

Margaret Cochran Corbin

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PENNSYLVANIA WOMEN

DURING THE

WAR OF THE REVOLUTION.

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BY

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MARGARET COCHRAN CORBIN.

Margaret Cochran, daughter of Robert Cochran, was born in what is now Franklin county, Pa., November 12, 1751. During the Indian maraud of 1756 her father was killed by the Indians and her mother taken prisoner. In November, 1758, the latter was seen one hundred miles westward of the Ohio. It is probable that Margaret and her brother John, were away from home at the time. In 1765 nothing had been heard from the mother, and the children were yet under the guardianship of their maternal uncle. About the year 1772 Margaret married John Corbin. Of him or his antecedents little is known save that he was a Virginian by birth.

At the commencement of the war of the Revolution, John Corbin enlisted as a matross in Captain Francis Proctor's First company of the Pennsylvania Artillery, and his wife accompanied her soldier to the wars. Childless, she felt that the patriot cause demanded this self-sacrificing duty on her part, and as the sequel shows, she proved how brave a woman could become. At the attack upon Fort Washington, a shot from the enemy killed her husband. There being no one to fill his place the officer in command directed the piece to be withdrawn. Hearing this order, Margaret Corbin unhesitatingly took her husband's place, and heroically performed his duties with skill and courage, until seriously wounded. Her services were appreciated by the officers of the army. The State of Pennsylvania made prompt provision for her, but it was not until the Supreme Executive Council called the attention of Congress to her case did that body offer her any relief.

On the 29th of June, 1779, the Council ordered: "That the case of Margaret Corbin, who was wounded and utterly disabled at Fort Washington, while she heroically filled the post of her husband, who was killed by her side serving a piece of artillery, be recommended to a further consideration of the Board of War, this Council being of opinion that notwithstanding the rations which have been allowed her, she is not provided for as her helpless situation really requires." A few days afterward, in July, we have the first acknowledgment of her services by Congress, which unanimously resolved: "That Margaret Corbin, wounded and disabled at the battle of Fort Washington while she heroically filled the post of her husband, who was killed by her side serving a piece of artillery, do receive during her natural life, or continuance of said disability, one-half the monthly pay drawn by a soldier in the service of these States; and that she now receive, out of the public stores, one suit of clothes or value thereof in money."

With this documentary evidence, it is a strange thing that Mr. Lossing, in his "Field Book of the Revolution," as well as other historians of greater or lesser note, should attempt to give the credit of these heroic achievements to some one else. On the rolls of the Invalid regiment in Pennsylvania, commanded by Colonel Lewis Nicola, as it was discharged in April, 1783, is found the name of Margaret Corbin. She was properly pensioned by her native State at the close of the war and until her death, caused by her wounds received in battle. She resided in Westmoreland county, beloved, honored and respected by every one. She died about the year 1800, the precise date not being obtainable. For her distinguished bravery in these days when patriotism has to be taught, it would be well that the women of Pennsylvania, so proud of their Revolutionary ancestry, should honor her devotion and loyalty to country

and liberty, by perpetuating her virtues in bronze or marble. Mr. De Lancey, in writing of the capitulation of Fort Washington, enthusiastically wrote: "The deed of Augustina of Arragon, the Maid of Zaragoza, was not nobler, truer, braver than that of Margaret Corbin, of Pennsylvania."