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of the American Scenic and
Historic Preservation Society

TO THE LEGISLATURE OF
THE STATE OF NEW YORK



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W. . Robert W. Reid of Washington Lodge, W. . William R. Lockwood of Prince of Orange Lodge and R. . W. . Thomas Sharlow of Ocean Lodge. The plan for the tablet was conceived by Dr. Reid, with whom our Society had the pleasure of co-operating.

Further particulars concerning Fort Masonic may be found in the May 23, September 12 and September 26, 1914, editions of the Masonic Standard, published at New York.

GRAVE OF MARGARET CORBIN

In December, 1914, Mr. Arthur P. Abbott of New York City, brought to the attention of this Society some interesting data which he had gathered about Margaret Corbin, who was wounded at the battle of Fort Washington on Manhattan Island, November 16, 1776, which appears to identify as her place of burial an unmarked grave on private property in a little hamlet called Swimtown, near West Point, N. Y.*

From the data kindly furnished by Mr. Abbott, we have prepared the following statement of the manner at which he arrived at this interesting conclusion.

While he was searching in the Highlands of the Hudson River in 1913 for information for a book in regard to the Palisades Interstate Park, which he has published under the title of "The Greatest Park in the World," he met an old resident nearly 80 years of age, locally known as Uncle Jerry, who as a boy had heard the neighbors tell stories of the Revolution. Uncle Jerry said among other things that near by was the grave of "Molly Pitcher," and he referred Mr. Abbott to Capt. Faurot at Highland Falls for further information. Mr. Abbott recalled the following inscription on a monument at Carlisle, Penn.:

MOLLY McCAULEY
Renowned in History as Molly Pitcher
The Heroine of Monmouth
Died January 1833, aged 79
Erected by the Citizens of Cumberland County
July 4th, 1876

* References to Margaret Corbin will be found in the following Annual Reports of this Society: 1903, p. 151; 1909, p. 60; 1910, p. 350.

and was convinced by this and other data either that Uncle Jerry was in error or that there were two Molly Pitchers. He then went to Capt. Faurot, a man of more than 70 years, who was a retired Hudson River steamboat captain. Capt. Faurot said that his father was one of the crew of Robert Fulton's steamboat Clermont.

"Yes," said Capt. Faurot to Mr. Abbott, "Molly Pitcher is buried in the Highlands and my grandfather helped to bury her," and told many interesting details of her life among the dwellers of the Highlands. He said that she was an Irish woman with a characteristically sharp tongue and quick temper, not always particular of her dress or person, yet commanding and haughty; that while she was called, when absent, "Dirty Kate," by those who had incurred her displeasure, she was invariably saluted as "Captain Molly" when face to face, and that in spite of all the hard things said about her, her favor was held in high esteem by all. Her grave had never been marked otherwise than by a cedar tree which grew beside it, and which, in recent years, had been cut down. The stump, however, yet remained. His father had taken him to her grave and pointing to it said, "Your grandfather brought me here as I have you, and pointing out her grave said "Here we buried 'Molly Pitcher.'" Captain Faurot said he had recently marked the grave with a small wooden stave on which he had placed the letters "M. P."

Mr. Abbott then consulted Dr. Edward S. Holden, librarian of the West Point Military Academy, since deceased, who at first discredited the story of Capt. Faurot; but later recalled an old copy book of letters which, upon being produced, proved to be copies of letters in the handwriting of Wm. Price, Quartermaster at West Point during the period following the close of the Revolutionary war and written to Secretary of War Knox. In these letters he made frequent mention of a "Captain Molly," as he called her, all of which referred to her needs of clothing, boarding house, etc. In fact he seemed to be her special guardian, and her needs were his utmost concern.

In course of conversation on the subject Dr. Holden mentioned a family in the Highlands who claimed to have the personal effects of "Captain Molly" purchased at the public "Vendue"

held after her death. Mr. Abbott called on the family and was shown a flax reel, spinning wheel, andirons, and other domestic articles, which, however, threw no light on the identity of "Captain Molly" of the Highlands.

Mr. Abbott made ineffectual enquiries of the custodian of military records at Albany and of the Pension Bureau at Washington, being informed by the latter that the records which he desired were destroyed by fire when the British burned the the capitol in the war of 1812.

Mr. Abbott then searched for names in history which would correspond to the information which he had gathered and found that Margaret Corbin, who served a cannon in the battle of Fort Washington on Manhattan Island on November 16, 1776, filled his requirement. He writes:

"She was an Irish woman; she was the first pensioned by our government for heroic deeds; she had been a helpless ward of the government; her deed was common knowledge and for it she was held in high esteem by those who were in sympathy with our cause. And, like Harvey Birch, the records available seemed to leave in mystery where she had come from or where she went after the war. Her comrades had called her "Captain Molly" — which, in itself, did not mean much, as Molly was a favorite nickname for Margaret or Mary and perhaps many others,— but it did carry with it a sense of respect and affection. The fact that Molly Pitcher of Monmouth was of Dutch parentage, her maiden name being Mary Ludwig, disproved any assertion that Mary Ludwig was the Highlands "Molly", for all tradition claimed that "Captain Molly" of the Highlands was Irish. Losing, depending on the traditions told to him by some of the same persons who told them to me, seemed to be the most guilty of confusing the records".

Through the State Librarian of Pennsylvania, Mr. Abbott gathered information about Margaret Corbin which he summarizes as follows:

"Margaret Corbin was born in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, November 12, 1751. She was the only daughter of Robert Cochran who was killed by the Indians in 1756, and whose wife, (Margaret's mother,) was taken into captivity by the Indians at the same time. Margaret at the time was only five years of age. The reason she escaped was that she and her brother were at the

time visiting an uncle, brother of her mother. This uncle raised Margaret, who in 1772 married a Virginian by the name of John Corbin. John Corbin enlisted in the First Company Pennsylvania Artillery under Captain Francis Proctor. His wife Margaret having no children or other home ties, did what many other noble women of that day did, followed her husband to war and offered her services as a nurse and aid in camp life. John Corbin was killed at the battle of Fort Washington November 16, 1776, and when he fell Margaret took his place at his gun and served it with great credit till struck down with three grape shot which nearly severed her arm and a part of her breast. At the surrender she was paroled to Greene across the river at Fort Lee and was carried with other sick and wounded to Philadelphia. Here later she was formally enrolled as a member of the "Invalid Regiment", the history of which is most interesting but which space will not permit giving here. An interesting item in this connection is that Mary Ludwig was also a Pennsylvania woman and married John Hays who also joined the same regiment as a gunner. Hays was wounded in 1778 at the battle of Monmouth at which place his wife "Molly Pitcher" as she was called by members of her regiment, performed the act of carrying water in a pitcher to the soldiers under fire, and took active part in the work of the battery, inspired perhaps by the earlier act of Margaret Corbin in 1776, with whom she no doubt was acquainted, and which placed her name also in the book of immortals.

"So grievous were the wounds received by Margaret Corbin at Fort Washington, and which were ultimately the cause of her death (and not, as Lossing would have us believe, by a loathsome and dishonorable disease) that the Supreme Council of Philadelphia on June 29, 1779, granted her \$30 and recommended her to the Board of War for a regular pension, which that body granted July 6, 1779, the pensions being for a soldier's half pay and the value of one suit of clothes each year till she died".

Mr. Abbott is of the opinion that when the Invalid Regiment was mustered out in April, 1783, Margaret having no home or family to go to, no hospital to receive her, and her warmest friends being those with whom she had served their country, turned her thoughts to the Hudson River where her husband had laid down his life and where, owing to the disbanding of the greatest numbers of soldiers, she could find the largest number of sympathetic friends; that here she found a quiet refuge, where she died about the year 1800; and that Margaret Corbin is the "Captain Molly"

of the Highlands. He makes the suggestion that her grave be marked by a suitable monument, and that on the monument should be inscribed the words: "Sacred to the memory of Margaret Corbin, Heroine of the Battle of Fort Washington."

MUNICIPAL NOMENCLATURE

Proposed Change of Name of Varick Street, New York.

In former Annual Reports we have deplored the displacement of old names of towns, streets, parks, etc., to gratify some passing wave of sentiment or influential demand upon the municipal authorities. It is easy to understand a state of popular feeling like that which existed in New York City after the close of the American Revolution and which led to the abolition of such names as Queen Street, King Street, Crown Street,* but such changes as those of Mulberry Bend Park to Columbus Park, Bloomingdale Park to Straus Park, Long Acre Square to Times Square, and many others seem to have been quite unnecessary, especially when, as in most of the cases, the very worthy new names might have been bestowed upon new parks without displacing old names.

This subject has again come into prominence in New York City during the past year by reason of the proposal to rename Varick Street. Until the past year, Varick Street has been the name applied to the thoroughfare about three-quarters of a mile long extending from No. 130 Franklin Street northward to Carmine Street (a transverse street) where it ended. In our last Report we mentioned the destruction of buildings for the purpose of connecting the northern end of Varick Street at Carmine Street with the southern end of Seventh Avenue at Eleventh Street and Greenwich Avenue, a distance of about half a mile. This new connection has been called the Seventh Avenue Extension in common parlance.

On October 16, 1914, the Board of Estimate and Apportionment adopted a report of the Committee on City Plan, recommending to the Board of Aldermen that the name of Seventh

* Although with singular inconsistency but with better judgment such names as King's County, Queen's County, King's Bridge, and even New York, named after the Duke of York, were retained.