

Francis Marion

Francis Marion, for whom Marion Square is named, was born in St. John's Berkeley Parrish, a rural area outside Charleston, in 1732, the youngest of six children. In 1756, he commenced his military career in the parish militia, and joined the campaigns against the Cherokee Indians, rising to the rank of first lieutenant.

At the start of the Revolutionary War, in 1775, Marion responded to the call of South Carolina. Commissioned as a captain, he helped in capturing Fort Johnson in 1775 and was under the command of Colonel William Moultrie at the Battle of Sullivan's Island in June 1776. After the Fall of Charleston in 1780, Marion was commissioned a brigadier general in the South Carolina militia and organized a partisan force which fought in numerous battles in the Carolina backcountry.

His small scale hit-and-run tactics disrupted supply lines, intercepted communications and hampered the enemy considerably. He camped in swamps and other out-of-the-way places to suddenly confront the enemy in devastating ambushes when the British least expected, after which he would vanish back into the dense low country forests and swamps.

Infuriated by these tactics, the British ordered one of their best commanders, Banastre Tarleton, to fight Marion's force. But Tarleton could not catch him. After one particularly grueling and pointless pursuit through miles of swamp, Tarleton declared, "As for this damned old fox, the Devil himself could not catch him." The name stuck and Marion later became known as the Swamp Fox.

After the war ended he served in the South Carolina Senate and was elected to the 1790 state Constitutional Convention. Marion died in 1795.

Largely due to his men's success in hit-and-run tactics, the United States Army considers him to be the "father" of the Army Rangers.