

"STORMING OF STONY POINT: A ROMANCE OF THE REVOLUTION"

From the *Ulster Republican*, Wednesday, June 18, 1845

The night had already settled down gloomy and foreboding, on the evening of the 15th of July, 1779, when the advancing column of a little army whose uniform betokened it to be American, emerged from a thick wood on the shore of the Hudson, and in an instant the dim shadowy prospect disclosed to them along the bank of the river opened to the sight. Far away lay Verplanck's point, now buried in a mass of shadow, while on the river, dark, gloomy, and frowning, rose up to the craggy heights of Stony Point. Washed on three sides by the Hudson, and protected on the other, except along a narrow road, by a morass, the fort was deemed one of the most impregnable on the river; and its capture regarded almost impossible. Yet to achieve that gallant purpose this little army was now upon its march.

A turn in the road soon hid them from the river, and after a silent march of some minutes' duration, they arrived within three miles and a half of the enemy's line, and halting at the command of their officer, formed into columns for the attack. Beginning again their march, they soon reached the marshy ground at the base of the hill.

"Hist!" said the low voice of the General from the front, "we are nigh enough – halt".

The order passed in a whisper down the line, and the column paused on the edge of the morass. It was a moment of suspense and peril. Every man felt that in a few minutes the fate of their hazardous enterprise would be determined, and that they would either be cold in death, or the American flag in triumph wave over the dark promontory ahead, now scarcely discernible through the thick gloom of midnight. Yet not a lip quivered, nor a cheek blanched at that crisis. About twenty paces in the front column, had halted the forlorn hope of one hundred and fifty men, with unloaded pieces and bayonets fixed, while farther on a smaller group of shadowy forms could be seen through the obscurity, accoutered with a with axes, to cut through the abatti. Each man had a piece of white paper in his hat to distinguish him from the foe in the approaching melee. The pause was momentary. The General had already reconnoitered the approaches to the

still silent promontory, and waving his sword on high, he gave the orders. In another instant, the dark massive column was moving steady to the attack.

It was a thrilling moment, during which that devoted band rushed rapidly over the march. As yet the enemy had not discovered them. Even the hearts of the oldest veterans trembled with the eagerness of that moment of suspense. Already had the foremost of the pioneers reached the abattis, and the quick, rapid blows of their axes rung upon the night, when suddenly the shout of alarm broke from the fort, the gun of a sentry flashed through the gloom, and in an instant all was uproar and confusion within the astonished fortification. Not a moment was to be lost.

"Advance! Advance!" shouted Wayne, as he pressed rapidly onwards to the abattis, followed in death-like silence by his indomitable troops.

"To arms!" came born on the night breeze from the fort – "to arms – to arms", and then followed the quick roll of the drum. In an instant the enemy were at their post, and the gallant continentals still maintained their silent but steady march; a fire, such as only desperation could produce, burst from every embrasure of the fort. The incessant rattling of the musketry, the crashing of the grape shot, and lurid light hung over the scene by the explosion of the shells, and streams of fire pouring from the fort, formed a picture which no pen can describe.

Yet amid it all the daring assailants steadily advanced; not a trigger had been pulled in their ranks. Faithful to the command of their General, though trembling in every limb with eagerness they kept up their silent march, amid the fiery tempest, as if impelled by some god-like power. On – on – on they pressed. The whirlwind of fire from the fort ceased not, still they dashed along charging at the point of the bayonet, over the abattis and bulwarks until the enemy, born back by their impetuous onset, quailed before them. The works were forced.

Then, not till then, was their death-like silence broken. A sound rung out from the victorious troops over all the thunder of the battle. It was the watchword of success. It was heard by the head of the column behind; it was passed down their line – was caught up by the rear, and a wild shout, making the very welkin tremble, rang out as they dashed to the attack.

The contest was short and terrific. Over bulwarks, battery, and prostrate foes the gallant continentals, headed by Wayne, pressed on and driving all before them, met the column of their little army with an enthusiastic cheer, in the very centre of the enemy's works. In another moment the starry flag of America was waving triumphantly over the battlements.

The enthusiasm of the victors cannot be described. But though the contest had been so bloody, not a man of the enemy fell after resistance ceased. The prisoners were disarmed, a guard placed over them, sentries posted on all the commanding positions around the works. The morning gun announced to the British fleet that Stony Point was won.

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