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Fundraising Seeks To Repair Beverley Mill At Thoroughfare Gap
By Deborah Fitts

BROAD RUN, Va. - Beverley Mill, the Civil War landmark in Thoroughfare Gap that was gutted by fire three years ago, will shortly begin a \$600,000 repair project to save it as a "restored ruin."

Engineering work was completed in mid-September in preparation for "pinning" and otherwise supporting the walls of the six-and-a-half-story stone structure. In a modern version of the 19th-century concept, steel rods will be strung through the building from outer wall to outer wall, and a steel framework will be erected inside the building to give it stability.

The culprits were never identified, but youths loitering in the abandoned building were blamed for the blaze, Oct. 22, 1998. Lost in the fire were millworks and other equipment left behind when the mill closed more than half a century ago. The nonprofit foundation that owns the mill, dubbed the Turn the Mill Around Campaign, received a \$300,000 state grant last year to stabilize the structure.

Beverley Mill, built in 1742, dominates Thoroughfare Gap in the Bull Run Mountains, providing a time warp for modern-day travelers hustling past along Interstate 66. The structure was a focal point of the battle of Thoroughfare Gap, Aug. 28, 1862. Eileen Vroom, executive director of Turn the Mill Around, said the organization has raised a required \$75,000 match for the state grant. She said the ultimate cost of the repairs will total over \$600,000, however, suggesting that the fundraising will continue well into the future.

Volunteers clearing the 13-foot-high debris pile inside the mill found three of the four iron plates used in pinning the gable ends, and they will be re-used at the ends of the new steel rods. The gable ends, knocked in by the high-pressure hoses of firefighters, will have to be rebuilt, including the mill's trademark round windows just under the peak of

the roof.

The roof will not be replaced. Stones around each aperture and along the roofline will be repointed and the roofline will be capped with copper to prevent moisture from entering the mortar. Vroom said work should finally begin late this fall, and will be completed next year. Delays in obtaining the engineering plans slowed things by nearly a year.

An interesting discovery made during the digging-out was 8-inch-square stone flues running up the corners of the building's inner east wall to the chimney atop the gable end. One worker called the stonework "incredible." One grist stone was also recovered from the rubble.

In a second phase of the project, visitors will be able to enter the building and view what remains of the interior walls. A new pedestrian trail will lead visitors past the mill pond, headrace and tailrace, including highlights such as the mill sluice and an intact 29-foot Fitzhugh overshot wheel.

Visitors will also be treated to a stunning view of Broad Run, which falls 87 feet through the gap, and the steep-sloped battlefield of Thoroughfare Gap.

On adjoining property belonging to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation stand the ruins of Meadowlands, the manor house of the Chapman family, who built the mill, as well as the remains of a smaller mill.

Beverley Mill is the focal point of the Thoroughfare Gap Historic District, which was placed on the National Register a year ago. The designation was granted despite the fire, because the gap is so little changed since the time of the Civil War. The mill is fenced off and remains closed to the public pending the repairs. It is technically "a condemned building," Vroom said.

Donations for the mill may be made to Turn the Mill Around Campaign, P.O. Box 207, Broad Run, VA 20137. Donors will receive the group's annual newsletter.

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