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The Marion Park Project Committee of  
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Testimony

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Subcommittee on National Parks

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Description of the Marion Park Project and a brief biography of Brigadier General Francis Marion

Sec. 1: The Marion Park Project Committee – “The Swamp Fox in DC”:

The Marion Park Project was conceived by John F. McCabe during a trip to Washington, DC in June of 2005. Looking at a map of the Capital City, Mr. McCabe noticed a small green space marked “Marion Park” on South Carolina Avenue, SE, just four blocks from the United States Capitol Building. Being a curious history buff, Mr. McCabe researched the park, and discovered that it was part of the National Capital Parks-East division of the National Park Service. The park was named for the famous partisan general from South Carolina, Francis Marion or “The Swamp Fox”.

Mr. McCabe contacted the National Park Service and was sent research on the history of the park. It was represented in the original 1791 Pierre L’Enfant design, and was improved in 1886 as the Capitol Hill Neighborhood developed. It was also noted that there is very little recognition of the name of the park, or the National Hero for whom it was named.

It was then that the idea came to Mr. McCabe to discover the process needed to place a monument in Marion Park, which would be on National Park grounds. After another visit to Washington in August, which involved a visit to Marion Park with Dr. Frank Faragasso, a National Park Historian, the process began. On December 23, 2005, Mr. McCabe contacted Joseph Lawler of the National Capitol Region of the National Park Service, and was sent an official communication on the process to place a monument honoring “The Swamp Fox” in Washington.

The State Newspaper of Columbia, SC, published a front page story on the project on December 27, 2005, which was released to the Associated Press and picked up by roughly 25 newspapers, and various radio and television stations, including National Public Radio. The Charleston (SC) Post & Courier has published two articles and three editorials lauding the project. After several meeting with Congressman Joe Wilson, he offered to introduce the needed legislation to get the project underway. All six South Carolina Congressmen have co-sponsored the legislation. Senators Lindsey Graham and Jim DeMint have agreed to support the project in the United States Senate.

The Marion Park Project Committee was formed, and partnered with the Palmetto Conservation Foundation, a South Carolina-based 501(c)3 organization. A meeting then was held with the National Park Service in Washington on March 24, 2006. At this meeting the finer points in establishing a monument on Federal government land were determined. Five steps are required to complete the process at no cost to the Federal government:

- Enabling Legislation
- Site Selection
- Design

- Fundraising
- Installation

The Project is currently in phase one. A meeting is scheduled to take place on June 27<sup>th</sup> in Washington with the National Capitol Memorial Advisory Commission at the National Building Museum to discuss compliance and procedure issues.

## Sec. 2: Who was Brigadier General Francis Marion?

General Francis Marion, known as “The Swamp Fox,” was a Revolutionary officer from Berkeley County, South Carolina. Even though he was a commissioned officer in the South Carolina Second Regiment, he also led a band of irregular fighters in the back- and low-country swamps of South Carolina fighting the British troops under Lord Cornwallis. He is generally credited as the Father of Guerilla Warfare, and is recognized as such at various War Colleges.

A man of diminutive stature, General Marion was a lifelong citizen-soldier and planter, living on his plantation, Pond Bluff, which now lies under Lake Marion in Central South Carolina. He fought as a lieutenant in the French and Indian War in the 1750's, The Cherokee Campaign of 1760, as a captain at the Battle of Sullivan's Island on June 28, 1776, and as a lieutenant colonel at the Battle of Savannah on October 9, 1779. One interesting fact about his life is that he was carried out of Charleston in 1780 with a broken ankle suffered when he jumped out of a window to escape a Loyalist trap, thus avoiding the fall of Charleston under Gen. Benjamin Lincoln and his 5,000 Continental Troops.

After Charleston had fallen and the Americans were driven from the field at the Battle of Camden in August of 1780, General Marion and his band of irregulars, with whites and blacks, free and slave, along with friendly Native Americans, were the only organized fighting force in action in America, as General Washington's army was at a stalemate outside of British occupied New York. (It is believed that Marion's Band was the first integrated fighting force in America as well.) General Washington had then selected General Nathanael Greene to take over the Southern Administration to replace the disgraced General Horatio Gates. In order to buy time for Greene to come South, General Marion and his band harassed British positions between Camden, Georgetown and Charleston. Two particular “choke points” on the supply lines were on the Santee River near Charleston and the Black River near Georgetown. With so much success in these areas using such tactics, the British Command sent several officers after Marion, one of whom was the famous Colonial Banastre Tarleton who reportedly exclaimed after several unsuccessful capture attempts, “...as to this damned old fox, the devil himself could not catch him.” The name the Swamp Fox stuck.

Disrupting the supply lines, drawing forces away from the expected General Greene, and all-out harassment helped to ensure Patriot Victories at King's Mountain, Cowpens, Eutaw Springs and the eventual surrender at Yorktown. Without General Marion, many historians feel that the British Plan to control the Southern Colonies and split the fledgling nation would have succeeded. Fortunately, the local populace was encouraged by the exploits of The Swamp Fox. The Cause of Independence and the American Experiment was saved because of such a great leader.

General Marion is now and has always been a National Hero. Second only to George Washington in popularity in the century following the Revolutionary War. Marion has lent his name to 29 cities and 17 counties across America, a four year university, a National Forest, countless babies, one of two biographies from the famous biographer Parson M.L. Weems (the other being General Washington), the William Cullen Bryant epic poem “Song of Marion's Men,” a feature length motion picture “The Patriot,” which starred Mel Gibson, a Wonderful World of Disney series in 1959-60 called “The Swamp Fox,” starring Leslie Nielsen and hosted by Walt Disney himself, and a small park on Capitol Hill in the city he helped to create that cries for a monument in his honor.