, Simms resigned his editorship and went north to explore new opportunities. In New York he met James Lawson, a young Scots businessman and occasional poet. Through Lawson, Simms was introduced to a group of young writers and critics and their publishers. For the rest of his life he would engage in a lively correspondence with these new friends, and he would make almost annual visits to New York to renew and deepen their friendships.

Buoyed by the success of his trip, Simms returned to Charleston determined to make a living as a professional writer. During the next three years he published *Martin Faber* (1833), a ghost story and his first work of fiction; *Guy Rivers* (1834), the first of his "border tales" set in the Georgia frontier; *The Yemassee* (1835), a colonial romance based on an Indian uprising in 1715; and *The Partisan* (1835), the first of his Revolutionary War romances. Published by Harper and Brothers of New York, these works were widely and warmly reviewed and established Simms as one of his country's leading literary lights.

In 1836 Simms's life took another propitious turn with his marriage to Chevillette Roach, the nineteen-year-old daughter of a wealthy planter. The newlyweds made their home at Woodlands, one of the Roach plantations on the Edisto River near Orangeburg. Simms savored life at Woodlands and the setting it provided for his literary endeavors. Though he spent his summers in Charleston, Woodlands would be his home for the remainder of his life.

Despite the delights of plantation living, Simms felt himself a "man marked for the scourge." Of the fourteen children borne by Chevillette, only five would live to adulthood. His father-in-law's poor management of the plantation kept the family's financial situation precarious and forced on Simms a pace of composition that occasionally affected his health and morale.

Simms believed that "to be national in literature, one must needs be sectional." Indeed, he continued, "he who shall depict one *section* faithfully, has made his proper and sufficient contribution to the great work of *national* illustration." Though occasionally annoyed by an inaccurately perceived sense of neglect in his home state and prompted at times to consider removing to what he hoped might be a more hospitable literary climate in New York, Simms remained a South Carolinian and devoted his professional life to telling the Palmetto State's story. His efforts varied widely. He edited numerous literary journals, engaged in a rich and voluminous correspondence, and lectured widely. He wrote stories about the southern frontier, essays on literary and social topics, and reviews of newly published works.

But Simms's principal contributions to a broader understanding of South Carolina may be found in his poetry, his history, his biographies, and perhaps most notably, his fiction. Simms's best poetry, such as "Maid of Congaree" and "Dark-Eyed Maid of Edisto," conveyed the beauty and mystery of South Carolina. After the Civil War he collected and published *War Poetry of the South*, a valuable document of the Confederate experience. A committed historian, Simms possessed one of the finest private libraries of historical materials in the South. He published a history of South Carolina in 1840 (versions revised by his granddaughter Mary Simms Oliphant would become a staple for schoolchildren in the twentieth century), followed by biographies of Francis Marion and Nathanael Greene. His beloved Woodlands was put to the torch by Union troops in 1865 (though later rebuilt), and his entire library was destroyed. Simms retreated inland, where he witnessed the burning and devastation there, which he later described in *Sack and Destruction of the City of Columbia, S.C.*

In his fiction Simms was a master of the "romance," which he likened more to epic poetry. He covered the entire sweep of Carolina history, from the earliest years of French and Spanish settlement (*The Lily and the Totem* and *Vasconselos*), through the period of English colonization (*The Yemassee*), through the Revolution (a "cycle" of seven romances, most notably *The Partisan* and *Woodcraft*), up to Simms's own time, where a distinctive American character began to emerge (*Guy Rivers*).

Keeping nation and section in balance became increasingly difficult for Simms during the 1850s. Some critics have read *Woodcraft*, with its view of a coherent, hierarchical plantation society, as a rebuttal to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. More certain was Simms's growing sense of alienation from the North, which came to a climax during a lecture tour in New York in 1856. Speaking on "South Carolina in the Revolution," he asserted his native state's contributions to the country's history and attacked the antislavery movement for its "defamation" of South Carolina. So

negative were the reviews of his first lecture that Simms cancelled the remainder of his engagements and returned home. From that point on he became an advocate of southern secession.

Broken by the war and enfeebled by illness, Simms attempted in 1865 to revive his literary career, but the result was undistinguished. He died in Charleston on June 11, 1870, and was buried in Magnolia Cemetery. Simms was posthumously inducted into the South Carolina Academy of Authors in 1986.

Guilds, John C. *Simms: A Literary Life.* Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1992.

McCardell, John. "William Gilmore Simms and Antebellum Southern Literature." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Literature.* Vol. 4. Edited by Jay Parini. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Oliphant, Mary C. Simms, Alfred Taylor Odell, and T. C. Duncan Eaves, eds. *The Letters of*

William Gilmore Simms. 6 vols. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1952–1982.

Share This SC Encyclopedia Content:

Citation Information
The following information is provided for citations.
Article Title Simms, William Gilmore
Author John M. McCardell, Jr.
Website Name *South Carolina Encyclopedia*
URL http://www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/simms-william-gilmore/
Access Date July 12, 2018
Publisher University of South Carolina, Institute for Southern Studies
Original Published Date August 1, 2016
Date of Last Update December 7, 2016

Social media & sharing icons powered by UltimatelySocial