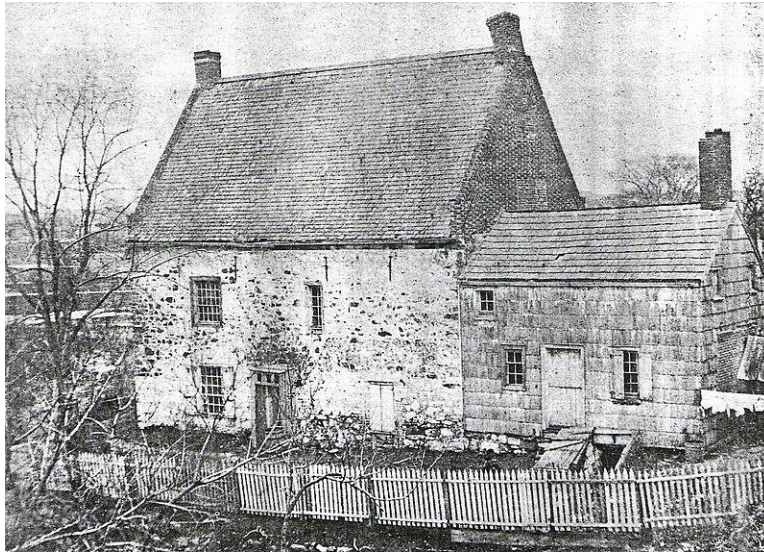


# The Old Stone House

## W.M. Akers



On August 22nd, 1776, the British Army invaded New York. Six weeks earlier, the Declaration of Independence had been signed, and the Revolutionary War was about to begin. The British chose to attack Brooklyn, a village across the river from Manhattan, where General George Washington had his army. The Patriot forces were ready to fight, but they were badly outnumbered. The British had 34,000 soldiers. The Americans had less than 13,000.

The battle started on August 27th, when British soldiers raided a watermelon patch, and were fired upon by American troops. The Americans retreated northward, fighting as they went. The British surrounded the Americans, who fled across the Gowanus Creek. To keep back the British, they left behind a group of soldiers from Maryland: just a few hundred Americans to hold off 2,000 Redcoats (British Army officials).

The British were fighting from in front of the Old Stone House—a farmhouse built in 1699. The Marylanders attacked the house six times. Nearly all of them were killed or captured. As he watched from a nearby hill, General Washington said, "Good God! What brave fellows I must this day lose." Because of the sacrifice of the Marylanders, the American army was able to escape. Had it not been for the fighting at the Old Stone House, the war could have been lost that morning.

The Revolution survived, and so did the Old Stone House. The family home of the Vechte family was sold to the Cortelyous in 1783. In the late 19th Century, it served as the clubhouse for the baseball team that would later be named the Brooklyn Dodgers. In 1897, the house was destroyed and buried. Thirty years later, it was dug up and rebuilt by the New York City Parks Department.

"Eighty percent of the house," said Old Stone House Executive Director Kimberly Maier, "is original material."

On the outside, the house looks just as it did in 1699. On the inside, there is an exhibit about the Battle of Brooklyn and the men who died there. There are uniforms like the soldiers would have worn, maps of the battle, and a diorama of the fighting around the house. Six thousand children come every year to learn about the house. Maier and her staff teach them not just about the battle, but about what life was like in the 18th century.

"You couldn't just go to the grocery store," she said. "You just had one dress, because you had to weave it and cut the cloth and sew it together. The chores were so much more than just making your bed."

Maier said that school children are most surprised when they learn what playtime was like in the 18th century. To kids today, 18<sup>th</sup> century fun looks a lot like work.

"Kids would start out by helping in the garden, or helping to churn butter," Maier said.

Children would do basic weaving, or help in the kitchen. As they got better at these tasks, they would learn more advanced tasks. Eventually, they would be as good as a grown-up. When they played outside, they didn't have rubber balls. Instead, they used an inflated pig's bladder.

Outside the Old Stone House is a park. A few years ago, it was rebuilt. It has swings and fountains and jungle gyms. Children play there every day—and they don't have to use a butter churn.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Where is the Old Stone House?

- A Maryland
- B Britain
- C New York
- D Washington

2. What does the author describe at the end of the passage?

- A what life was like in the 18<sup>th</sup> century
- B an exhibit about the Battle of Brooklyn
- C how George Washington escaped from the British
- D how the Old Stone House was destroyed and rebuilt

3. The Old Stone House played an important role in the American Revolution. What evidence from the passage supports this conclusion?

- A "The British surrounded the Americans, who fled across the Gowanus Creek."
- B "Had it not been for the fighting at the Old Stone House, the war could have been lost that morning."
- C "The British chose to attack Brooklyn, a village across the river from Manhattan, where General George Washington had his army."
- D "The Marylanders attacked the house six times. Nearly all of them were killed or captured."

4. The passage states, "Because of the sacrifice of the Marylanders, the American Army was able to escape."

What was the sacrifice of the Marylanders?

- A They risked the Old Stone House to hold off 2,000 Redcoats.
- B They risked their lives fighting with the American Army.
- C They risked their lives to help the 2,000 Redcoats.
- D They risked their lives to hold off 2,000 Redcoats.

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A the Old Stone House
- B the Revolutionary War
- C the Battle of Brooklyn
- D George Washington

6. Read the following sentences: "The Patriot forces were ready to fight, but **they were badly outnumbered**. The British had 34,000 soldiers. The Americans had less than 13,000."

What does "**they were badly outnumbered**" mean?

- A There were far more British soldiers than American soldiers.
- B There was no way for the American soldiers to win.
- C The Americans couldn't count the number of British soldiers.
- D The American soldiers were better than the British soldiers.

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

George Washington left a few hundred soldiers behind to hold off the British.  
\_\_\_\_\_, the American army was able to escape.

- A On the other hand
- B As a result
- C For example
- D In particular

8. What is currently inside the Old Stone House?

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9. What can students on field trips learn about at the Old Stone House?

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10. Explain whether the Old Stone House has changed a lot since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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## Teacher Guide &amp; Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 770

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8. What is currently inside the Old Stone House?

**Suggested answer:** Inside the Old Stone House there is an exhibit about the Battle of Brooklyn.

9. What can students on field trips learn about at the Old Stone House?

**Suggested answer:** Students can learn about the house, the battle of Brooklyn, and what life was like in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

10. Explain whether the Old Stone House has changed a lot since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Suggested answer:** Answers may vary and should be supported by the passage. Students can argue that the house has not changed very much, because it looks the same on the outside, and is made of 80% original material. Students can also argue that the house has changed a lot, as it has been used for many different purposes over time, and was destroyed and rebuilt.