

AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

Campaigns of

1779.

1. American scenic and historic preservation society.
Stony Point Battlefield.
2. Firman, S.G.
Historic Stony Point.
3. Hall, E.H.
Stony Point Battlefield.
4. Johnston, J.W.
Centennial celebration of the Minisink battle.
5. Townshend, C.H.
The British invasion of New Haven, Connecticut.

Stony Point Battlefield.

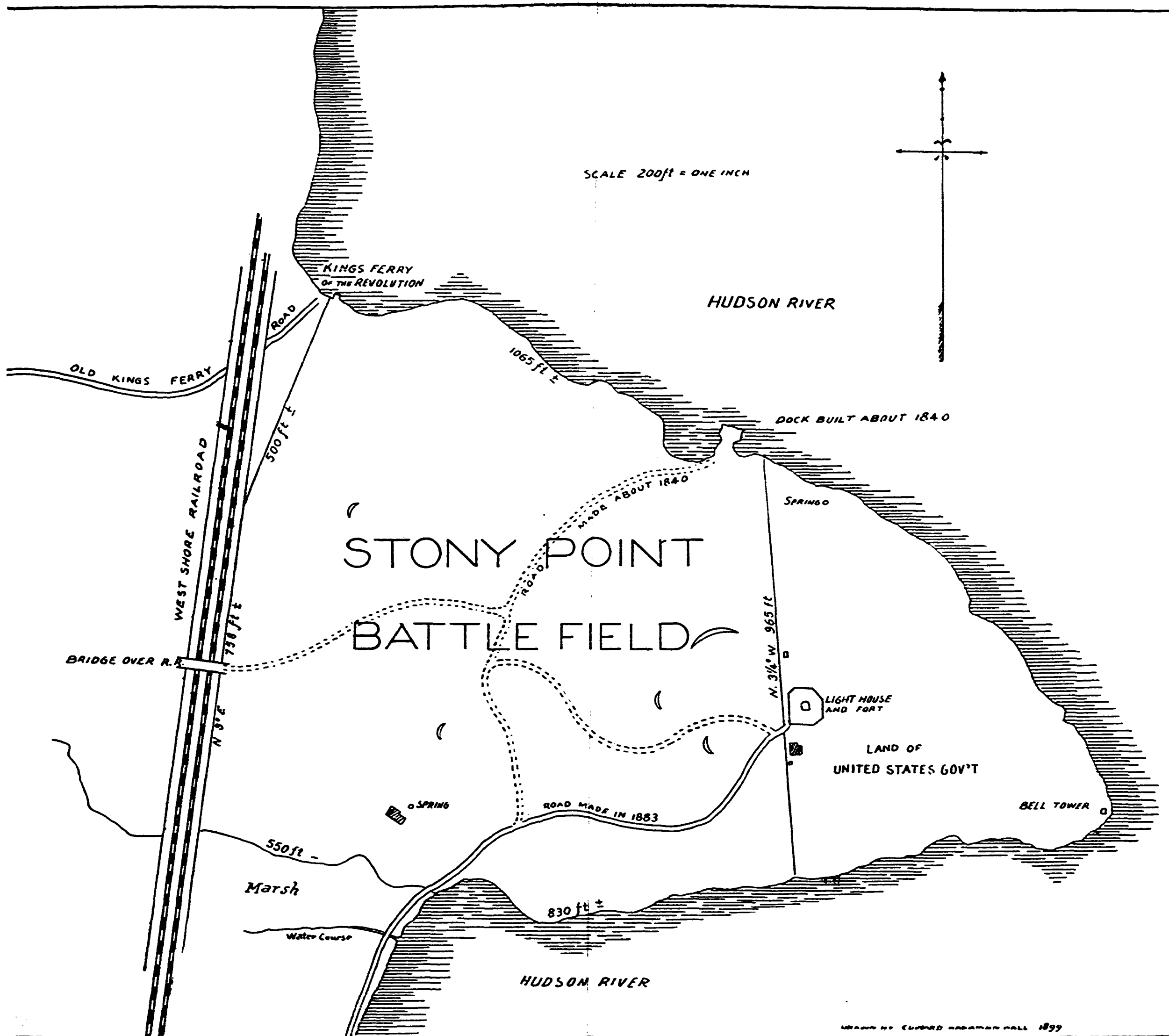
*Report of the Committee
of the
Society for the Preservation of
Scenic and Historic Places and Objects.*

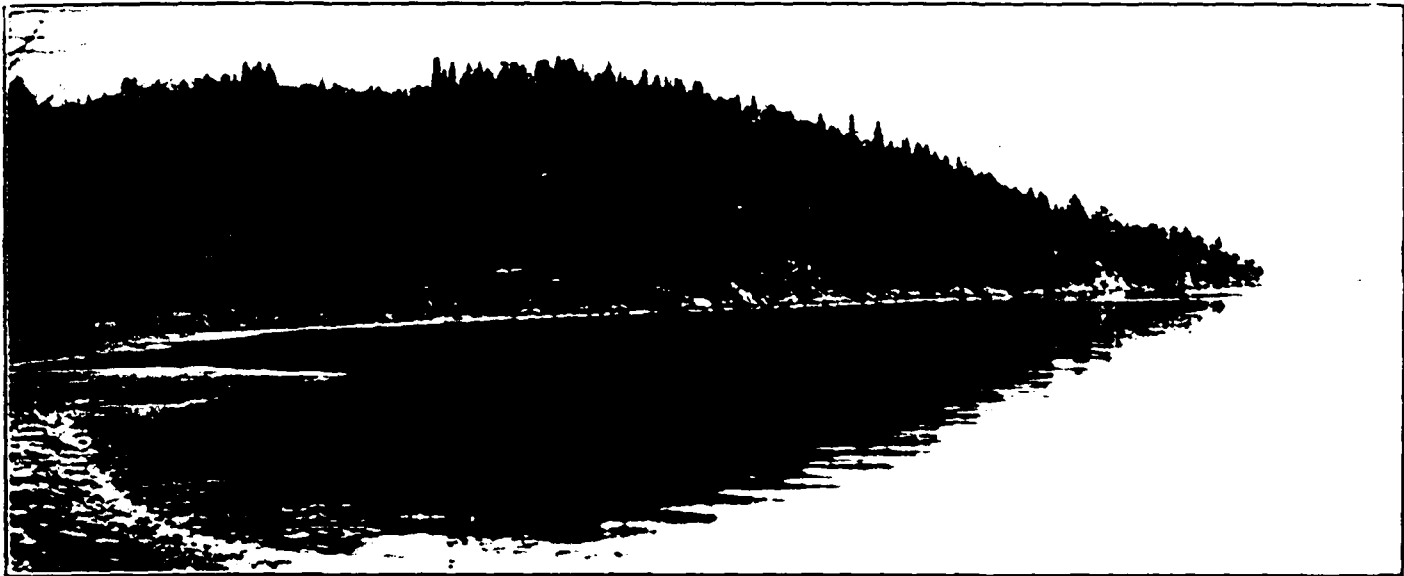


With Maps and Illustrations.



1900





Stony Point Battlefield.*

To the Board of Trustees of the Society for the Preservation of Scenic and Historic Places and Objects :

Your Committee, appointed to examine the Stony Point Battleground which has been committed to the trusteeship of this Society by the State of New York and make recommendations concerning the care and improvement of the same, beg leave to report as follows :

Purchase of the Reservation.

At the request of this Society, the State of New York (by Chapter 764 of the laws of 1897, and Chapters 202 and 302 of the laws of 1898), appropriated \$25,000 for the acquisition of the historic Stony Point Peninsula, and authorized its committal to the care of this Society—which Society, by its act of incorporation (Chapter 166 of the Laws of 1895), is expressly authorized to become the public trustee of scenic and historic places and objects. By the advice and with the co-operation of the Society, the Comptroller was able to consummate the purchase of 33 7-10 acres for the sum of \$21,500, leaving an unexpended balance of \$3,500 in the State's Treasury.

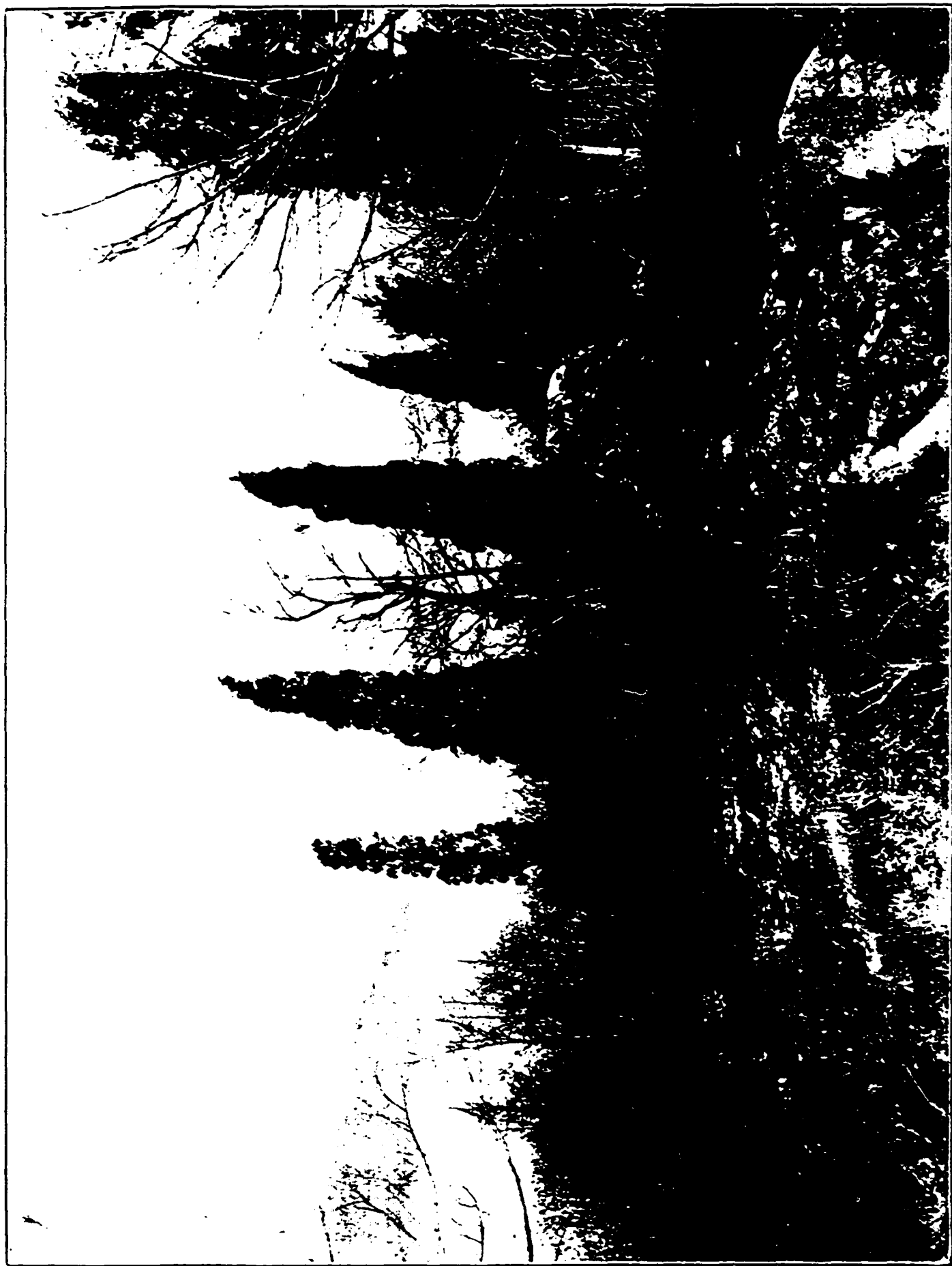
* The head piece at the top of this page is a view of Stony Point from the south.

Location and Description.

The property thus acquired by the State is the major portion of the Stony Point Peninsula, jutting into the Hudson River from its western shore, about 38 miles north of New York City and about 12 miles south of West Point. This rocky promontory was formerly separated from the mainland by a marsh, which was threaded by a small stream navigable at high tide by row boats and was crossed about midway by a narrow causeway or "Mud Bridge." This marsh has latterly become partially filled up, and is now low, swampy ground, filled with brakes, rushes and low shrubbery. Within the bounds made by the river and the marsh, the surface is extremely bold and rocky, rising rapidly from the swamp toward the apex of the peninsula and becoming very precipitous on the shores. At its highest point it has an elevation of about 400 feet above the level of the river.

The location is one of such commanding importance that the United States Lighthouse service has acquired jurisdiction of about nine acres at the extremity of the promontory and erected thereon, exactly in the middle of the site of the old Revolutionary Fort and upon the site of its magazine, a government beacon for the guidance of passing vessels. A portion of the Lighthouse Reservation is cleared, and upon it may be seen, in an excellent state of preservation, some of the ravelins which protected the old Fort from the river side.

Through a deep artificial cut in the western portion of the Peninsula, runs the West Shore Railroad, the nearest station of which, called Stony Point, is but five or ten minutes' walk south of the Point. The property of the State lies between the railroad cut and the Lighthouse property, and is bounded as follows, as represented in the accompanying map: Beginning on the south side of Stony Point Peninsula, at high water mark of the Hudson River, and at the southwest corner of the land owned by the Government of the United States, and running thence along said land north $3\frac{1}{4}$ degrees west 965 feet, to the north side of said Peninsula and to high-water mark of the Hudson River; thence westerly along said high-water mark about 1,065 feet, to land of John Teneycke; thence southerly along said land about 500 feet to the land of the West Shore Railroad Co., thence southerly along said railroad land about 758 feet to the line separating the upland on the north from the marsh land on the south; thence easterly along said line about 550 feet to the Hudson River;



VIEW FROM STONY POINT, LOOKING NORTHWARD.

thence along the high-water mark of said river easterly about 830 feet to the place of beginning, containing 33 7-10 acres more or less.

The State property, as before stated, is extremely bold and rocky, and is thickly overgrown with evergreens and deciduous trees. With the exception of a wagon road leading by the shortest route from the mainland on the south to the Lighthouse, and heretofore maintained by the Lighthouse authorities, the ground is almost inaccessible, there being no footpaths, and the intervals between the trees being filled so thickly with low shrubbery and briers as to be almost impassable, except to the enterprising explorer seeking a personal acquaintance with the historic eminence, or to the predatory neighbor seeking timber, firewood, or Christmas trees at the expense of the State. The rudiments of two or three ancient roads are indicated by dotted lines in the accompanying map, but the roads themselves are almost indistinguishable in the thicket of undergrowth. Buried in the trees is a small, dilapidated and uninhabited frame structure, in companionship with a primitive cattle shed in a harmonious state of ruination. On the northern water-front is the substance of a dock of stone and timber, which, with proper repair, may be made to afford a landing for the deepest draught river steamboats, as it did at the time of the Centennial celebration in 1879.

The river between Stony Point and Verplanck's Point on the opposite eastern shore is but half a mile wide. To the south the stream expands into the majestic Haverstraw Bay, five miles wide, the broadest part of the river. On the western shore of the bay, the High Torn Mountain, 820 feet high, foreshadows the sublimity of the famous scenery which the traveler from the south is approaching; while on the eastern shore spreads out a smiling landscape of beautiful hills, peaceful intervalles and thriving villages. To the north of Stony Point is Peekskill Bay, above which, on either side of the river, tower the giant sentinels of the Highland passage—the Donderberg, 1,098 feet high, on the western bank, and Anthony's Nose, 1,220 feet high, on the eastern.

Whichever way one looks, his eye rests on ground made classic by the history and traditions of the country, and upon scenes abounding in reminders of the truthful chronicles of the historian and the legendary fancies of the poet and romancer. Mad Anthony Wayne's picturesque and daring exploit, Arnold's treason, Andre's capture, the vagaries of the "bulbous-bottomed Dutch goblin," the fearful

apparitions of the phantom "storm-ship," and a hundred other histories and fictions invest the region with a fascinating interest second to that of no other on the Hudson.

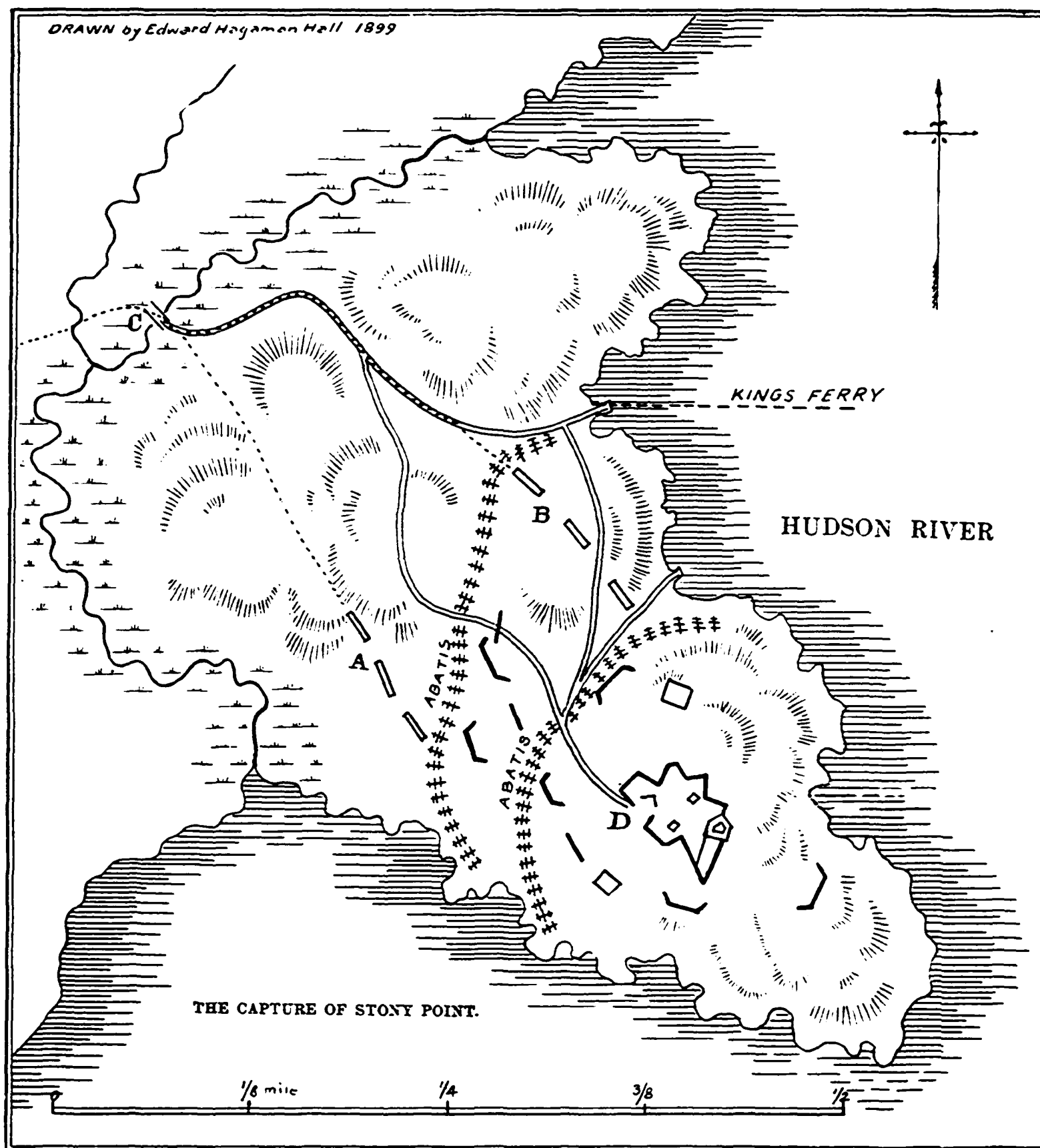
Revolutionary History.

A brief description of the specific events which give the Stony Point Reservation its peculiar interest is essential to an understanding of the historical value of the property acquired by the State and an appreciation of the importance of the recommendations with which your committee conclude this report.

In the first place, Stony Point was famous as the western terminus of the old King's Ferry, one of those important connections between the New England and other States during the Revolutionary period which it was the great ambition of the British commander to sever. Back and forth across this ferry passed nearly all of the conspicuous figures in the drama of the American Revolution, from the great Commander-in-Chief and "Father of his Country" down to the abhorred traitor and the unfortunate victim of his plot.

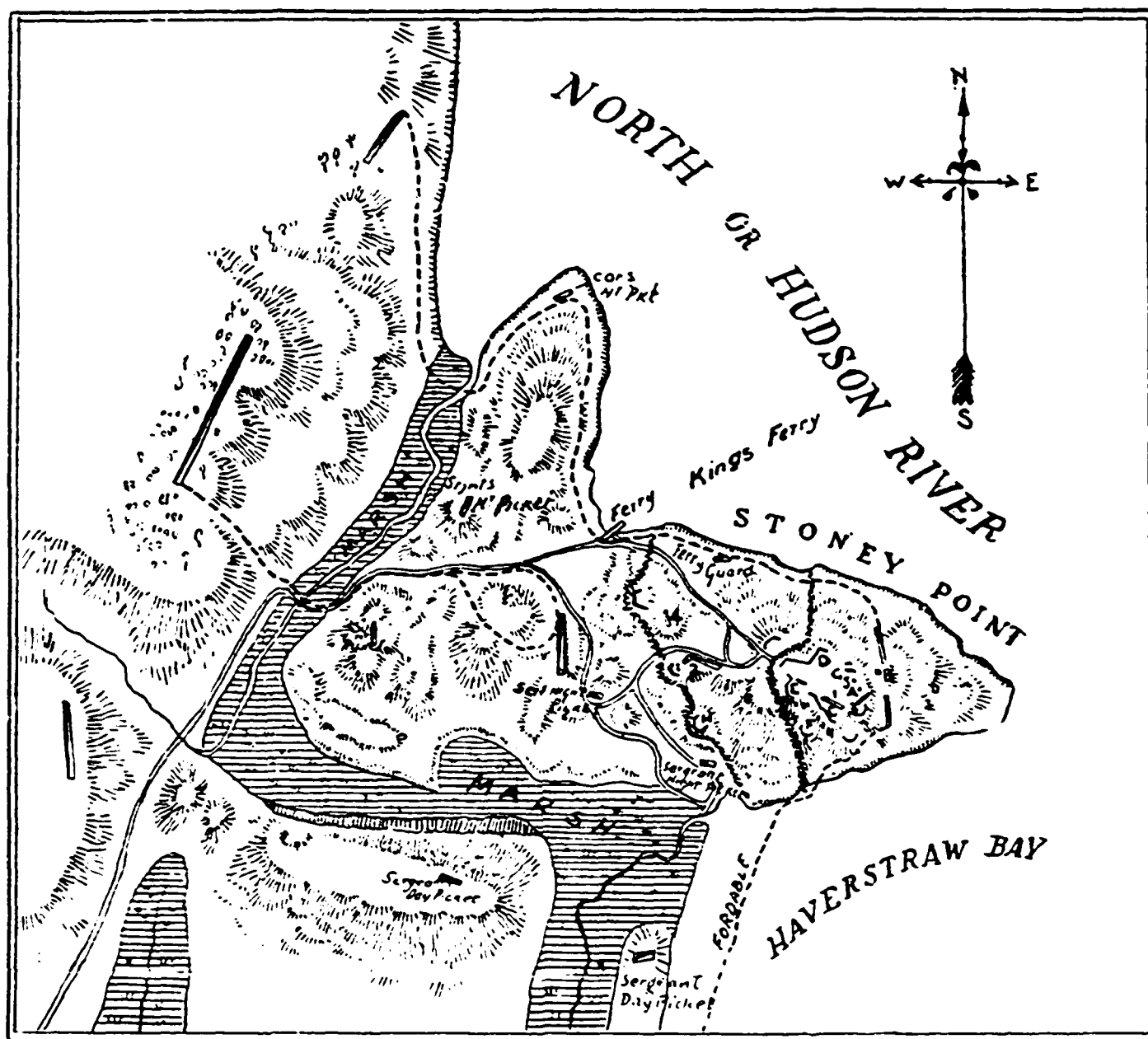
The ferry was guarded on the west by Stony Point and on the east by Fort Fayette on Verplanck's Point, the former incompletely fortified and garrisoned by only forty men in the spring of 1779, and the latter garrisoned by seventy men. On May 30th, 1779, Sir Henry Clinton sailed up the river with a strong force, before which the little guard at Stony Point retired without resistance. The British then turned the guns across the river upon Verplanck's Point, and, with the co-operation of a land attack, compelled the surrender of Fort Fayette. The terms of capitulation offered in behalf of Sir Henry Clinton on this occasion were signed by John Andre, who, two years later, was to cross this same ferry in disguise, in his unsuccessful effort to reach the British lines with the traitorous secrets imparted by Benedict Arnold.

The loss of these outposts was greatly lamented by Washington, the more so as it was followed by a series of British depredations in Connecticut which it was important to counteract. Washington therefore determined upon their recapture. Meanwhile, the British had greatly enlarged and strengthened the fortifications of Stony Point, supplied them with provisions and munitions and garri-



PLAN OF THE CAPTURE OF STONY POINT, JULY 15-16, 1779.

Based upon a smaller map of the same in "Lossing's Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution."
 A, American right column led by Gen. Wayne: B, American left column: C, Mud Bridge or Causeway:
 D, Fort.



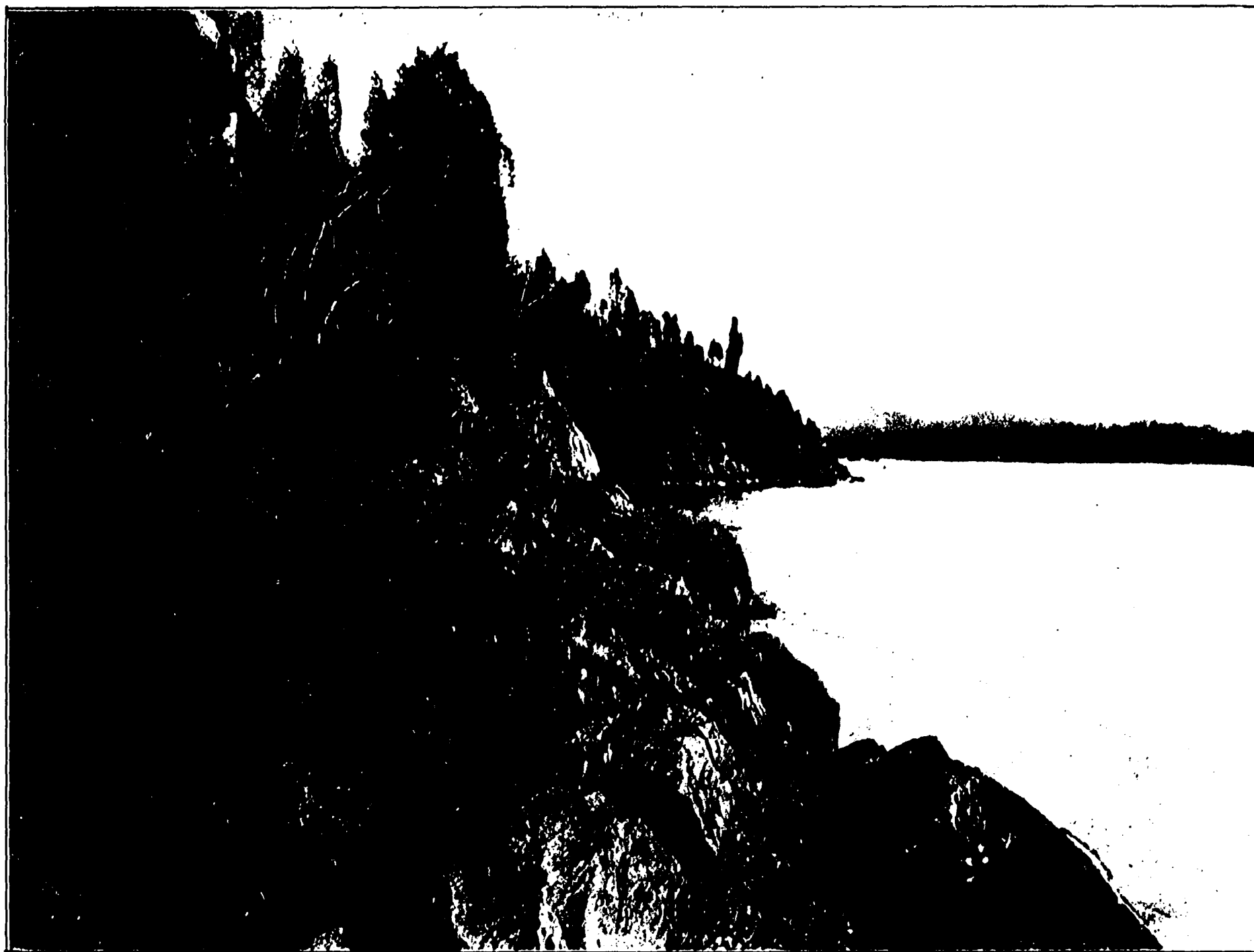
"A PLAN OF THE SURPRISE OF STONEY POINT

"by a detachment of the American Army, commanded by Brigadier-General Wayne on 15
"July, 1779, from surveys of Wm. Simpson, Lt. 17th Rt., and D. Campbell, Lt. 42d Rt.; by
"John Hills, Lt. 23d Rt. and Assistant Engineer."

Drawn on a reduced scale from a British map with the foregoing title in the collection of military maps of the late Gen. U. S. Grant, by permission of his son, Brig.-Gen. Frederick D. Grant.

soned them with the Seventeenth Regiment of Foot, the Grenadier Companies of the Seventy-first and some artillery, the whole under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Johnson, of the Seventh. Perched in their craggy fortress, like eagles in their nest, protected on two sides by the Hudson River, in which British gunboats rode at anchor, and on the inshore side by a dangerous morass crossed only by a narrow causeway, the British position was well nigh impregnable. The recapture of the position was entrusted by General Washington to General Anthony Wayne, a man of indomitable courage, who is recorded as having declared to the Commander-in-Chief that he would not hesitate to storm the kingdom of Satan if only Washington would plan it.

On the 15th of July, 1779, in a broiling hot sun, Wayne stealthily moved 1,200 light infantry from the vicinity of Fort Montgomery down to a point a mile and a half south of Stony Point, and at nightfall silently crept toward his prey. Every dog in the neighborhood had been killed, and as a further precaution against a premature alarm, all charges were withdrawn from the American muskets and the men enjoined to rely solely on their bayonets. To prevent the mistaking of friends for enemies in the execution of the midnight attack, each American fixed a piece of white paper in his hat as a distinguishing mark. By the aid of a patriotic negro of the neighborhood, who knew the countersign of the enemy—"The Fort's our own"—the British sentinel at the outpost on the high ground west of the morass and the guard at the causeway were approached, seized and gagged, and about midnight, with a favorable tide, all but a reserve of three hundred of Wayne's men crossed the morass on foot and approached the base of the western declivity. Here they divided into two columns, the right, under Wayne himself, making a southerly circuit, while the left made a detour to the north, both with the object of simultaneously entering the fort from opposite directions. In this plan they were completely successful. Picking their way up the precipitous rocks like mountain goats, they approached within pistol shot of the inner sentries before the alarm was given. Then, amidst a terrific storm of grape-shot and musketry from the heights above them, the Americans, still without loading, pressed steadily upward, tore their way through a double line of abatis, passed to the breastworks, cut away the pickets, cleared the chevaux de frise at the sallyport, mounted the parapet, and entered



VIEW OF SOUTH SIDE OF STONY POINT, LOOKING EASTWARD.

the fort at the point of the bayonet. The American casualties were 15 killed and 83 wounded, Wayne himself being among the latter. The British lost 63 killed and surrendered 543 officers and men, including their wounded.

Accompanying this report are two plans of the capture, one (page 8) based on the account from the American standpoint and prepared from a smaller plan in "Lossing's Pictorial Fieldbook of the Revolution." The other (page 9) is drawn on a greatly reduced scale from a British map in the collection of military maps of the late General U. S. Grant, by permission of his son, Brigadier-General Frederick D. Grant. The latter, made from deliberate surveys by British engineers while in possession of the Point, is undoubtedly valuable so far as topographical data is concerned, but it shows an interesting departure from the plan of attack as given by the Americans. The American plan represents Wayne's force crossing the causeway and then splitting into two columns, as previously described. The British plan, however, represents the American right column fording the edge of the river and striking inside of the second line of abatis. It is probable that the British were taken so completely by surprise that they never knew exactly how the Americans got there.

Although the Americans subsequently dismantled the Fort and, for strategic reasons, withdrew with their armament and stores to the Highlands, the recapture had served the valuable purpose contemplated, namely, of checking the enemy, counteracting his movements in Connecticut and inspiring the American cause.

The Point will always stand as one of Nature's rugged monuments to an audacious military exploit that was regarded as one of the most brilliant feats of the Revolutionary War, and to this day not only civilians but military veterans go miles out of their way to visit the spot where "Mad" Anthony Wayne and his heroic comrades earned the golden tributes of Congress and the rapturous applause of the Nation.

Recommendations.

Since the committal of this property to the care of the Society the Society has, at its own expense, erected signs of warning and employed a watchman, at the nominal compensation of two dollars a



MAMMOTH BOULDER ON STONY POINT.

week, to warn off trespassers; but the limited financial resources of the Society will not at present permit the undertaking of improvements which appear to be necessary to render the property accessible to the public and to give the people the benefit of the money already expended for its purchase. These improvements need not involve the expenditure of any great amount of money, and may briefly be stated as follows:

1. The clearing out of the undergrowth.
2. The judicious opening of a few vistas through the densest growths of trees so that adequate river views can be obtained.
3. The construction of a carriage way into the heart of the Reservation.
4. The construction of a few simple rustic footpaths.
5. The erection of a pavilion or shelter for picnic parties similar to that in Van Cortlandt Park, New York City.
6. The provision of proper sanitary conveniences for public comfort.
7. The rehabilitation of the old dock.
8. The identification and relocation of the Revolutionary fortifications. The latter is, it is believed, can be done from maps still extant, by the cadets from the West Point Military Academy as part of their field practice, the Superintendent of the Academy having expressed his readiness to co-operate in this work if the permission of the Secretary of War can be secured.

It seems to your Committee no more than just that if this Society assumes the responsibility for the care of this Reservation, and gives its advice and supervision as a public trustee without compensation, the State should supply the means for making the physical improvements. To the end, therefore, that the foregoing recommendations, or as many of them as may be practicable, may be carried out, we respectfully recommend that the Society petition the Legislature for the appropriation of the unexpended balance of \$3,500 referred to on page 3 of this report, and that the President appoint a Committee of three, whose duty it shall be to secure the reintroduction and passage by the Legislature of the bill for this purpose which was passed by the last Assembly (No. 1392), but which failed to pass the Senate.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

SAML. PARSONS, JR.,
GEO. F. KUNZ.,
H. K. BUSH BROWN,
EDWARD HAGAMAN HALL,
Committee.

NEW YORK, January 11, 1900.

The foregoing report was adopted, and the President appointed as the Legislative Committee on the subject, Colonel H. W. Sackett, of New York; Charles S. Francis, Editor of the *Troy Times*, and Hugh Hastings of Albany, State Historian, all members of the Board of Trustees.



See next page for list of officers and statement of the objects of the Society for the Preservation of Scenic and Historic Places and Objects.

*Society for the
Preservation of Scenic and Historic Places and Objects.*



President. Hon. ANDREW H. GREEN, 214 Broadway, New York.

Vice-President. CHARLES S. FRANCIS, Troy, N. Y.

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Secretary. EDWARD HAGAMAN HALL, Tribune Building, New York.

TRUSTEES,

the foregoing, and

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This Society was originally incorporated by act of the Legislature of 1895, (Chapter 166) under the title of "The Trustees of Scenic and Historic Places and Objects," which title was changed by an act of 1896 (Chapter 302) to "The Society for the Preservation of Scenic and Historic Places and Objects." The corporation is composed of public-spirited citizens, associated, as their title indicates, for the acquisition, as public trustees, of places and objects worthy of preservation, either on account of their natural beauty or their identification with the annals of the State. Its purposes are "to acquire by purchase, gift, grant, devise or bequest, historical objects or memorable or picturesque places in the State, hold real and personal property in fee or upon such trusts as may be agreed upon between the donors thereof and said corporation, and to improve the same," solely for the public use and benefit. The Society also encourages and co-operates with other organizations and individuals throughout the State for the erection of monuments and memorials, for the preservation of natural scenery from disfigurement, for the creation of public parks for the health, comfort and recreation of the people, and for the improvement and beautification of cities and villages.

Any person may become a member of the society, after application to or invitation by the board of trustees, upon election and payment of an annual due of five dollars in advance. Any person may become a life member by the payment of \$100 at one time, or a patron by the donation of real or personal property to the value of \$500.