

A detailed travel diary of a sailboat excursion on the Hudson River and extended stay at the West Point Military Academy. Written by William Sturgis, a New York native and Civil War veteran, who later became a prominent cattle baron in Wyoming and played a leading role in the commercial development of Cheyenne in the 1870s.

The undated manuscript, written sometime not long after the Civil War, recounts Sturgis's week-long stay at the quarters of "Our friend the Colonel" on the West Point campus. The narrative account begins on a Saturday at dusk: "The good yacht our floating home came gracefully sliding around the point ... and lowered her sails off the old wharf at West Point, the place where rocks & cadets stand perpendicular..." After announcing their presence with a cannon shot, the Colonel "responded to the call of our artillery as promptly as he did to the long roll on the Banks of the Shenandoah on that dusky morning when the Johnnies came out of the mist like so many phantoms ... We soon had him on board & found we were just in time for the Dress Parade at sunset ...".

Thus begins Sturgis's detailed description of his entire visit, as he ascends the mount by carriage and attends the Dress Parade, and giving his impressions throughout the course of his stay of the "thousand soldiers at the Point divided between Cavalry, Artillery, & Engineers". Of particular interest is his description of "Old Put" (Fort Putnam, then in a ruined state), the Picture Gallery, the Library, and other galleries in which were displayed many famous artifacts seized during the Mexican-American War. He often embellishes his observations with historical context, including Benedict Arnold's famous act of treason. Several other buildings on the campus are described, including the Chapel, the Colonel's quarters, etc., along with several other military drills, including a Cavalry exercise and its impressive leaping drills. In gratitude, Sturgis and his party take the Colonel for a sail on the Hudson.

An interesting, off-color contemporary account of West Point and the surrounding area, written soon after the rapid modernization of the campus during the 1850s, often romanticized by the graduates on both sides of the Civil War as the "end of the Old West Point era." [BTC#407115]

A leaf from the Log Book
of the *Thetis* —
Saturday 8 P.M. We arrived just as the
slanting rays of the sunlight were taking a
farewell of the bed of the River and Old Sol
himself was just "going into retirement" for the night
behind the highest summit of the Highlands,
following the track taken by poor old Rip Van Winkle.
The top of the old Crows Nest some 1500 ft above us
was still bright but the banks under the
cliffs were rapidly becoming dusky.

The good yacht our floating home came
gracefully sliding round the point (she's
always graceful whatever she does) and ^{lowered} ~~recoiled~~
^{her sails} off the old wharf at West Point the place
where rocks & Cadets stand perpendicular —

"Down went the anchor then

Out ran the rattling chain"
while with right good will our commoners
pulled the launch, and gave a salute that
made the old walls of rock ring again, as
they tossed the report over to the hills opposite
and they in turn tossed it up to Old Fort Put.
letting it die away on the mountain side below
the Crows Nest.