

Abandoned Civil War-era mill burns to the ground

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HAYMARKET — All that remains of Beverly Mill are its exterior stone walls, after a fire gutted the Civil War-era building Thursday afternoon.

Firefighters from three counties arrived at the scene around 4 p.m. to find the structure engulfed in flames, said Capt. Steven Kersse of the Prince William

County fire and rescue squad.

Embers from the blaze sparked a brush fire 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 incident, Kersse said.

Although the mill, worth about \$58,000,

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.

Turner said he visited the scene after the fire, which swept through the inside of the five-story structure, igniting timbers and other debris.

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

In the early 1970s it was declared a historic 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 the structure, 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.

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HISTORY GUTTED. Prince William County firefighters spray the smoldering Beverly Mill during a fire Thursday afternoon

Chris Moorhead—Staff Photographer

HISTORIC SITE FILE: BEVERLEY MILL
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