

THE
Battle of Monmouth, N. J.

BY THE LATE
WILLIAM S. STRYKER
ADJUTANT-GENERAL OF NEW JERSEY
PRESIDENT OF THE NEW JERSEY SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI
PRESIDENT OF THE NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, ETC.

Edited by
WILLIAM STARR MYERS, Ph.D.,
PROFESSOR OF POLITICS, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY



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drivers to move steadily. General Knox then appealed to his friend Colonel Henry Jackson to come up and cover the guns, but before he could get his men up as a supporting party on the right of the batteries, the whole artillery line was obliged again to retreat as the enemy had gained the wood on the left and the British dragoons were closing in on the right. Even in this retreat the cannon were frequently unlimbered and shot sent among the enemy. All this time men on horseback on the roadway, seeing the danger to which Oswald's command was exposed, were shouting to him to "retreat! retreat!" His danger was certainly imminent but as he was moving off General Lee directed him to remain there and keep firing until he had direct orders to retreat. Oswald's guns began to fire again when some aides from General Lafayette came up and ordered him to retreat. This order he disregarded for a time because of General Lee's superior orders just given him. He said to Lafayette's aides, "I will remain here and until I have General Lee's orders to retreat I cannot retreat." The aides of Lafayette replied that they had General Lee's orders that he should now retreat and that they should conduct him to a new position in the rear.

During the cannonade at the place they were about to leave, one of the picturesque incidents of this battle took place,—a battle full of dramatic scenes worthy of the painter's brush and the chisel of the sculptor.

The story of Molly Pitcher is related in many different ways.

In Barber and Howe's *Historical Collections of New Jersey* the episode is told somewhat in this manner: During the engagement Molly, the wife of a cannonier, was busy carrying water from a neighboring spring to refresh the weary artillerists. While engaged in this work her husband fell dead at his gun. An officer about this time ordered the gun to the rear. "No," said the woman, "the cannon shall not be removed for the want of someone to serve it; since my brave husband is no more I will use my

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utmost exertions to avenge his death." She then performed the duties of cannonier and attracted the attention of all in sight. Washington gave her the rank of Lieutenant, and half-pay for life. She wore an epaulette afterward and was called Captain Molly.

Custis, in his *Recollections*, relates very much the same story but gives this as the woman's expression, "Lie there, my darling, while I revenge ye."

The version of the story given by Lossing in his *Field Book* and in his notes to Custis' *Recollections* makes her a young Irishwoman, twenty-two years of age and a sturdy camp-follower. When she heard the order for the removal of the gun, she seized the rammer and with skill and courage tried to avenge her husband's death. The next morning, covered with blood and dirt, she was presented by General Greene to General Washington, who gave her a piece of gold and conferred upon her a commission as sergeant. The fame of "Sergeant Molly" spread throughout the army and the French soldiers, interested in her story, filled her chapeau with silver coin as she passed in front of their ranks.

The Journal of Doctor Albigeance Waldo, dated in camp opposite Brunswick on July 3, 1778, gives probably the most accurate account of the incident in these words: "One of the camp women I must give a little praise to. Her gallant, whom she attended in battle, being shot down, she immediately took up his gun and cartridges and like a Spartan heroine fought with astonishing bravery, discharging the piece with as much regularity as any soldier present. This a wounded officer, whom I dressed, told me he did see himself, she being in his platoon, and assured me I might depend on its truth."

Now this statement of Doctor Waldo represents the woman as the sweetheart of an infantry soldier, who fell dead in his platoon, instead of the wife of an artilleryman, serving his cannon. A most diligent search of the pension records of the Old War Office at Washington fails to

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show a pension given, or half-pay for life allowed, to any woman for the death of her lover or husband at the Battle of Monmouth under any of the names by which Molly Pitcher has been known—Molly Maban, Molly Hanna, Molly Hayes or Molly McCauley.

An incident of a similar character occurred at Fort Washington, November 16, 1776. The Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania on June 29, 1779, directed that an order be drawn "in favour of Margaret Corbin for Thirty Dollars to relieve her present necessities she having been wounded and utterly disabled by three Grapeshott, while she filled with distinguished Bravery the post of her Husband, who was killed by her side, serving a piece of Artillery at Fort Washington." In the *Pennsylvania Colonial Records*⁹ we find that after reciting her services in the language just stated, the Council ordered, "that she be recommended to a further consideration of the Board of War, This Council being of the opinion, that notwithstanding the rations which have been allowed her, she is not Provided for as her helpless situation really requires." In the Second Series of *Pennsylvania Archives*¹⁰ we find her name in Colonel Lewis Nicolas' Invalid Regiment as discharged at the close of the war in April 1783, and thus Margaret Corbin must have been carried on the regimental rolls of the Continental Army for all those years after her heroic exploit in November 1776.¹¹

Mention should also be made of the record concerning "Captain Molly" which is found in Boynton's *History of West Point* (page 166). In this work the story is told of her firing the last gun at the British when Fort Clinton was taken October 6, 1777. Then follows the anecdote of her good conduct at Monmouth, nine months afterwards, in the same language as given in Barber and Howe's *Historical Collections of New Jersey*. In addition to this story,

⁹ Vol. XII, p. 34.

¹⁰ Vol. XI, p. 277.

¹¹ *Magazine of American History*, Vol. I, p. 90, and Vol. XVI, pp. 299, 401.

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however, extracts are given from manuscript notes made at the Academy by Major George Fleming, Ordnance and Military Storekeeper. These notes are dated October 7, 1786, April 21, June 12 and July 8, 1787, and relate to lodging and food furnished her at the village of Swinstown, now called Buttermilk Falls. This clearly shows that four years after the Revolution the Secretary of War, General Knox, attended to the maintenance of a woman called Molly Pitcher at the government's expense.

The story which is now generally believed, which has same incidental record proof and which is likely to be regarded in the future as the true account, may be related in this wise: Mary Ludwig, daughter of John George Ludwig, who came to this country with the Palatinates, was born October 13, 1744. In the year 1768 she was employed as a domestic in the family of William Irvine, of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, afterward a distinguished general in the Revolutionary War. On July 24, 1769, Mary Ludwig married John Casper Hayes, a barber of Carlisle.¹² On December 1, 1775, her husband, his soldier name being John Hayes, enlisted in Colonel Thomas Procter's First Pennsylvania regiment artillery and served therein one year.¹³ He then enlisted in January, 1777, in Captain John Alexander's Company of Colonel William Irvine's Seventh Pennsylvania regiment.¹⁴ It appears that Molly Hayes followed her husband to the war, as we have seen was the custom in the British Army, and to some extent in the American troops. These women nursed the sick and assisted in the cooking and washing. Private Hayes was probably detailed on the battle-field of Monmouth from infantry service to help one of the batteries. His wife was aiding the cause by carrying pitchers of water for the heated and wounded men. When John Hayes was wounded at the gun she took his place and performed

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¹² *Pennsylvania Archives*, Second Series, Vol. II, p. 181. 115 & 155 → #1 C

✓ ¹³ *ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 176.

✓ ¹⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 614.

#3 → John Hayes
#8 → John Hayes
[191] → John Hayes

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some act of unusual heroism.¹⁵ On the death of John Hayes after the war Molly Hayes married a worthless fellow named John McCauley. Molly McCauley, known familiarly in Carlisle as "Molly Pitcher," lived on the corner of North and Bedford Streets in a house which since has been demolished. On February 27, 1822, the Pennsylvania Legislature granted her the sum of forty dollars and an annuity of the same amount.¹⁶ She died January 22, 1832, and is buried in the old Carlisle cemetery. On the one hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence the citizens of Carlisle erected a neat monument over the heroine's grave,¹⁷ with the following inscription:

MOLLY MCCAULEY
RENOWNED IN HISTORY AS
"MOLLY PITCHER,"
THE HEROINE OF MONMOUTH.
DIED JANUARY 22, 1833¹⁸
AGED SEVENTY-NINE YEARS.
ERECTED BY THE CITIZENS OF CUMBERLAND
COUNTY, JULY THE FOURTH 1876.¹⁹

¹⁵ "I am satisfied that this spring was in the edge of Gordon's woods near what is known as Gordon's Bridge on the Pennsylvania Railroad, and not where 'Mollie Pitcher's Well' is today pointed out, for the reason that Ramsay's guns were near these woods and the well was not dug until fifty years after the battle, by Dr. J. C. Thompson, who himself years later told me he dug it." Samuel C. Cowart, in conversation with Ed., August 12, 1926.

¹⁶ *Laws of Pennsylvania 1821-22*, p. 32.

¹⁷ Egle's *Some Pennsylvania Women in the War of the Revolution*, p. 85.

¹⁸ The date should be January 22, 1832. *The Carlisle Republican* in its issue of January 26, 1832, says: "Died on Sunday last in this borough, at an advanced age, Mrs. Molly McCauly," &c.

¹⁹ For a number of years I spent a part of each summer in Carlisle. In 1905 I met there Miss Caroline Ege, a life-long resident, who died in the year 1909 at the advanced age of eighty-seven. As a child she had known Molly McCauley, remembered her well, and told me interesting facts in regard to her. In response to a letter of inquiry to a member of Miss Ege's family I received the following reply (August 1926): "Yes, you are correct in quoting—'Molly was a rough, common woman who swore like a trooper.' She smoked and chewed tobacco, and had no education whatever. She was hired to do the most menial work, such as scrubbing, etc. I think there are some of her descendants still living in Carlisle."—W.S.M.