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Blaze destroys 250-year-old Beverly Mill

By SETH MEXNER AND SHARON BHAGWANDIN
 MANASSAS JOURNAL MESSENGER

Only the stone exterior walls of the Beverly Mill remain after a fire gutted the historic structure Thursday afternoon.

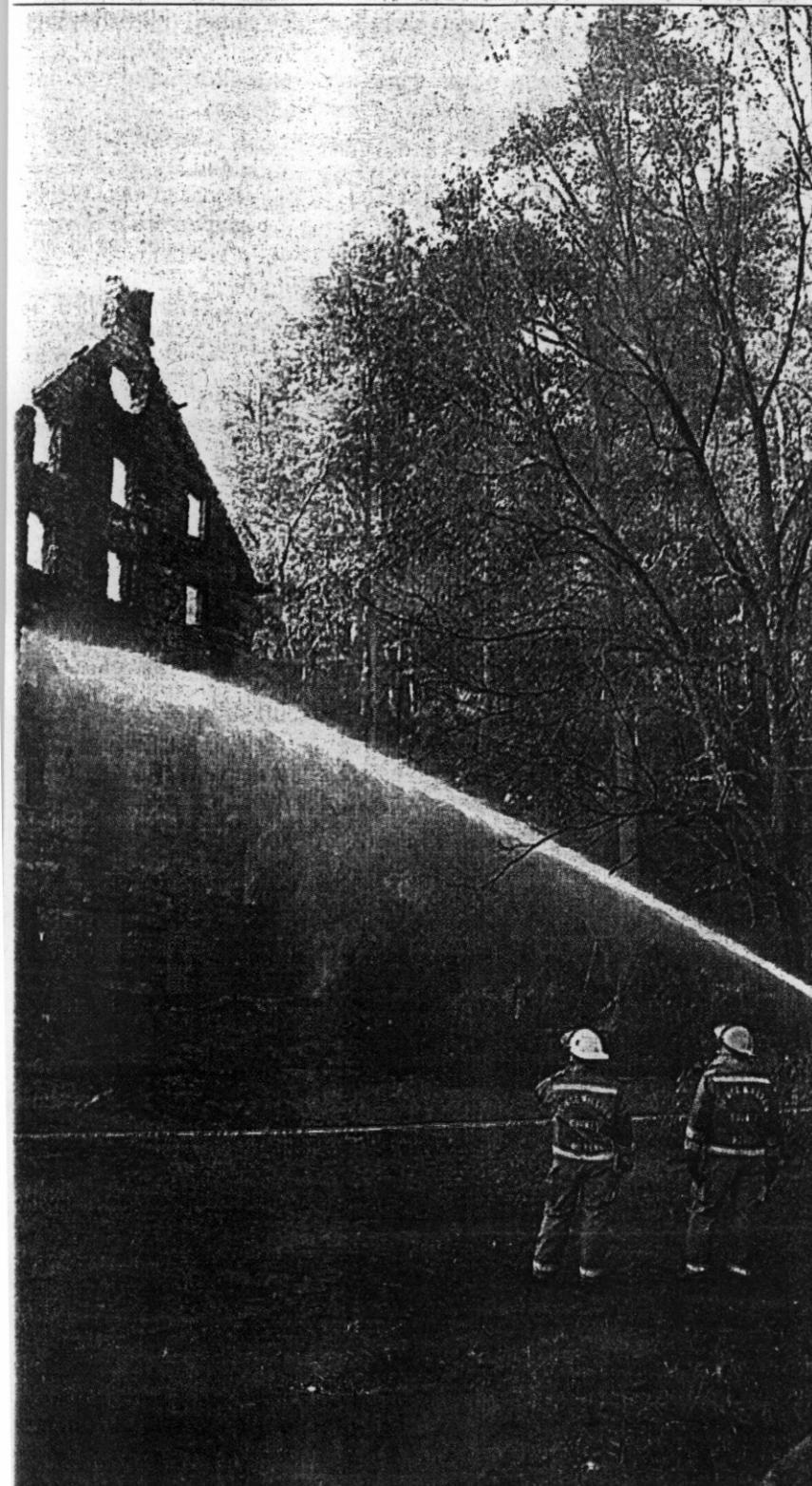
Firefighters from three counties found the building engulfed in flames when they arrived at the scene around 4 p.m., according to Prince William County fire and rescue Capt. Steven Kersse.

Embers from the blaze sparked brush in the surrounding woods that took firefighters nearly two hours to put out.

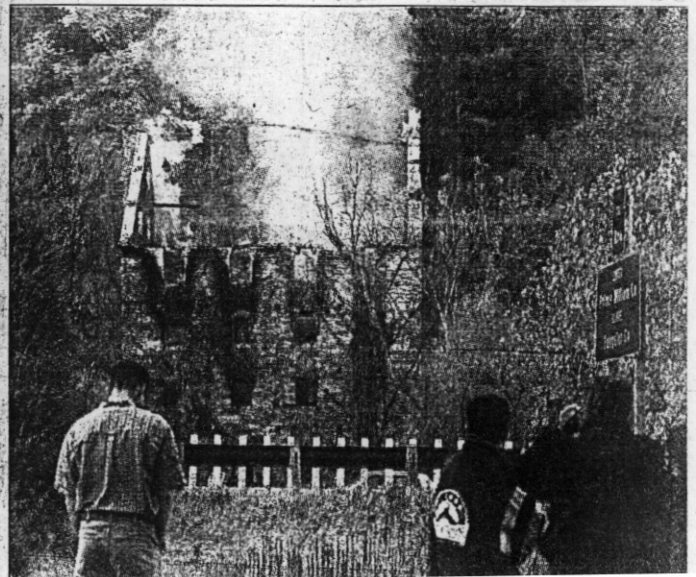
About 20 companies from Prince William, Loudoun and Fauquier counties responded, Kersse said.

The cause of the fire was not immediately known and the county's fire marshal opened an investigation into the

▼ SEE MILL / A6



CHRIS MOORHEAD/MEDIA GENERAL NEWS SERVICE



County firefighters, above, respond to a fire at Beverly Mill off Interstate 66. Spectators at the remains of the structure, which was gutted by the fire.

▲ MILL

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incident, Kersse said.

Although the mill is on private land, people often break into the structure and occasionally light fires, according to Ron Turner of the Prince William County Historic Commission.

The mill suffered damage twice last year as the result of someone lighting fires inside, Turner said.

Turner said he visited the scene after the fire, which swept through the inside of the five-story structure.

"It's ruined. It's really sad that it survived the Civil War and now it's ruined," Turner said.

The four remaining fire-damaged walls may have to be knocked down, Turner said.

Built more than 250 years ago, the building first served as a grist mill along Broad Run. The mill was rebuilt in 1857 after a fire and rebuilt again in 1858 as a plaster grinding mill. It was used by both Confederate and Union soldiers in 1861-62, said Tish Como of the Prince William County Library System's Relic Department.

The mill ceased to be used in the 1940s. In the early 1970s it was declared a landmark and

added to the historic landmark register. The mill's present owner, Athalie Irvine Smith of Middleburg, formed Bull Run Preserves in hopes of the mill being used again, but no steps were taken to protect it, Como said.

In 1980, a historic site study done by historian Francis Jones labeled the mill in fair to poor condition, saying it was subject to vandalism and arson, and suffering from lack of maintenance. The mill was valued at \$58,000 in January.

• *Seth Meixner and Sharon Bhagwandin can be reached at jm@cais.com*

▲ FIRE

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He was in critical condition in the hospital's burn unit for most of Wednesday and died at 7:30 p.m.

Patterson has a brother, who is also believed to be homeless and living in the same woods.

A funeral for Perry, a lifetime resident of Manassas, will be held Saturday. He is survived by a wife and three children, who live in Gainesville.

• *Tania Anderson can be reached at jm@cais.com*

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