

Stone House

Manassas National
Battlefield Park
Virginia



Photo ca. March 1862 Library of Congress

The Stone House Tavern, as it was identified by Confederate General Jubal Early in his memoirs, managed to survive the shot and shell from both battles of Manassas. A year after the fighting ended, a passing soldier commented that the forlorn-looking house still stood,

“the windows broken, fences gone, and the indentations of balls plainly visible.” In 1865, a British traveler stopped at the Stone House and left us a rather unflattering picture of the house and its owner. “The house was formerly a tavern, and the man who kept it was one

of those two-faced farmers, Secessionists at heart, but always loyal to the winning side. . . . He had managed to get his house through the storm, although in a somewhat dismantled condition. The bar-room was as barren as the intellect of the owner.”

A PROMINENT MANASSAS LANDMARK

The Stone House remains one of only two intact pre-Civil War buildings within Manassas National Battlefield Park. The imposing red sandstone structure dominates the historic crossroads of the Sudley-Manassas Road (modern Route 234) and the Warrenton Turnpike (Route 29). The Stone House was built in the heyday of America’s “Turnpike Era” in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The Warrenton Turnpike, completed in 1828, represented one of the best hard-surfaced roads of early Virginia, connecting farmers from the lower Shenandoah Valley to markets in the east. A turnpike toll gate stood across the road near the Stone House, and weary drovers and teamsters could stop at the house for rest and refreshment. The Stone House probably served the traffic on the turnpike as a wagon stop, where hard men drank hard liquor, rather than as the type of tavern commonly described by the more genteel travelers of the time.

Henry P. and Jane Matthews owned the Stone House from 1850 until 1865. When the railroads extended into the area in the 1850s, wagon traffic on the turnpike steadily decreased, and Mr. Matthews increasingly turned to farming corn, oats, and hops to make his

living. Then the war came, and the railroads twice drew the opposing armies to Manassas. The Matthews apparently attempted to remain in their home as the fighting swirled around them. Like most available structures in the area, the house was taken over as a refuge for the battle casualties. After the Second Battle of Manassas, Confederate officers used the Stone House to parole Union prisoners. In 1865 the Matthews sold their property and moved away. The Stone House continued in private and public use, at times as a tavern, post office and residence—and always

as a battlefield landmark for travelers. The Federal Government bought the property in 1949, and in 1960 the Park Service began a major restoration project to return the building to its Civil War appearance. Much of the original structure remains, including the exterior walls, the chimneys, and a considerable amount of the flooring inside the house. No original furnishings exist that can be associated with the house. However, main floor exhibits and representative displays speak to the rich historical heritage of the Stone House.

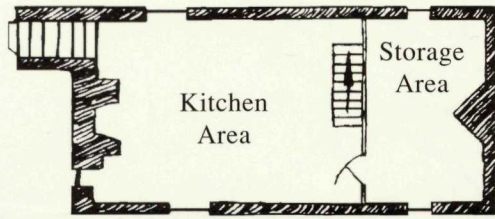


1902. Note the porch on the front of the house and the additional structures nearby. The building in the left background was a country store.

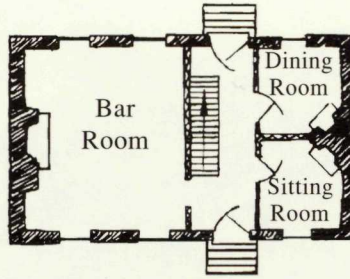
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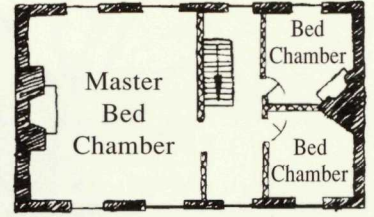
Basement



First Floor



Second Floor



THE STONE HOUSE AND THE CIVIL WAR

The Civil War brought devastation to the cluster of families living near the Stone House intersection. Most families suffered, with their crops destroyed, fences burned, or houses damaged.

The Matthews at the Stone House found themselves in the thick of the fighting during the first battle. The battle began a third of a mile north of the Stone House where a brigade of Southerners, hurrying from Stone Bridge, met Union attackers advancing south on the Sudley-Manassas Road. From the shelter of the Stone House, retreating Southerners fired on the advancing Yankees until the 27th New York Infantry drove them from this cover, across the Warrenton Turnpike, and up Henry Hill.

Wounded from the fighting sought shelter in the basement of the Stone House. Corporal William H. Merrell of the 27th New York Infantry joined them and observed, "the floor above was also covered with wounded soldiers, whose cries could be distinctly heard." A makeshift red flag appeared on the building to mark the Stone House as a place of refuge and suffering. After the fighting ended, company A of the 28th Virginia Infantry arrived at the Stone House to find 100 weapons and "a large number of the wounded enemy, some dead, and thirty-six men, who surrendered themselves prisoners." Among the prisoners were two Union medical officers, a

surgeon and an assistant surgeon. Only the assistant surgeon was allowed to remain and care for the many sufferers as best he could. No evidence exists that any surgical operations took place inside the house. Two primary battlefield hospital sites were located nearby at Sudley Church and the Francis Lewis House, "Portici."

E.P. Ge

During the Second Battle of Manassas, Union commander John Pope established his headquarters on Buck Hill overlooking the Stone House. On August 30 most of the defeated Union army passed the Stone

George W. Edgcomb in 1861



House on the Warrenton Turnpike in retreat toward Washington. Private George Edgcomb of the 23rd New York wrote that he entered the Stone House at this time to

Brehm
Aug. 30

rescue a wounded comrade. The weight of the man proved too great a burden for Edgcomb to carry and he had to abandon the soldier along the road near Stone Bridge. At least two other wounded soldiers also occupied the Stone House that day. Privates Eugene P. Geer and Charles E. Brehm of the 5th New York Infantry were wounded on August 30, 1862 in a futile attempt to halt General James Longstreet's counterattack. Somehow the two men found their way to one of the small upstairs rooms at the Stone House. There, carved in the floorboards in the late summer of 1862, and still visible today, are the initials "E.P. Ge" and "Brehm Aug 30." Charles Brehm recovered from his wounds and survived the war. Eugene Geer died of his wounds September 30, 1862. He was 17.

Battlefield of Second Manassas showing Stone House in lower right corner.

Sketch by Edwin Forbes, August 30, 1862 Library of Congress

