

# Revolutionary War Heroine Finally Is Given Recognition

By EDITH EVANS ASBURY

Margaret Corbin took over her husband's cannon after he fell mortally wounded, and vainly tried to defend Fort Washington against the British 200 years ago, then faded into oblivion and was nearly forgotten.

Yesterday the New York City Council voted unanimously to honor her by putting her name on street signs on the drive leading through Fort Tryon Park and around the Cloisters. It also voted to name the plaza at the entrance to the park Margaret Corbin Plaza.

Robert Hoffman, who has been buttonholing city officials, community leaders and innumerable strangers for the last two years to talk about Mrs. Corbin, was on hand yesterday to observe the Council's action. Mr. Hoffman, who grew up on the Lower East Side, retired two years ago as a furniture salesman.

"Everybody laughed at him when he first came up with the idea," Councilwoman Arlene Stringer, one of the sponsors of the Council bill to honor Mrs. Corbin, said yesterday.

"Then he explained who Margaret Corbin was and what she had done. I grew up in Washington Heights. We were taken on geology hikes when I was in school, and learned all about the rock formations, but they never taught us the history of the neighborhood."

## Tryon's Background Cited

Councilman Henry Stern, another sponsor of the bill, said: "I grew up in Washington Heights, too. I played in Fort Tryon Park, used the slides and seesaws without ever realizing I was honoring a Tory (William Tryon)."

The idea Mr. Hoffman came up with was to rename Fort Tryon Park for an American hero, not a Tory governor. He got it after he heard some Austrian tourists laugh after being told who the park was named for.

Hope Irvine, co-chairman of the Bicentennial Committee of Community Board 12 had come across Mrs. Corbin in her research, and suggested her name to Mr. Hoffman.

That was two years ago. Since then, Mr. Hoffman's one-man committee has expanded to a 13-member ad hoc committee of converts.

The Cloisters which, along with the land for Fort Tryon Park, was given to the City by the Rockefeller family, opposed renaming the whole park, but suggested instead that the plaza and drive be renamed, a compromise finally agreed to by the committee.

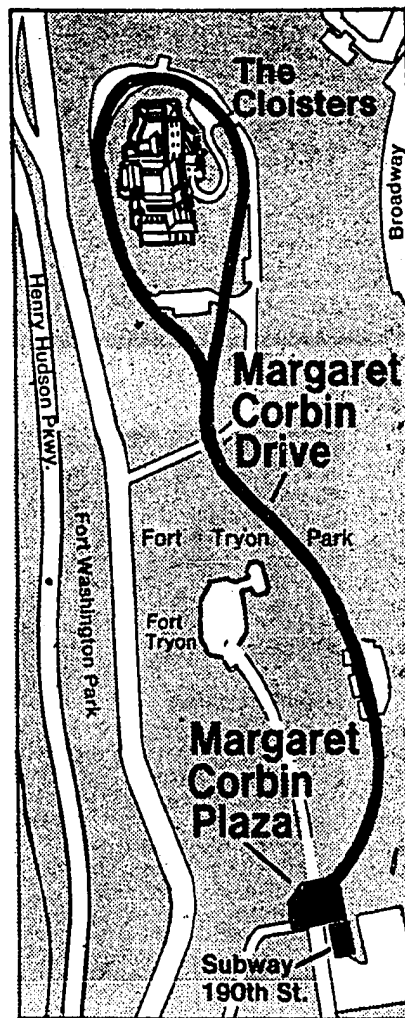
The current generation of children attending Washington Heights public schools are being taught about Mrs. Corbin, again thanks to Mr. Hoffman. He campaigned for and obtained publication of a pamphlet about her and the Battle of Fort Washington by the bureau of curriculum development of School District 6.

"Captain Molly," as she was sometimes called, was born in a frontier settlement in Pennsylvania in 1751. Her father was killed and her mother seized in an Indian raid when she was 5 years old, and she was brought up by an uncle.

Mrs. Corbin was wounded at the



Margaret Corbin



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Battle of Fort Washington, but somehow eluded capture. Except for pension records, showing she was granted half a soldier's pay by Congress, plus a suit of clothes annually, which ceased around 1800, little is known of her later life.

Her vine-obscured grave was discovered near Highland Falls, not far from West Point, early in this century. Daughters of the American Revolution and others obtained permission for her reinterment at West Point Military Cemetery in 1926, and the D.A.R. erected a monument there commemorating her "deeds for the cause of liberty."

There Mrs. Corbin, the only woman buried in the military cemetery at West Point, continued to escape attention until the Bicentennial, Mrs. Irvine and Mr. Hoffman.