

OUR OPINION

The end of Rockledge?

Rockledge is not a building which people forget.

Overlooking the Occoquan River, it is carved into the shelf of rock on the hillside. For years, it stood abandoned, like a blank visage of the past peering over the present town. It was forlorn and unkempt, but even in its reduced state, its grandeur remained.

Then, in 1974, restoration began. Most of the work was not visible from the outside; the wear of years and the quarry blasts from across the river did not easily yield to workmen's changes. A billy goat roamed the still unaltered front yard. A cow munched lazily.

Inside, however, the restoration continued. The inside walls were repaired, and appropriate furnishings were installed. The outside, too, showed the signs of efforts, as the stone was reinforced with gunnite.

No one had moved into Rockledge, but the building had assumed a new life. There was promise that its history would not end with gradual decay and the unconcern of those who live in the present.

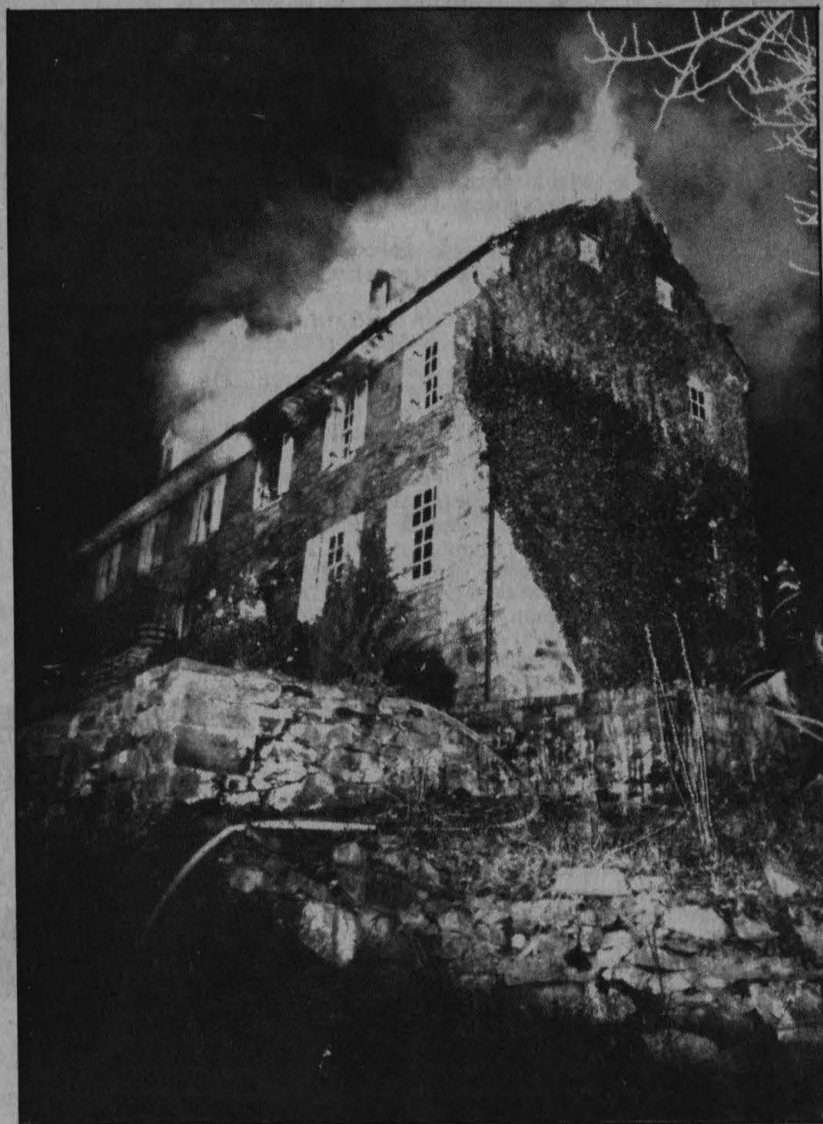
Then, in January, 1980, Rockledge was burned. The restoration effort had accomplished nothing, and there is no way to tell how much further structural damage was done by the arson.

Now, the Rockledge owner has given up. It is hard to blame him, but the prospect of demolition is dreadful.

The building will be difficult to save. Its historic value is limited to the local area, but the price for purchasing and renovating the building again would require the financial resources of a national preservation organization. It seems hopeless to hunt for a historic group with both the interest and the necessary money.

The building is not very useful for conversion, either.

It would be a wonderful restaurant, but there is no place to park automobiles. The hill rises behind the house, and the parking space available in the town below is already insufficient for days when many



people seek the joys of Occoquan. It is difficult to see how a profit-making concern could recoup an investment in the building.

In the absence of a practical suggestion, all we can offer is hope that some person or group of people will emerge, money in hand, to at-

tempt to salvage the building. The project would be enormous. The prospect of a return on the investment would be dubious. The alternative—that Rockledge would be levelled to make room for some other sort of development—may be the only future for this monument to the past.