Finding the Original Burial Location of Margaret Corbin
Joseph Chellis (Joseph.Chellis@westpoint.edu)
Department of Geography and Environmental Engineering, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York 10996
Advisor: COL Mindy Kimball   Community Partner: Ms. Jennifer (Minus) Voigtschild, Daughters of the American Revolution

INTRODUCTION
Margaret Cochran Corbin, also known as “Captain Molly” of Revolutionary War fame, died in Highland Falls, NY in the year 1800. She was buried in Highland Falls, but the location was not well established and has been obscured by exhumation in 1926 (when her remains were thought to be reinterred in a grave on West Point). During a recent site expansion of the West Point Cemetery, a chain of events led to the conclusion that the reinterred remains were not Margaret Corbin (but instead a middle-aged male). The mystery remains - where is Margaret Corbin buried? The grave in Highland Falls was on the Cragston Estate of JP Morgan, near the present-day location of the Highland Falls water treatment plant. Using historical data, site reconnaissance, and photogrammetry techniques, we attempted to locate the original burial location using Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR). Of most usefulness in the surveys is identifying the locations where the burial is not likely located. Ruling out the areas where a burial might have been located allows us to narrow the search and refine future surveys to eventually conclude where Margaret Corbin’s grave is actually located.

METHODS
LMX200 Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR)
• Transmits radio waves into the ground and reflects the difference between materials.
• Does not “see” into the ground, merely reflects a change in subsurface media

Line Survey Method
• Uses GPS to track the position of the GPR. Lines are created by “mowing the lawn” and three dimensions of the subsurface are modeled in reference to their position on the surface

RESULTS
Inconclusive results at this point. Nothing clearly indicating a body location or a grave shaft can be definitively identified. The difference between the soil and any remains (probably just bones and a collapsed casket) would be very weak. Three distinct anomalies (shown in Figure 6) are promising sites for further investigation. Wastewater treatment plant infrastructure could be obscuring the grave. Tree cover and the steep slopes to the west of the site caused GPS interference and made the data less accurate.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Future work should survey the periphery of the site, along the grassy slope between the paved area and the treeline to the west as seen in the rocky background of Figure 4(b).

Historical research into the location and burial practices of the early 1800 would be helpful in interpreting the data.

Spatial referencing historical photographs would help, since the smokestack in Figure 8 is the same home/building that is still on the property (as seen in the upper-left of Figure 1).

Other geophysical methods (electric resistivity) might look for artifacts she could have been buried with such as a medal, necklace, or gorget.

Follow-on work already planned in summer 2022.

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