

# Weekend tour of the mill building at Broad Run grinds out area's history

By KRISTA KIMBLE  
 Observer staff

On Aug. 28, 1862, Confederate forces under Maj. General Longstreet met the Union forces of Brig. Gen. James Ricketts and Col. Percy Wyndham in the area of Fauquier and Prince William counties, known as Thoroughfare Gap.

The late afternoon skirmish that broke out between the sides resulted in the Union forces' being driven back, allowing the Confederates to unite with Stonewall Jackson's troops for what was to become the Battle of Second Manassas. This battle erupted the following day.

Seated inside the Gap, adjacent to the railroad, was Chapman's Mill, an impressive stone structure built by the Chapman family in 1742. At one time, the building stood an imposing seven stories tall. This historic building provided an anchor point for the Thoroughfare Gap battle.

The mill building itself contains a fascinating history. Over the years, Chapman's mill helped foster the economic growth of the Shenandoah Valley; in turn, it influenced the economic, political and social development of the nation. It provided flour and corn mill to troops for a number of wars.

To keep the building and its contents from falling into the hands of the Union soldiers, following the Battle of First Manassas, the Confederate troops burned the mill. This was the condition of the building at the time of the Battle of Thoroughfare Gap.

The mill was restored by the Beverley family; by 1876, it had once again become a thriving mill operation. At this time, the mill took on the Beverley family name and has since been referred to as



Local historian Bruce Slawter provides an overview of the Battle of Thoroughfare Gap at historic Chapman's Mill, also known as Beverley Mill, in Broad Run. Krista Kimble / the Bull Run Observer

both Chapman's Mill and Beverley Mill.

Sadly, the mill was burned and gutted by an Oct. 22, 1998 arson fire. Soon afterward, a foundation formed; Turn the Mill around Campaign purchased the property and began to work on raising the funds to restore it.

Recently, Turn the Mill around Campaign has begun to open the mill to the public for limited hours and special events. On Saturday, Aug. 29, to commemorate the anniversary of the Thoroughfare Gap Battle, the group hosted a series of talks at the mill.

At various times throughout the day, the public was invited to listen to local historians tell about the historic battle and walk the

grounds, Bruce Slawter, a Civil War history enthusiast, led one of these talks at 4 p.m.

Gathered inside the shell of the old mill, a group of people listened to Slawter give an overview of the factors that led up to the clash, a strategic outline of the battle, and an

update of what happened to many of the key participants.

"Had the Federals been more resolved about holding onto the gap, they could have prevented the two confederate troops from uniting, and the Battle of the Second Manassas would have had a much differ-

ent outcome or may not have occurred," Slawter said.

Ellen Percy Miller, executive director of Turn the Mill around Campaign, said, "When the mill was burned in 1998, it forced us to begin to focus on and explore the amazing history of the building rather than strictly on the function of the mill. The enormity of structure and its craftsmanship is extraordinary.

"Chapman's Mill will be open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.," Percy Miller said. "We invite and encourage people to come out and visit the mill to become acquainted with this incredible treasure in our own backyard.

"Turn the Mill Around is seeking volunteers who would like to be trained as tour guides for the mill grounds," Percy Miller added. "We are always eager for donations to help us continue our work toward the goal of restoring the mill and preserving this important point of history."

More information about Chapman's Mill, the Battle of Thoroughfare Gap and Turn the Mill around Campaign may be found at [www.chapmansmill.org](http://www.chapmansmill.org). The mill is located at the end of Beverley Mill Road, which is off Turner Road off VA 55 in Broad Run.

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The **MANASSAS OBSERVER** **BULL RUN OBSERVER** **PRINCE WILLIAM OBSERVER**

# SPARE TIME: Antique auto lovers spin their wheels on Saturday nights

By **TERRI L. ERWIN-FITZ**  
Observer staff

If you've ever driven by the parking lot between Swirlies soft-serve ice cream and Burger King on VA 28 and wondered why it was packed, here's your answer.

On Saturday evenings from 4 to 11, people who own antique cars gather in the parking lot to "show" their cars. Many of these classic car lovers come to the parking lot every weekend. Basically they bring their cars and talk to the curious about the cars' history and what the cars mean to the owners.

People of all ages meander through the area—some with ice cream or soft drinks in hand—looking at the cars and talking about cars from yesteryear.

Lynn Bishop from Manassas owns a 1947 Ford Coupe that has a 1974 Chevelle engine and a new Corvette transmission. The Ford is his only antique; he was thrilled to share it came in second in show in its class at a recent car show. He comes to the Manassas gathering every week to talk with other friends who own antique cars. A group of them meet in a corner of the parking lot every Saturday evening to hang out and talk cars and cover other topics as well. Bishop pampers his baby: only taking her out on Sundays to church besides his Saturday night show. Owing the Ford, Bishop said, is "like owning a horse: owning one is a hobby, more than one

is an investment."

Bill Huntington, also of Manassas, has owned his 1966 Chevelle Malibu for 42 years. He calls her his "Fairy Tale." He has her story written and available to all who pass by or ask about her. He and his wife raised three children, driving that car, until it was stolen in March 1979. When it was recovered, he couldn't afford to piece it back together and repair it. After 28 years, he and his son began the repair on the car in 2007. They completed it and he drove it for the first time in 30 years on March 21, 2009.

Huntington also comes to the gathering off 28 every week. He has taken the car to seven shows and it has received five trophies. The car is all original and is the original color. He proudly shows the ghost flames in the car's paint that only come out in certain light.

There are also people who gather at the pseudo show who have more than one car and bring out different cars on different weekends. Bob Mayhugh of Midland comes out every Saturday to talk to his friends and strangers about his collection of cars. He and his father own three cars: a 1970 Dodge Challenger R/T; a 1978 Plymouth Fury Convertible; and a 1971 Plymouth 340 Duster. He has done some of the restoration himself on the vehicles and some of the restoration has had to be completed by someone who specializes in antique restoration.



Terri L. Erwin-Fitz / the Bull Run Observer

Lynn Bishop of Manassas enjoys showing off his 1947 Ford Coupe.

He has found his collectors' items in several different places. One he saw sitting in someone's front yard, one by word of mouth and the other through someone his father knew. He said he doesn't drive the cars except to bring them out to events.

Della and Jerry Atkins of Oakton have an interesting story about their collection of Mustangs. They own four Fords: a 1964 Mustang, a 1965 black Mustang Convertible (Della's), a 1965 Mustang with 35,000 miles and a 1956 Ford Thunderbird. On this particular Saturday evening, they had their 1964 Ford Mustang in pagoda green. Jerry had just had the car at a show that benefitted a charity. The car was in the top 20 out of 130 cars at the show.

Della and Jerry are the original owners of the '64 Mustang. Jerry bought the Mustang from Ted Britt Ford brand new. At the time, he says that he saw the car at the dealer and came home and told Della that he wanted to buy it. It would be their first "new" car. Della said that it was fine, but he

had to find out how to pay for it. Jerry sold the three cars they owned in order to purchase the \$2,658 car. He sold a 1957 Buick, a 1950 Edsel and a 1957 Mercury in order to buy their new family car.

Della and Jerry drive the cars all the time except in the winter when they drive a van. Della pointed out the '64 has bite marks

in the dashboard, marking a period of time when one of her daughters was teething. Jerry said the car just kept hanging around.

The Atkinses fell so much in love with the Mustang that both of their daughters drove Mustangs to high school and over the years Jerry has owned about 20 that he has restored and sold.

All of the car owners have their own stories about the vehicle they bring or why they ended up with that particular vehicle and all are happy to talk with you about their memories. Children and adults roam through the cars looking, taking pictures and talking to each other. The car owners are almost like a family themselves since many of them come out to meet to share their common interest every week.

If your family is looking for a fun outing on a lazy fall Saturday evening, grab a milkshake, soda or ice cream and come to the parking lot between Swirlies and Burger King any time between 4 and 11; listen to the stories and tales these people share.



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