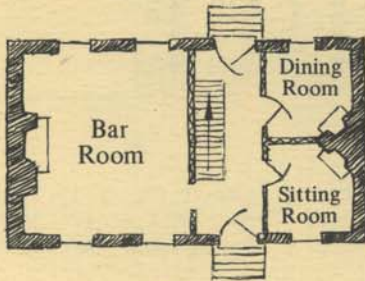


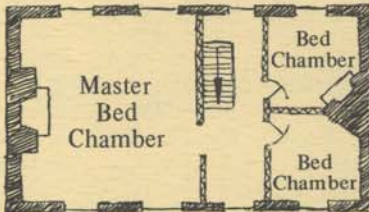
STONE HOUSE

FIRST FLOOR



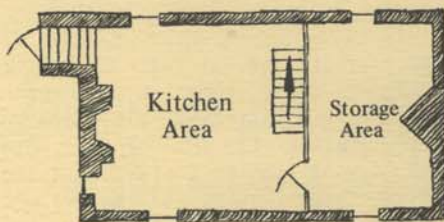
Front
(South)

SECOND FLOOR

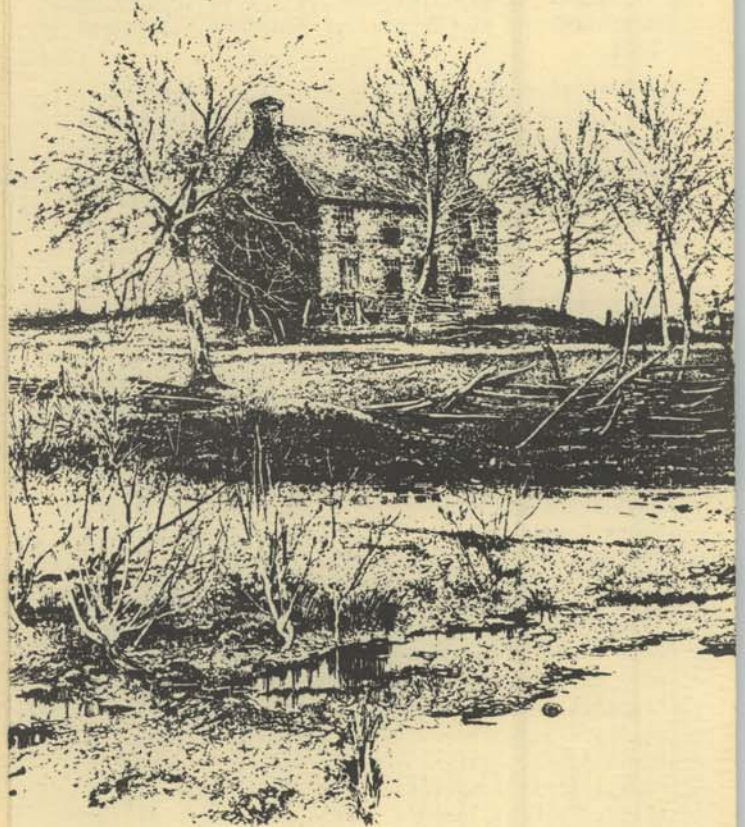


Front
(South)

BASEMENT



Front
(South)



MANASSAS
NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK
VIRGINIA

STONE HOUSE

Standing at the intersection of the Warrenton Turnpike and Sudley Road (now 29-211 and 234), the old Stone House is one of the most notable landmarks of the Manassas National Battlefield Park.

Constructed in the 1820's, it was originally a tavern serving the Warrenton Turnpike. Its success was short lived, though, as railroads and canals soon replaced the wagon as the principle means of transporting goods. Ever in its prime the Stone House was never a fancy hotel, nor was it noted for its fine drink. But it suited the rough and boisterous drivers who were its customers. Here they found a decent meal, a warm fire, and a relaxing drink.

As the Turnpike traffic died, the Stone House and its occupants seemed ready to slip into comfortable obscurity. But the secession of South Carolina in 1861 marked the beginning of a chain of events that ultimately brought two great armies to fight in the fields nearby. This battle brought Stone House back into the mainstream of history and marked its significance in blood.

On July 21, 1861, the fighting at First Manassas began just one-third of a mile north of the house. Nine hundred Confederates under General Evans, who were hurrying from Stone Bridge, met two brigades of Union soldiers. After a gallant stand against overwhelming odds, the Confederates fell back. As they passed Stone House, some of them took shelter behind its solid stone walls; others climbed to the second story and fired at the approaching enemy. But the advancing troops drove them from their refuge.

A Union Surgical Team decided the house would make an ideal field hospital. The walls would stop all but the heaviest shells, thus protecting the wounded. The bar and large upstairs were ideal for wards, and the smaller rooms were the right size for operating.

The family that owned the house had fled, taking whatever they could carry. When the surgeons took over, they stacked the furniture out of the way. They spread straw to act as bedding and to soak up the blood, took down the doors to use as operating tables, and hoisted the red flag to mark the building a hospital. They they began their gruesome work.

When a bullet from a Civil War rifle hit an arm or a leg, there was usually only one thing to do—amputate. With no knowledge of germs, infection, antiseptics, or shock effect, the wounded soldier stood a better chance of dying than living.

The wounded came to the house all day. Here they were treated, and here many died. The operating, the screams, the dying went on all night and through the next day. Then it was over. The dead were buried. The wounded were carried away. The house lived again in peace.

In August 1862, the armies returned, and this time the fighting was even more horrible and bloodier than before. Again the Stone House served as a hospital. And then, just as suddenly as they had come, the armies were gone—never to return.

Three years later it was over. One hundred and fifty miles away, on a Palm Sunday afternoon, the blood bath called the American Civil War ended.

* * *

Today more than a hundred years later, the Stone House stands as a symbol of the grim realities of war. The operating tables are again set up, the furniture stacked, the straw spread. But this is only a reminder of the men that suffered and died here. These young men, Americans all, marched into battle dreaming of heroism and valor. In this house those dreams turned into nightmares, shattered by a surgeons scalpel or forgotten in the pain of bullet-torn flesh. The glory of battle was not theirs.

Before leaving the parking lot at Stone Bridge, orient yourself to the surrounding area. Highway US29-211 runs east-west. While facing the highway, Stone Bridge and Bull Run are to your left about 100 yards. Van Pelt Hill is the prominent ridge about 600 yards to your right.

STOP 1

TRAIL DIRECTION

Proceed through the break in the rail fence of the parking lot to Stone Bridge, which is Stop 1.

Stone Bridge, where the old Warrenton Turnpike crossed Bull Run, was built about 1810. It marks the extreme left flank (or end) of the Confederate line guarding Manassas Junction. This position was occupied by men under the command of Colonel Nathan G. "Shanks" Evans.

Today the serenity of Stone Bridge is disturbed only by the rush of passing traffic on the modern highway nearby. But on a hot July Sunday in 1861, the quiet peacefulness of the area was shattered by a much more menacing and frightening noise. At 5:00 am the morning quiet was broken by the explosion of a 30 pound artillery shell fired by a Union battery from a bluff to the east of the bridge.

Imagine, if you can, the feelings of the troops here. For the three months since Fort Sumter, there had been much talk and bragging on both sides. Men from the South and men from the North had been supremely confident that their adversary would turn heels and run at the first shot.

Now the talking was over, the boasting meaningless. Today they would "see the elephant."

STOP 2

TRAIL DIRECTION

Follow the worn path leading to the left upstream from the bridge, to the interpretive sign "Bull Run".

Bull Run was a major obstacle for the Union army attempting to capture Manassas Junction. Few men knew how to swim in 1861, so fear of drowning, even in shallow water, was great. The Confederates heavily fortified the fords further downstream which led directly to the junction, so wading across under fire would be suicide. It was the strength of those positions that convinced the Union General, Irvin McDowell, to try a flanking movement, crossing his troops at ungarded Sudley Springs, a mile north of here.

To mask this movement, McDowell ordered the brigades of Sherman, Keyes, and Schenk to "demonstrate" in front of Stone Bridge. According to the plan, the flanking column, which was the main attacking force, was to be crossing Bull Run when the diversion at Stone Bridge began at dawn. But the main column stalled badly. In fact, it was almost 9:00 am, four hours later than planned, before the first Union troops crossed Bull Run at the upper ford!

Why the delay? Consider the condition of the Union troops. They were raw, virtually untrained recruits. Many had thrown away their canteens and haversacks on the long, three day march from Washington. They were tired, hot hungry and thirsty. Civilian sightseers clogged the roads, causing inexcusable delays. In addition the "road" chosen to reach the upper ford turned out to be little more than a path through the dark steamy woods. It was a depressing start.

STOP 3

TRAIL DIRECTION

Continue along the path to "Farm Ford" interpretive sign, which is Stop 3.

Here at Farm Ford Sherman crossed his troops at about 11:30 on the morning of the battle. By crossing here, he was able to cut an hour of marching time to the scene of the fighting near Matthew's Hill.

The brash Confederate officer who revealed the ford to Sherman was Major Roberdeau Chatham Wheat, leader of one of the most colorful units engaged at First Bull Run, the 1st Special Battalion of Louisiana Volunteers—better known as "Wheat's Tigers." Composed of the roughest elements of the New Orleans river front, this regiment quickly gained a reputation as hard and mean fighters. Splendidly attired in "Zouave" uniforms of blue and white striped pantaloons, red vest, and brown fez, their presence on the battlefield was easily noted. So was their ferociousness: When a fellow Confederate Unit accidentally fired on the Tigers in the opening moments of the battle, they unhesitatingly turned and fired back.

Union soldiers reported having the Tigers charge them, screaming wildly and brandishing large Bowie knives.

At the end of the battle, the Tigers were among the first to be out among the dead and wounded—stealing their valuables. Three of the Tigers earned the dubious distinction of being the first soldiers to be executed by the Confederate Army...for fighting with officers.

Although some of their misdeeds were doubtlessly exaggerated, there is no doubt that they were some of the hardest fighting men at First Manassas.

STOP 4

TRAIL
DIRECTION

Follow the path leading off to the left, away from Bull Run. The path will turn right and ascend sharply. At the top of the hill, the path will emerge into an open field to the left. Follow the directional marker to the crest of the hill by following the trail that skirts the woods to the right.

From this point, you get a sweeping panorama of the battlefield. Warrenton Turnpike cuts through the middle ground to the left. The two story white frame house across it to the west is the Robinson House. A freed black man and his family lived there. Some of the heaviest fighting of the battle took place around his simple home. Henry Hill lies beyond.

As quiet as the area is today, it is hard to imagine the sounds of battle carrying across the fields. Yet to the men who fought here, the sound of the fighting was one of the most striking occurrences. J. W. Reid of the 4th South Carolina wrote:

"Try to picture to yourself at least one hundred thousand men all loading and firing as fast as they could. It was truly terrific. The cannons, although they make a great noise, were nothing more than pop guns compared with the tremendous noise of the thousands of muskets. The sight of the dead, the cries of the wounded, the thundering noise of the battle, can never be put on paper."

STOP 5

TRAIL
DIRECTION

Follow the trail south across the field to the small grove of trees about 200 yards away. Here you will find the remains of the Van Pelt House near the interpretive marker which is Stop 5.

On the morning of the battle, Captain E. P. Alexander was disappointed. As part of General Beauregard's staff, he expected to be near any action that might occur. Instead, he had been assigned routine duty at a signal station on Signal Hill. He expected to be of little use there. At 8:45 am, as he was looking through his telescope toward Van Pelt Hill, where you are now, he noticed flashes of light and dust clouds in the distance beyond. Recognizing the reflection of bright morning sun off bayonets and cannon, he quickly signaled Colonel Evans of his discovery. He had just saved the day for the South.

At his headquarters near this house, which was a two story frame building, Colonel Evans had to make his decision. Although he had been ordered to hold the Stone Bridge, the new information indicated that Union troops were on his flank. The situation was critical, for if the flanking column was the main attack, the entire Confederate defensive line was in danger. The South could lose the battle and possibly the war. Evans acted quickly. Leaving four companies (about 300 men) to hold the bridge, he marched 900 men about a mile to the northwest, passing near the two modern farm buildings in the near distance. On Matthews Hill he placed his meager force in an attempt to block the Union attack and gain time for his superiors to send help.

This marks the end of the trail. To return to your car, simply retrace your steps. A slightly alternate route may be taken if, upon reaching the point where the path enters the woods near Stop 4, you continue straight ahead, instead of turning right and descending the hill. The new trail will lead to a bluff overlooking Bull Run. At that point simply turn right and follow the trail back to the parking area.

We recommend that you stop at Stone House next, which is open daily during the summer months. From the hill behind the house you can see Matthews Hill, where Evans' men finally engaged the Union flanking column.

BULL RUN REG LIB



SELF GUIDED TRAIL

Stone Bridge
Van Pelt Hill

This self-guided trail will take you through the opening stages of the Battle of First Manassas. The trail is not looped at this time, thus it will be necessary for you to retrace your steps from the ending point at Van Pelt Hill. Total round trip will be approximately 1.7 miles and will take about an hour. The terrain is not difficult, except for one sharp, short ascent of Van Pelt Ridge. The trail may be muddy during wet weather.