

7/9/90 HISTORIC SITE FILE: BEVERLEY MILL (BROAD RUN MILL)

# Stream's path rerouted to save old mill

BULL RUN REG LIB

By JIM ROGERS  
of the Potomac News

"VA"

## Places

**THOROUGHFARE GAP** — Beverley's Mill peeks from behind trees, casting a long shadow upon the rushing waters of Broad Run.

Every day, hundreds of motorists pass the massive five and one-half story landmark as they cross the Prince William-Fauquier county line, continuing their westward treks along Interstate 66. And every day many of them slow down to gaze at this reminder of America's rugged past.

State and federal historical records say the mill was erected sometime during the 1740s. It is unquestionably the most notable landmark on the western slope of the long, rolling Bull Run Mountain range.

Jonathan Chapman built a grist and flour mill near the site of the current mill shortly after he purchased the land in 1742, according to historical documents on file in Richmond.

A fire destroyed the original mill and an initial version of the present stone structure replaced it around 1755. State records suggest the improved stone structure, erected near an early road that connected the Shenandoah Valley with the eastern settlements, may have been used as a fortress to ward off Indian attacks.

But the new mill also fell victim to a fire that reportedly destroyed much of its interior and machinery.

Another rebuilding effort led to the structure's enlargement, including the addition of two more floors, around 1858. The new mill was used to crush limestone, grinding it into "plaster" for "liming," or fertilizing farmland.

Constructed of locally quarried, roughly shaped quartzite and Virginia

bluestone, the building includes a large metal mill wheel, 29 feet in diameter, located on the structure's west end.

The Chapmans owned and operated the mill until the Civil War. A capstone, or plaque, on the building's north side records how ownership of the mill passed from Johnathon to Nathaniel to Pearson to John to George and finally to John Chapman.

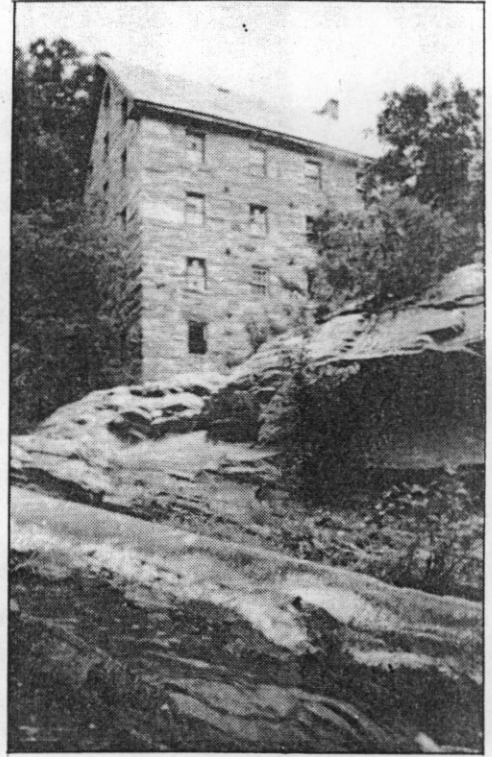
During the fall and winter of 1861-62, the Confederate Army used the mill as a meat-curing warehouse and distribution center, according to documents at the Virginia Landmarks Commission.

When Confederate leaders ordered the evacuation of Manassas in early 1863, Southern soldiers burned great amounts of meat inside the mill and again destroyed its interior, rendering the structure mostly useless to the invading Union troops.

At the war's end, and with the death of John Chapman, Robert Beverley bought the mill and gave it to his son, William, in 1879, documents show. It was William Beverley who rebuilt and operated the mill until about the turn of the century.

Ownership of the mill changed several times during the first half of the 20th century. Still, the structure was used as mill until about 1950.

In 1951, Mack J. West bought the old building and converted it into an antique shop. About 10 years later, plans to construct I-66 west of Gainesville called for the building's demolition, but a preservation group convinced the state highway department to change the



By Ron Sinfelt-Potomac News

**Beverley's Mill overlooks Broad Run near the Fauquier County line.**

Interstate's alignment to avoid the mill.

The highway department, in the effort to save the mill, had to reroute a portion of Broad Run, which for more than 200 years provided the water power that turned the mill's huge wheel.

In 1973, the Wests sold the mill to Athalie Irvine Smith, who in 1976 deeded it to the Bull Run Preserve, a non-profit group that is trying to preserve the structure.