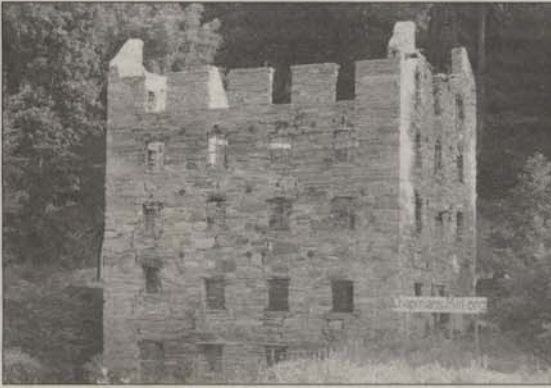


Historic Mill now being called Chapman/Beverley Mill to avoid confusion

By HEIDI M. BAUMSTARK
Observer staff

Beverley Mill, once known as Chapman Mill, straddles the Prince William-Fauquier county line. During its heyday, the Chapman/Beverley Mill provided a blur of business as farmers hauled their corn and wheat to be ground. The mill wheels have ceased.

Instead, the wheels of another kind grind along Interstate 66 in front of it, with some passengers catching glimpses of the tall stone structure. With the leadership of Ellen Percy Miller, executive director of Turn the Mill Around Campaign (TTMAC), this historic treasure may once again become a hub of activity for visitors who are eager to learn its story. That story stretches far back to the decades before local soldiers fought for independence.



Heidi M. Baumstark / the Bull Run Observer

Beverley Mill is visible to drivers headed west on Interstate 66 from Haymarket.

The ongoing preservation project in Thoroughfare Gap is on what TTMAC workers decided should be called Chapman/Beverley Mill to avoid confusion

between the two names, according to Percy Miller. Frances Lillian Jones' book, "Beverley (Chapman's) Mill, Thoroughfare Gap, Virginia: A History and Preserva-

tion Plan" also details the name.

The mill was built in 1742 by father and son Johnathan and Nathaniel Chapman. In 1858, the Chapmans enlarged the mill. "On the west side, which is actually in Fauquier County, the mill soared seven stories high," Percy Miller said, "and six stories on the east side, which is in Prince William County. This makes it one of the tallest mills in the United States." Today, the west side stands five-and-a-half stories tall and the east side is four-and-a-half stories tall, she continued.

A large stone, embedded in the north wall of the mill facing the railroad, has an inscription that reads, "John Chapman Rebuilt A.D. 1858." Chapman put the stone there; he was the last of the Chapmans to own and operate the mill. The stone inscription also includes the names "Johnathan, Nathaniel, Pearson, John and

George," according to Jones' book.

During the Civil War, sharpshooters from the north and south used the mill to attack or defend the Thoroughfare pass. The Aug. 28, 1862 Battle of Thoroughfare Gap took place in and around the mill.

One of the most retold stories of the mill centers around the Civil War. The Confederate Army's Subsistence Department established a huge meat-packing plant at the mill. In March 1862, more than two million pounds of meat was stored at the mill along with large herds of cattle and hogs at Thoroughfare Gap. When the Confederates were given the order to evacuate the area, the large mass of meat, along with the cattle and hogs, were "dealt with hastily" and whatever could not be taken by the retreating southern army was given to civilians. As the Confederates were departing through the Gap, they set fire to the mill burning any remaining meat to prevent it from supplying the Union army with needed food supplies, according to Jones.

After the Civil War, by 1876, the Beverley family restored the ruins to a successful milling operation, which then took on their name. Subsequent owners continued its operation until 1951.

This historic stone mill, which drivers on I-66 West can see, has received several honorific designations. The mill is on the National Register of Historic Places, the Virginia Landmarks Register and is a Virginia Civil War Trails site. And, in March, the mill and the "Chapman/Beverley Mill Historic District" were "approved for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places," Percy Miller said.

The mill was almost destroyed

continued on page 14

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Historic mill to open in 2009

continued from page 13

in the mid-1960s during I-66 construction. Local residents called enough attention to the mill's significance that I-66 was rerouted, PercyMiller explained.

Three decades later, the mill was threatened again; it was vandalized and set ablaze on Oct. 22, 1998. TTMAC is incorporating the fire into the mill's overall history.

TTMAC, a nonprofit organization formed in November 1998, "is dedicated to the historic preservation and stabilization of the Chapman's (Beverley's) Mill, a 260-year-old gristmill, located in the heart of Thoroughfare Gap, Virginia. Through these preservation efforts, Turn the Mill Around Campaign's goals are to develop an interpretive/educational program of the history and significance of the mill and Thoroughfare Gap and provide public access to the site," Jones' book said.

Plans for the site include a walking pathway around the mill with interpretive signs, explaining the old milling process and its impact on the economy. Walkways inside the mill are planned, too. "We plan to be open within a year," PercyMiller said.

She detailed the campaign's success to date. "In the fall of 2007, the scaffolding came down. We spent \$1.5 [million] stabilizing the walls, which is complete. It's now safe to bring people through and talk about the history," PercyMiller said. "We now need restrooms, running water, walkways and signage for it to be open next year."

She said money from the Va. General Assembly went to "more iron fencing between the mill and the railroad."

Broad Run resident Jack Hazel helped out, too. He donated the work of a crew of men and machinery to clean up all the debris collected during the past 10 years, PercyMiller said.

The city of Lexington donated milling equipment, circa 1870, from a dismantled mill. "This is similar to what we know was in Beverley Mill at the time of its arson," PercyMiller said. She said the equipment is in excellent condition; she and campaign planners are looking for someone to store the equipment in a secure, covered building until it can be used at the mill.

Currently, the mill is open by appointment for group tours. Various groups have already seen this national treasure. Members of those groups and others could take home a part of the mill. Paperweights in various sizes were made from the mill walls. "When they put in the anchor system to stabilize the walls, they had to core out the stone; these paperweights are from these cored

stones. Our Web site has ordering information and pictures of these paperweights," PercyMiller said.

Upgrades are ongoing, she continued. "Sometimes it may look like a lot is not happening, but there's so much going on behind the scenes as we create a museum and a historic site. We plan to host a 10th anniversary commemoration of the burning of the mill this October," PercyMiller said.

More on the mill and volunteer opportunities can be found at www.chapmansmill.org. Turn the Mill Around Campaign can also be reached at 540-253-5888.

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