

Will the real Molly please stand up—

“Captain Molly” and “Molly Pitcher”

Mention of “Captain Molly” Corbin’s exploits in the February Army Digest article, “Women in Army Service,” set off a barrage of questions from readers—What about “Molly Pitcher?” Which Molly served in the Revolutionary War? In which battle did she serve? Actually, two Mollies are renowned among the women who served with American forces in the Revolutionary War. “Captain Molly” Corbin is buried at West Point, New York, while “Molly Pitcher” Hays is interred in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Following are highlights of their careers:

“Captain Molly.” Born 12 November 1751, Margaret (“Captain Molly”) Corbin accompanied her husband during the Battle of Fort Washington, New York on 16 November 1776. When her husband was mortally wounded while serving a cannon, “Captain Molly” took his place and courageously carried on his duties until she was seriously wounded. Pensioned by the Executive Council of Pennsylvania, she was later given a lifetime pension by the Continental Congress of 1779, which she received in kind from the commissary at West Point.

In 1926, through research of the Daughters of the American Revolution, her grave was located in the Old Cemetery at Highland Falls. Her remains were disinterred and reburied at West Point.

Today the grave of “Captain Molly” is marked by the memorial plaque that reads in part: “In appreciation of her deeds for the



“Captain Molly” Corbin




“Molly Pitcher” Hays

cause of liberty and that her heroism may not be forgotten, her dust was removed to this spot and this memorial erected by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution in New York State 1926.”

“Molly Pitcher.” Mary Ludwig, Revolutionary War heroine better known to Americans as Molly Pitcher, was born on 13 October 1744. Arriving from New Jersey as a domestic servant at the age of 14, she lived with the family of GEN Irvine at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, until leaving to join her husband, John Hays, with the Revolutionary troops in New Jersey.

During the Battle of Monmouth on 28 June 1778, she carried water to the wounded on the battlefield on the hottest day of the year. In full view of the British, unmindful of her own danger, she filled and refilled a pitcher out of which the wounded drank.

Her husband was wounded during the battle and remained an invalid until his death. Subsequently she married a comrade of her husband’s by the name of McKelly (McCauley). The marriage soon ended. “Molly Pitcher” then worked for the county in Carlisle courthouse and during the last years of her life received a pension from the Pennsylvania legislature.

The remains of “Molly Pitcher” rest in the old graveyard in Carlisle. The grave is marked by a monument erected by the citizens of Carlisle and by a cannon and flagstaff placed there by the Patriotic Order of the Sons of America. 

March 1969