

Tomb Effigy of Margaret Corbin

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Artist Statement

The Linden Terrace and Fort Tryon is the site of the Battle of Fort Mifflin, fought during the Revolutionary War in 1776. Margaret Corbin, the first woman to fight for the US, participated in this battle. When her husband, an artilleryman, was struck down by shrapnel, she stepped in and took his place as a gunner. She fired the cannon until she was wounded and captured by the British. She became the first woman to receive a war pension from the US Government.

Currently the southern entrance of Fort Tryon Park, the traffic circle just outside the park and a drive that runs through are named for Corbin. There is also a memorial dedicated to Corbin and her compatriots near the Linden Terrace. There were efforts to rename the entire park after Corbin (Tryon being the name of the former British Colonial Governor) in the 1970's.

In the wake of the Women's Suffrage Movement, The Daughters of the American Revolution verified Corbin's records in 1926 and pushed for her legacy to be recognized. They reinterred (what they believed to be) her remains at the US Military Academy at West Point and commemorated it with a monument. In 2017, an archeological study revealed the remains that were buried were not actually Corbin's, leaving the location of her actual body unknown.

The Cloisters are the main attraction of Fort Tryon Park, and the building that looms large when looking north from the Linden Terrace. A museum, specifically built to house a large collection of Medieval art and comprised of several dismantled and reconstituted French Monasteries. The building creates a wonderful, if completely ahistorical place to view the collection, as the monasteries have nothing to do with the geological/historical site they sit atop. There is a fascinating feeling viewing Fort Tryon and the Linden Terrace from the Cloisters or vice versa, as both places are rich in history and meaning, just from totally different places and times.

Landsberg attempts to figuratively and aesthetically stitch these sites together linking the Revolutionary War battlefield and the medieval Cloisters. Based on the exquisite examples of French and Spanish tomb effigies on display in the Gothic Chapel, he creates a tomb, complete with an effigy in medieval style to (symbolically) house the remains of Margaret Corbin, American war hero.

The effigy is roughly the same dimensions as those at the Cloisters, and borrows style, details, pose and stone look of the medieval examples. The symbols are changed, the coats of arms display stars and stripes instead of family heraldry. The animals propping up the tomb and at the feet of the figure are not dogs or lions, but eagles. She has shield and armor, but also tricorne hat and Revolutionary War era gunnery tools. The result has the gravitas of medieval European history, but with an American claim. The piece is cast in plaster resin, and finished to look like

13th Century limestone.

There is a push in NYC, especially after the Monuments Commission in 2017, to reevaluate/rethink existing NYC monuments. Female historical figures are severely underrepresented in NYC and there are currently several initiatives to add representational figures of historical women to the hundreds of monuments to men in NYC. There is an opportunity to consider where we go with what we choose to commemorate now. The era of triumphant man on horse has gone out of style and now is a time to experiment of what the monuments of the future could look like. This medieval-revolutionary-war-female-war-hero monument is a view of what is possible with public commemoration.





Margaret Corbin Reference



Margaret Corbin Memorial Reference

