

First Woman Wounded in Action during the American Revolutionary War



Margaret Cochran Corbin is widely recognized as the first woman wounded in action during the American Revolutionary War – and as one of the earliest women to serve in combat in defense of our nation.

On November 16, 1776, during the Battle of Fort Mifflin in Pennsylvania, Margaret made history. After her husband, John Corbin, was killed while operating a cannon, she immediately took his place on the firing line. With no time to mourn, she continued loading and firing the artillery amid relentless British and Hessian attacks until she was struck by grapeshot and severely wounded. Her bravery that day earned her the enduring nickname “Captain Molly.”

Born on November 12, 1751, in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, Margaret’s early life was marked by hardship. Orphaned at age five after her father was killed in an Indian raid and her mother taken captive, Margaret and her brother were raised by an uncle. In 1772, she married John Corbin of Virginia. When he joined the Pennsylvania militia as an artilleryman in 1775, Margaret accompanied his regiment as a camp follower – cooking, cleaning, and caring for wounded soldiers, as many military wives did at the time.

Her service, however, went far beyond traditional camp duties. Following her heroic actions at Fort Mifflin and subsequent capture and parole, Margaret was assigned to the Corps of Invalids at West Point. The severity of her injuries left her permanently disabled, likely costing her the use of her arm and requiring lifelong care.

On July 6, 1779, the Continental Congress formally recognized her courage. After officers from her regiment petitioned on her behalf, Congress awarded Margaret lifelong financial compensation for her service – making her the first woman in United States history to receive a military pension.

Margaret Cochran Corbin died in 1800 at the age of 48 in Highland Falls, New York, just a few miles from West Point. Today, she is remembered not only for her extraordinary bravery under fire, but also as a trailblazer whose courage helped shape the legacy of women in American military service.



Margaret Corbin, “the first American woman to take a soldier’s part in the War for Liberty.”