



UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY
WEST POINT.

A Brief History of Trophy Point and its Usage

*Information compiled by the USMA Library*₁



Why Trophy Point? Portals to America...



- Foremost, this is where the idea of WEST POINT began
- One of two primary “portals” through which most visitors engage with, learn about, and immerse themselves in WEST POINT

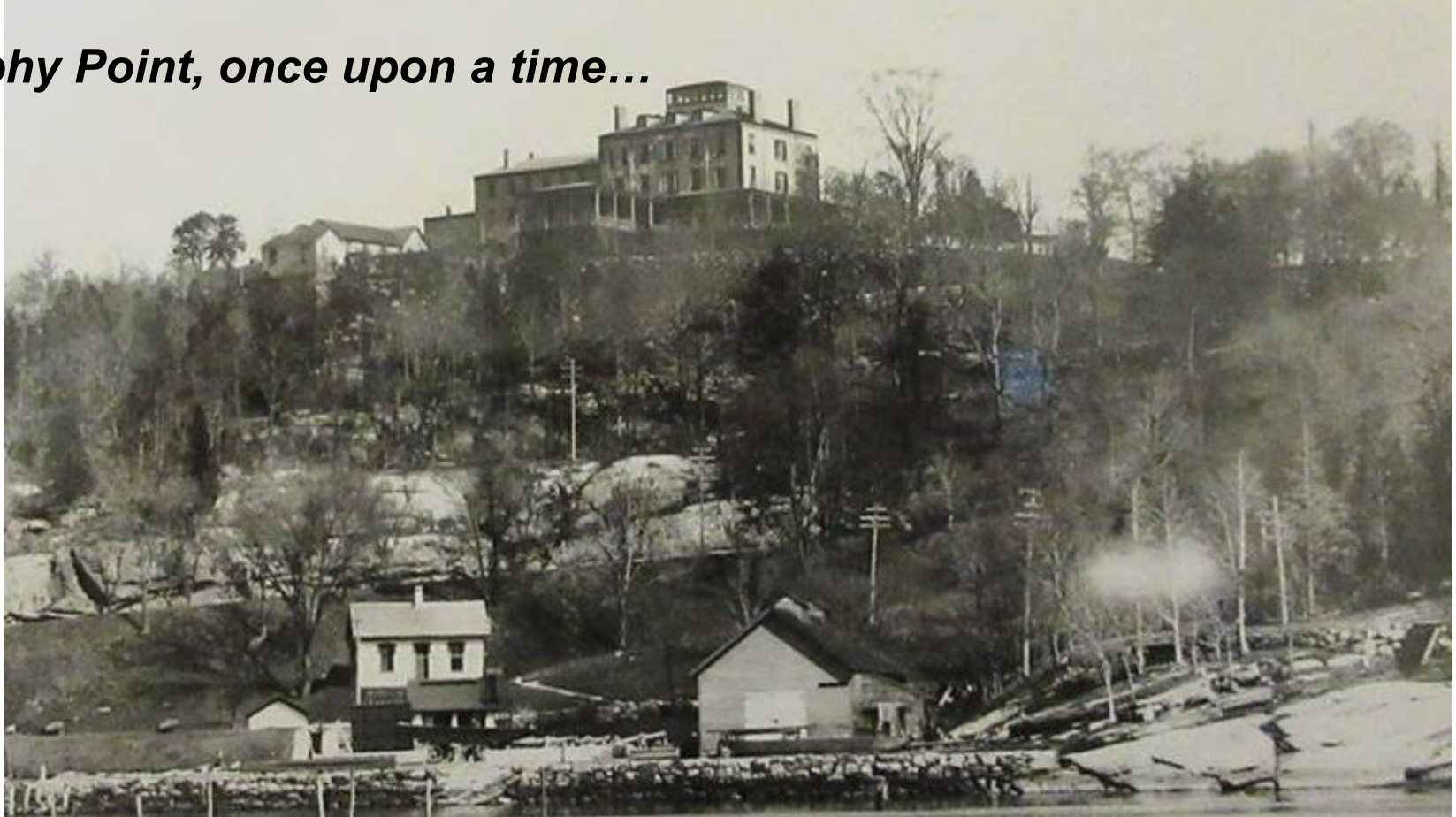


- **Perfect venue to tell the WEST POINT story to cadets, aspiring candidates and their families, and visitors...**

- The strategic nature of its past at the birth of our nation
- The strategic nature of its present in the context of the leaders it produces for the Army and our nation
- The criticality of its strategic role in the future of our nation



Trophy Point, once upon a time...



The fact of the matter is that Trophy Point has been many things over time... the site of barracks in 1780's, artillery firing points for cadet training, the original West Point Hotel (shown above), amphitheater, and more. In short, it has adapted to fulfill the Academy's needs as a strategic location, then and now.



A Brief History of Trophy Point

For purposes of this historical summary, we define Trophy Point as the area between Fort Clinton and the Ordnance Compound (what is now the Firstie Club) on the level of the plain. Small utilitarian structures of short duration are not included in this summary.

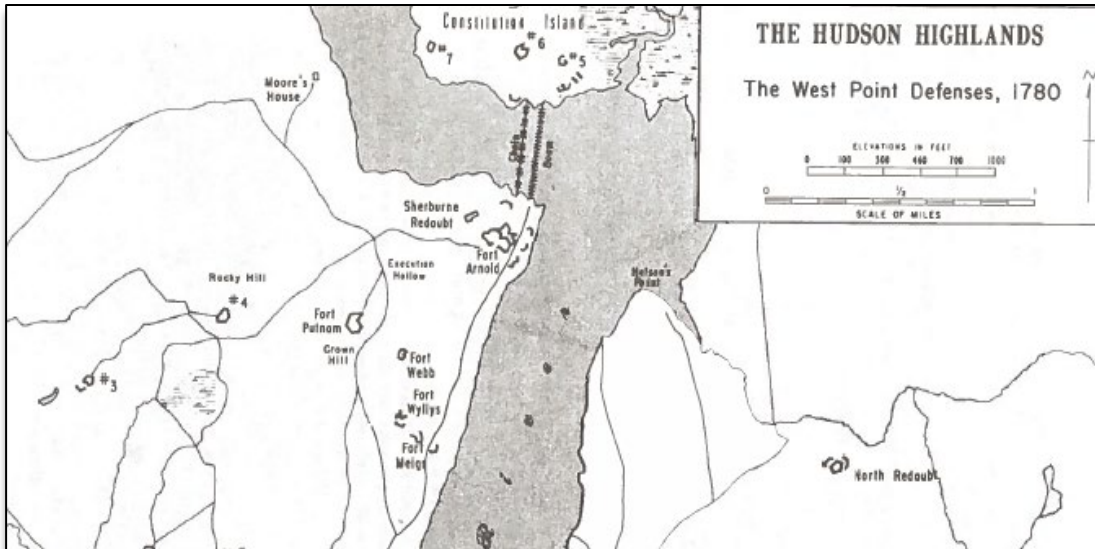
Trophy Point traces its name to the war trophies habitually stored there. As early as 1777, General Henry Knox ordered captured British cannon from the Battle of Saratoga to be brought to West Point. By the 1860s, trophies from the American Revolution, War of 1812, Mexican War and Civil War were displayed at Trophy Point, along with links of the Great Chain that blocked the river during the Revolutionary War. Many relics from the 18th and 19th Centuries are now grouped by war at Trophy Point.





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During the American Revolution fortifications were built on Trophy Point, including Sherburne's Redoubt, associated batteries and barracks. The area was also home to the so-called "Long Barracks" that may also date from the Revolution. Long Barracks remained on the site after the establishment of the U.S. Military Academy and was used to house cadets, as well as soldiers; but was destroyed by fire in 1826. Other early structures were located further west on the site now occupied by the 1840 Ordnance Compound (now used as the Firstie Club).





A Brief History of Trophy Point

The West Point Hotel was built on Trophy Point in 1829 east of the site of the former Long Barracks. The hotel grew incrementally with additions in 1850, 1860 (stable), 1870, 1879, and 1890. In his 1899 Report on the Enlargement of the Military Academy, Charles Larned* proclaimed the location of the hotel the “finest site on West Point” and bemoaned the hotel’s “inconvenient and unsightly” condition. He expressed regret that the hotel occupied the site, which “should belong to the general parade and be devoted to public structures or monuments.”

* COL Charles Larned, USMA 1870, was the USMA Dean and a Professor in the Department of Drawing. He served in the 7th U.S. Cavalry.



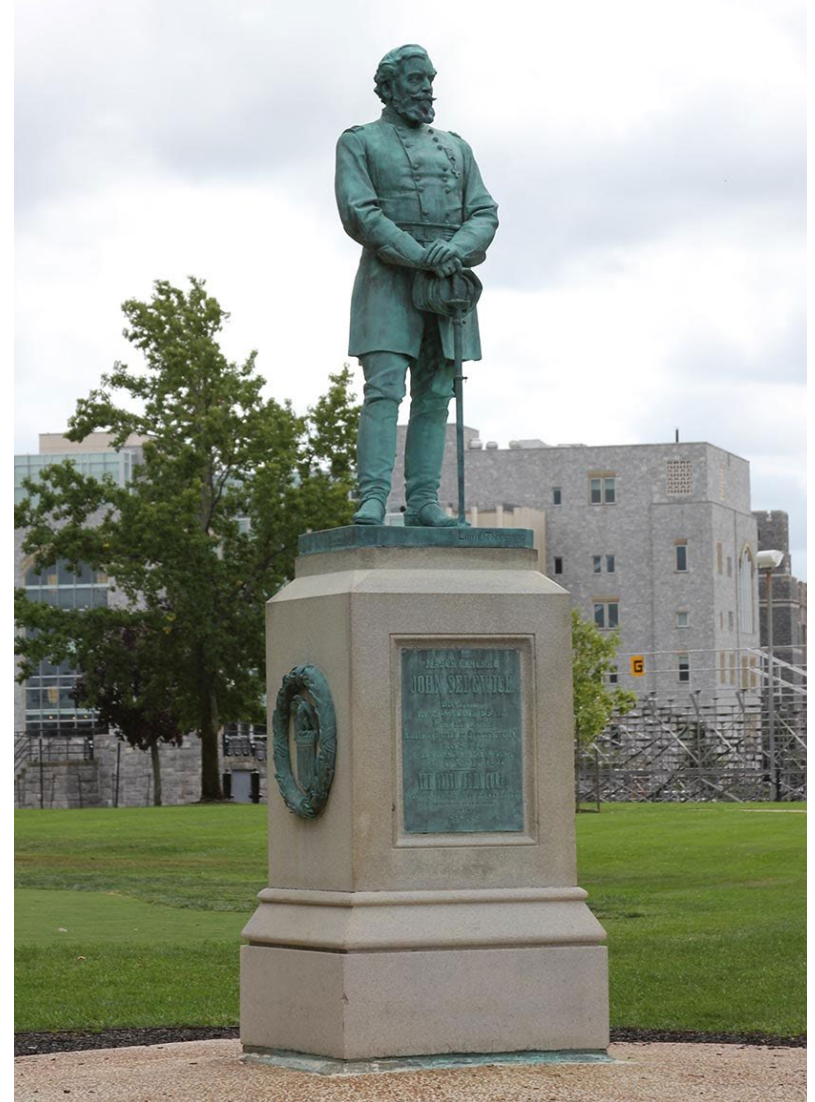
The bulk of the hotel was ultimately razed in 1932; but a laundry addition built in 1890 remains in place and served as a quarters for many years. The former laundry was recommended for demolition at least twice, as part of the 1960s expansion planning and as part of West Point 2002; A Facilities Improvement Plan (published in 1988), but the structure endures and was renovated for use as the Cadet Fine Arts Forum in 2016.



A Brief History of Trophy Point

The Academy has dedicated a series of monuments at sites on Trophy Point, including Sedgewick's Monument in 1863 (subsequently occupying several locations on Trophy Point and the plain) and the epic Battle Monument dedicated in 1897. Washington's Monument (dedicated 1915) sat at the end of Thayer Road at the Intersection with Washington and Cullum Roads in front of Trophy Point.

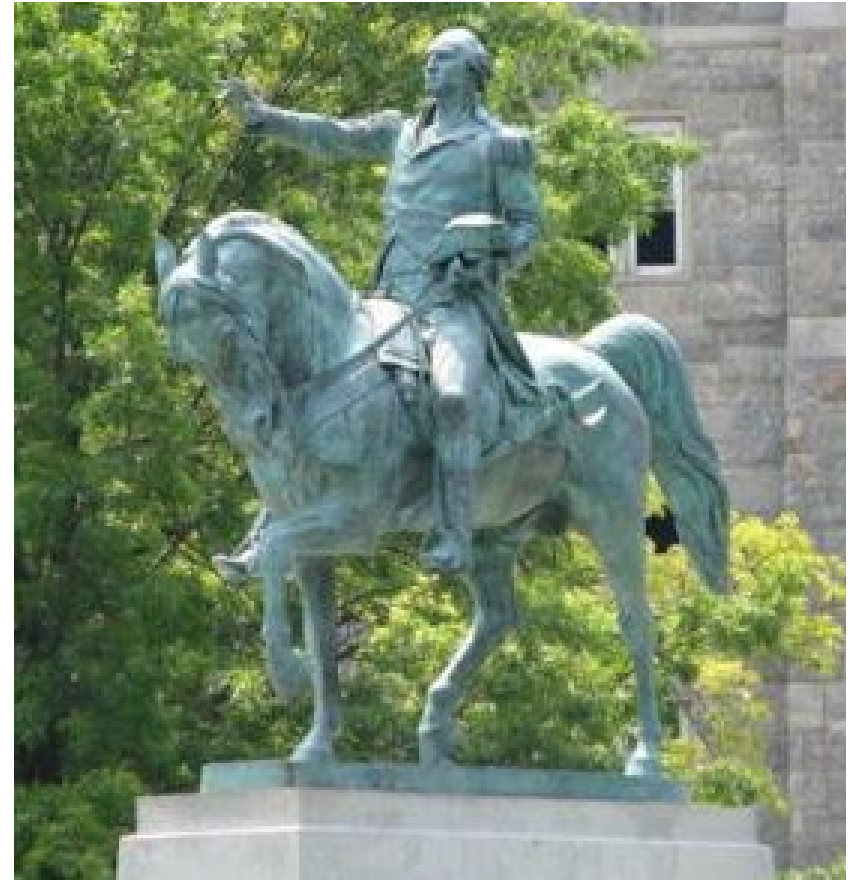
When 1960s expansion planning led to a decision to reroute traffic around the plain, one goal was to divide the plain into two parts: the area inside the loop between Cullum and Jefferson Roads was to be dedicated to cadets; **the area on the river side was to be used to "attract the public"**... early recognition of the critical portal that Trophy Point has become.





There was also a formal “Monuments Study” by O’Connor & Kilham (1966). They concluded that the Washington Monument, which would be displaced by the changed traffic pattern around the plain, deserved the highest priority of location “somewhere on Trophy Point – where, or approximately where it is now.” Although Washington was ultimately relocated to the front of the expanded Washington Hall complex in the early 1970s, the report calls the former hotel site the “most important site on the Main Post.” At that time the site was under consideration as the location for the MacArthur Monument, which was ultimately placed near the expansion era barracks named in MacArthur’s honor.

During this period the Sylvanus Thayer Monument also briefly occupied Trophy Point. In more recent years, class gifts have added to the ambiance of Trophy Point, including twelve granite benches donated by The Class of 1934 as their 50th reunion gift, the Class of 1938 Trophy Point Overlook - a 40th reunion gift, and the January 1943 water fountain, a 30th reunion gift.





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Trophy Point has also been a location for training and recreational pursuits. Training batteries existed on the site from the 1860s through the 1930s. Tennis courts were in place from the 1920s until parking was expanded in conjunction with the renovation of the CFAF building in 2016. The band's amphitheater was established in 1937 on the site of the former Siege/Schofield Battery and then significantly enhanced during the 1960s expansion. While building the permanent stage/overlook and expanded seating space, there were two main points of guidance from the superintendent: the project must enhance the natural beauty of the site and must not destroy the famous scenic view (emphasis in original documentation).



Siege and Mortar Battery circa 1909 after the construction of Battery Schofield in the background



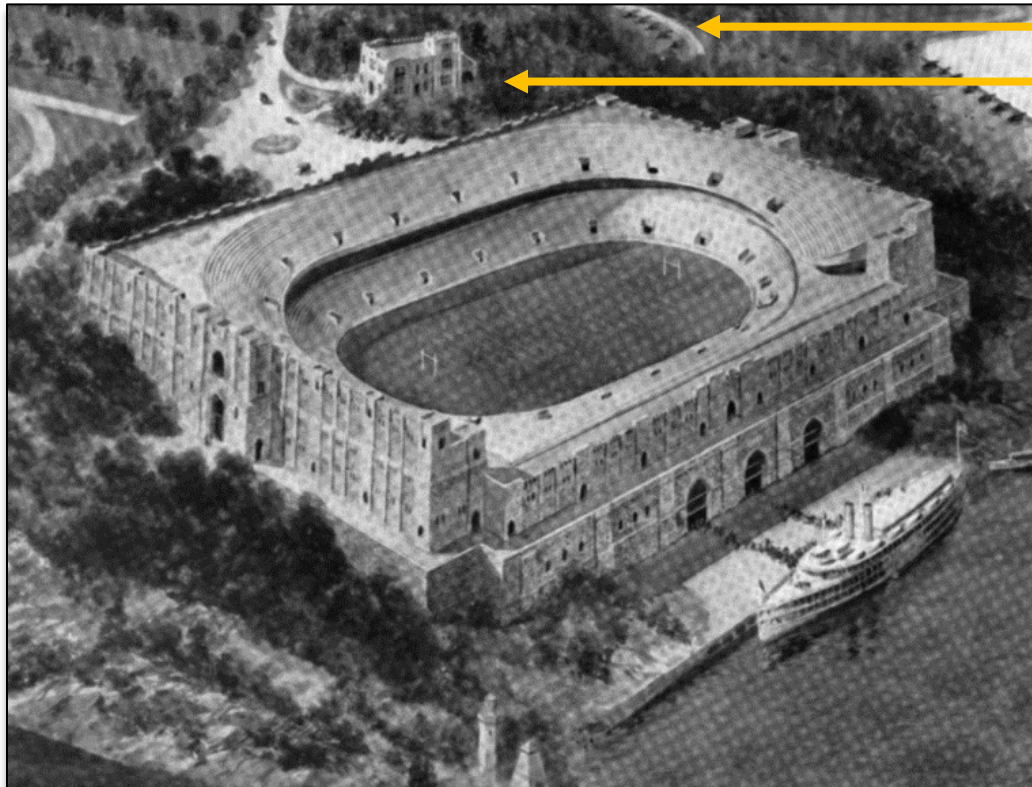
Although no significant buildings have been added to Trophy Point since the West Point Hotel, each of West Point's major 20th Century building initiatives have included proposals for Trophy Point. A 1901 proposal shows an area just south of the ordnance compound as the proposed location for the new cadet chapel. When the chapel was ultimately programmed on the hill above the plain after the 1903 Architectural Competition, the winning firm (Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson of Boston) recommended razing the West Point Hotel and using the site to build a grand new quarters for the superintendent, to include reception rooms and facilities for lodging distinguished visitors. Subsequent iterations of the plans expanded to include five sets of quarters and a second iteration of Battle Monument dubbed the "Hancock Monument." The proposal was finally abandoned in 1911.





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The 1944 Architectural Competition was spurred by the 1942 increase in the authorized strength of the Corps of Cadets. Interestingly, former Superintendent Douglas MacArthur had called for a comparable increase in 1921. In support of his proposal, MacArthur planned for new facilities, including some similar to those called for in 1944. One that was unique to the MacArthur era was a proposal to create a “Colosseum and World War Memorial” to be built on the river’s edge below Trophy Point, but also allowing access to the upper decks from the level of the plain. In the rendering, the colosseum dominates Trophy Point along with other proposed buildings. The construction of Michie Stadium in 1924 prevented the revisiting of the colosseum concept when the Corps was finally expanded. Michie Stadium has since become the other prominent “portal to America”...



← Artillery batteries

← Hotel



A Brief History of Trophy Point

For the 1944 Architectural Competition, the proposed buildings did include an additional memorial hall located on Trophy Point just off Cullum Road and over the current footprint for the CFAF building and adjacent parking lot (**the planned site for The Link**). The proposed facility was intended for 20th Century memorialization and social and recreational use by the Corps of Cadets.

In justifying the facility, Academy officials emphasized the inadequate size of Cullum Hall (which was to be retained), which had been built when the Corps of Cadets numbered approximately 400. With the Corps expanded to nearly 2,500 cadets, the proposed memorial hall was to be approximately six times the size of Cullum Hall. It was one of several facilities that did not get built.





In 1963, expansion planning documents depict a new cadet recreation and reception center adjacent to the old hotel laundry/current CFAF building. Further east on the site is a separate auditorium and fine arts center. Later iterations of the plans combined the two facilities into a single building on Trophy Point. Although the Trophy Point site remained under consideration for some time, the building was ultimately built in an alternate location and named Eisenhower Hall.





Trophy Point Today

Today, Trophy Point remains one of the preeminent attractions to West Point and serves as a critical portal through which the Academy connects with America. Each year, thousands of people – Americans and foreign visitors alike – visit West Point and, in particular, Trophy Point, to gain understanding of what West Point is and to appreciate its strategic connection to the idea that has become the United States of America.

