Lead: For 400 years service men and women have fought to carve out and defend freedom and the civilization we know as America. This series on *A Moment in Time* (is presented by the people of __________ and) is devoted to the memory of those warriors, whose sacrifice gave, in the words of Lincoln at Gettysburg, *the last full measure*.

Content: From the opening of hostilities at Lexington and Concord in 1775 until signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, the Revolution was
America's longest war until the Vietnam conflict. While tension between Loyalist and Patriot sympathizers continued throughout the former colonies, active fighting for the most part had shifted to the South after 1779. First Savannah, then Charleston fell, and British forces under Lord Cornwallis began a series of raids into the interior culminating in the Battle of Camden, South Carolina in August, 1780. Patriot forces under the command of General Horatio Gates suffered a disastrous defeat. After that there appeared almost nothing standing in the way of ultimate victory for the British commanders. In 1780 the fleeting hopes of American Independence were
kept alive in the South by partisan guerrillas.

There were two problems with British strategy in the Revolution. One was political, the other military. Politically, the mother country failed to recognize that as many half of the colonials did not support the Revolution. Had the British tried harder to exploit the divisions in the colonies they might have won back the affection of Americans through negotiation and compromise. Instead they treated Americans as undisciplined children needing to be whipped back into order. This political arrogance then led to the second strategic mistake, this one military. The American forces were vastly
outnumbered, mostly clothed in rags, had little ammunition or artillery, and were, with some notable exceptions, poorly led, but they weren't stupid. They were not going to stand up in pitched battle and be mowed down by the finest European troops money could buy. When they could not win, the Patriot forces melted into the woods and returned to fight again.

After Camden the Patriots for a time could not field an Army that was able to defeat the British, therefore the cause was maintained by militia groups organized by Carolinians Francis Marion, Thomas Sumter, and Andrew Pickens, and a small unit from Virginia led by Light Horse Harry Lee. Marion was the most
successful and best remembered. Before the war he was a plantation owner, of Huguenot descent, serving in the state legislature. He rose to command his own unit. At times his racially mixed band numbered in the hundreds, at others his forces dwindled to only a few dozen. They lived in the swamps of the Pee Dee River in northeastern South Carolina, sniped at the Redcoats and their Loyalist allies, attacked baggage trains, and harassed patrols. Like the morning mist, Marion and his troops would suddenly appear in lightning attacks that steadily eroded British strength and morale.

At first the raids astonished the Brits, then they grew angry. Major
James Wemyss was sent after Marion’s band, but when he could not find them, cut a path of destruction through the Carolina low-country, seventy miles long, at times fifteen miles wide - crops destroyed, livestock slaughtered, plantations leveled. In the mistaken belief that all non-Episcopalian were Rebels, Wemyss burned many Presbyterian churches.

Then General Clinton, displaying that brilliant sense of public relations that nearly always attended British conduct during the Revolution, declared that those who remained neutral in the fight were considered enemies of the British crown. Thus, wanton destruction and foolish politics helped swell the ranks of the
partisans. While some Patriots were guilty of brutality, Marion never attacked noncombatants, even those with known Loyalist sympathies. The British, on the other hand, slashed, burned, and massacred with little hesitation.

Marion inspired almost fanatical loyalty in his troops. He understood the weaknesses of his unit and never risked the lives of his men unnecessarily. Instinctively, Marion grasped the fact that he was fighting a civil war; that many of his opponents were his neighbors, having more in common with him than the imported British military. Winning the hearts and minds of these Loyalists was as important as winning battles. People
were changing sides all the time. Cornwallis had turncoats hanged without trial. Marion accepted them back, trusted them and made them his devoted followers. Operating from his base deep in the Pee Dee swamp on Snow’s Island in the southeastern corner of present-day Florence County South Carolina, Marion made full use of the new recruits.

Frustrated by Marion’s raids, the British sent Colonel Banastre Tarleton, known affectionately as Butcher Tarleton for his brutal tactics, but after seven days of wandering around in the muck he arrived empty handed at Ox Swamp. Tradition records that he said, “Come, my boys, Let’s go back, ....as
for this damned old fox, the devil himself could not catch him.” The name stuck and as later embellished by William Gilmore Simms, Marion is known to history as the “Swamp Fox.”

Research assistance for this series on Francis Marion has been provided by Joe Rowley. At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.
Resources


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