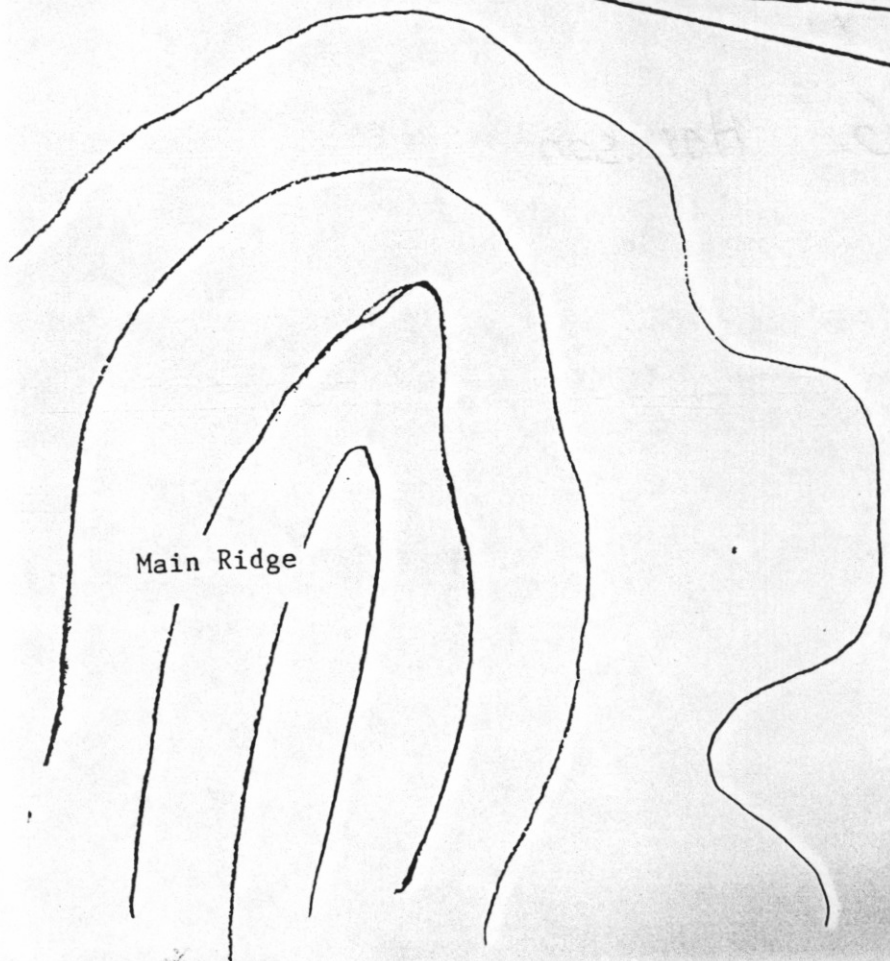
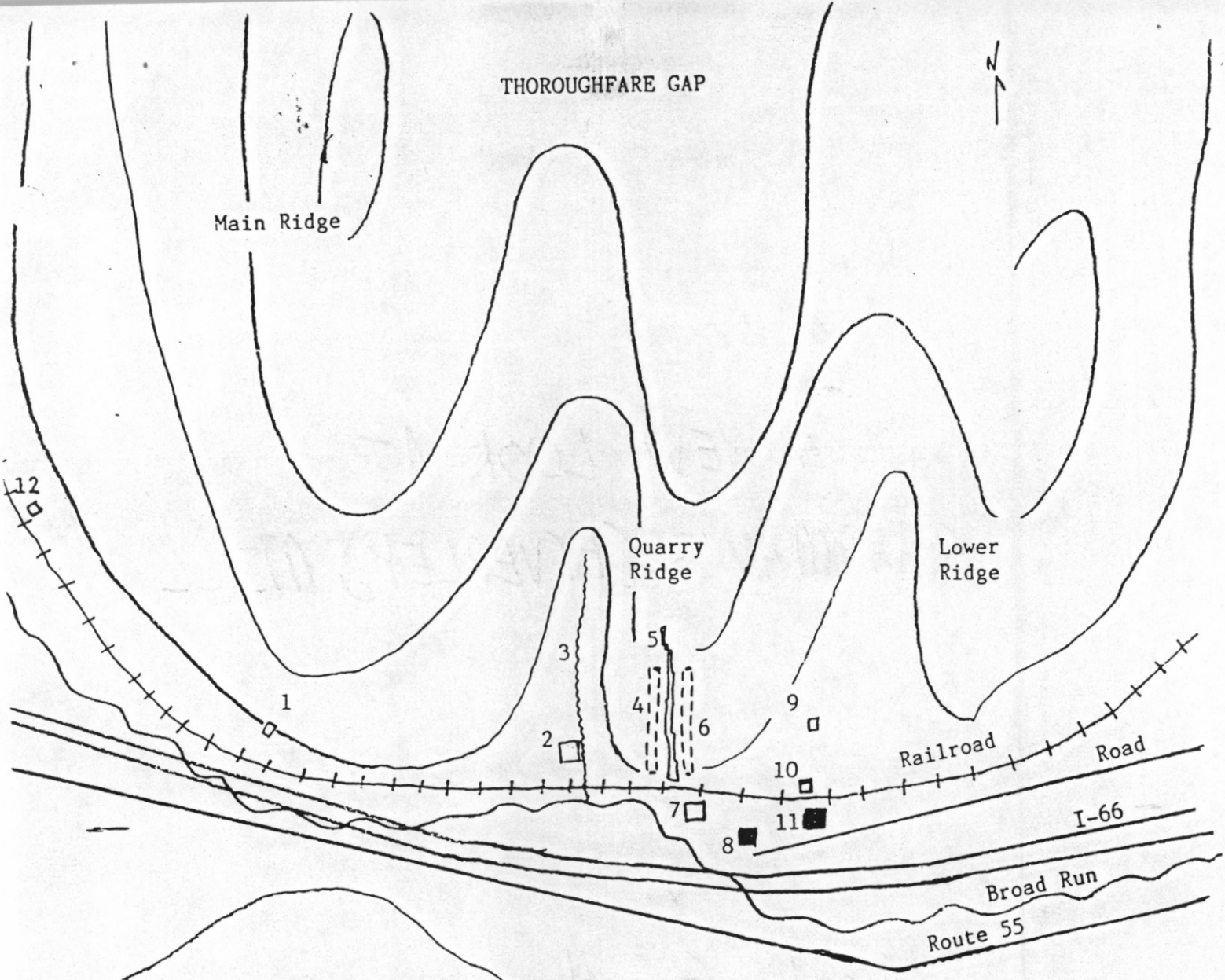


A NEW LOOK AT  
CHAPMAN'S (BEVERLEY) MILL

by  
Noel G. Harrison



Key

- 1-Iron-Spout Spring
- 2-"Stone Barn"
- 3-"Small Stream"
- 4-Position of First Georgia Regulars
- 5-Quarry Trench
- 6-Position of 11th Pennsylvania
- 7-Chapman's Mill
- 8-Postwar Building
- 9-Chapman Cemetery
- 10-"Meadowland" and Adjacent Icehouse
- 11-Postwar Building
- 12-Ruins of Broad Run Station

0  300 Yards

The numerous histories of the industrial complex at Chapman's Mill, also known as Beverley Mill, all share one characteristic: the lack of a balanced, detailed examination of Civil War events. These studies focus on the economic significance of Chapman's Mill, the largest structure in the complex; discuss military affairs in only a general or incomplete fashion; and de-emphasize the importance of other sites and structures. This neglect is unfortunate but understandable, given the obscurity of much of the revelant source material for the 1860s. An examination of several little-known but vivid accounts brings the industrial and military significance of the complex into sharper focus and illuminates one of the most unusual engagements of the entire war.

The remnants of the Chapman's Mill complex are located along the north side of Thoroughfare Gap, a prominent landmark on the Fauquier-Prince William County line. Broad Run loses 80 feet in elevation as it tumbles past the towering quartzite cliffs flanking the pass. Travellers often commented upon the scenic "wild confusion of nature" encountered in the gap.<sup>1</sup> Much of this aesthetic quality has survived the use of the pass as a thoroughfare for a wagon road; a railroad; and, most recently, an interstate highway.

A number of studies discuss the antebellum history of Chapman's Mill in detail, and it needs only a brief summary here. By 1759, the Chapman family had erected a two and one-half-story stone mill on the north side of Thoroughfare Gap, near the east entrance to the pass, and, strategically, on a wagon road connecting the farms and grainaries of Fauquier County with other road systems leading to markets in Alexandria. In 1852, the Manassa's Gap Railroad Company extended its tracks past the north side of the mill and undoubtedly inspired miller/owner John Chapman to expand the building by two stories. Chapman was extremely proud of the addition, which was completed in

1858, and directed <sup>his masons to set</sup> a stone inscribed with his name and the names of his miller forebears ~~to be set~~ into the enlarged north wall.

Unfortunately, most historical studies devote scant attention to the other antebellum sites and structures in the complex. These include the remnants of two buildings also constructed by the Chapman family: a stone dwelling known as "Meadowland" and a half stone/half wood structure known as the "Upper Mill," which, along with Chapman's Mill, ground 200 tons of plaster; 3,000 bushels of wheat; and 16,200 bushels of corn in 1860.<sup>2</sup> An overgrown yard west of the Upper Mill marks the site of the Broad Run station on the Manassa's Gap Railroad. The Chapman family cemetery; an enormous, stone-lined icehouse or well; and <sup>the waters of</sup> a spring--formerly channelled by an iron spout--which emerge from a cliff and cascade onto the railroad grade, are ~~also~~ among the haunting collection of remnants.

The final antebellum site in the complex receives only passing mention in historical studies but is as important to the industrial history of Northern Virginia as Chapman's Mill itself. This site is the remnant of a quarry from which masons extracted most or all of the quartzite used to build Chapman's Mill and the other stone structures in the complex. The quarry is visible today as a huge trench extending ~~from the top of the ridge to the~~ ~~Chapman's Mill~~ about 200 yards along the spine of a ridge. Operations here, unlike those at most quarries, emphasized excavation along the surface of the rock, not into it. Age, close proximity to identifiable building sites, and the type of stone extracted also make the quarry unique.

Although an engagement fought at Thoroughfare Gap in August 1862 was the most important event which occurred there during the Civil War, it is not the principal wartime subject discussed in most histories of the industrial complex at Chapman's Mill. Instead, these narratives focus on the relatively unimportant

destruction of a nearby meat-processing plant by Confederate troops retreating from the Manassas area ~~in March of the same year~~ in March of the same year. The historical neglect of the August engagement is doubly ironic since the complex was the scene of the heaviest fighting of that clash.

On the afternoon of August 28, 1862, General James Longstreet's First Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia approached the west entrance to Thoroughfare Gap, en route to reinforce General T.J. "Stonewall" Jackson's Second Corps positioned near Bull Run. The Ninth Georgia Infantry, one of the five regiments in General George T. Anderson's Brigade of Longstreet's Corps, pushed into the pass and expelled a Union cavalry regiment from positions at and near the Chapman's Mill complex. When the Georgians advanced beyond the gap, they collided with the artillery and infantry of General James

Ricketts' Division of the Union Army of Virginia. Ricketts had orders to block any Confederate advance. ~~He ordered his~~<sup>3</sup>

The Ninth Georgia ~~started a single volley~~ from behind an embankment on the curving railroad and <sup>then</sup> ~~retreated~~ <sup>opened fire</sup> and retreated into the gap. Colonel J.W. Stiles' Brigade of Ricketts' Division pursued.<sup>4</sup> A company in one of Stiles' regiments, the 13th Massachusetts Infantry, was ordered to occupy Chapman's Mill and, as one of its members later recalled, "proceeded up the railroad and took possession.... Some of the boys climbed up to the second story windows to get better shots...."<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, another regiment in the brigade, the 11th Pennsylvania Infantry, pushed past Meadowland, ascended the ridge extending north from the mill, and formed line along the east edge of the quarry.<sup>6</sup>

The soldiers in General Anderson's four remaining regiments--the First Georgia Regulars and the Seventh, Eighth, and 11th Georgia Infantries--were waiting in reserve positions extending northwest ~~from the edge of the quarry~~

along the railroad from Iron-Spout Spring towards the charred ruins of Broad Run Station, which was burned three months earlier. They may have heard an occasional, distant rumbling from the direction of Bull Run, where "Stonewall" Jackson's Corps was opening the Battle of Second Manassas by attacking other elements of the Army of Virginia. According to W.H. Andrews, a soldier in the First Regulars, Iron-Spout Spring supplied the Georgians with "some of the best and purest water I ever drank."<sup>7</sup> This pleasant interlude came to an end when Anderson ordered the four regiments, with the Regulars in the lead, to reinforce the Ninth Georgia.

The advance of the Confederate column stalled when it reached the position of the Ninth just west of Chapman's Mill. Andrews later wrote that the Union sharpshooters in that building "made it so hot for the regulars" that they had to seek shelter behind "a large stone barn"--probably the Upper Mill.<sup>8</sup> In an effort to outflank Chapman's Mill, General Anderson directed the four arriving regiments to shift to the left and climb up to the quarry, described by W.H. Andrews as:

...a trench dug in the rock to get stone to build with, that run well up on the mountain to the left of...[Chapman's] mill. The ditch was about seven feet wide and six feet deep....<sup>9</sup>

That soldier also recalled the difficult climb:

Just at the foot of the [ridge]...was a small stream covered with briars. There was but one place in front...that a man could pass through and that was directly in front of myself....I filed through and the boys followed me. We then started to climb...by holding on to rocks and bushes, the air being full of musket balls from the enemy's guns on top. On reaching a break off in the rock about four feet high, I halted, the bullets flying around my head as thick as a swarm of bees [then]....placed my hands and gun on the rock and gave a spring, landing on top....The [ridge]...was covered with trees and bushes so that you could not see any distance ahead....When within 50 feet of the [quarry ditch]... the air was so full of lead, I dropped on my hands and knees and crawled....until I reached the ditch. I then poked my gun over the loose dirt at the edge of the ditch and fired.<sup>10</sup>

Andrews was soon joined by the rest of the First Regulars, who, during much of the next hour, engaged in a bizarre firefight with the infantrymen in the 11th Pennsylvania. The two regiments, separated only by the quarry trench, blazed away at point-blank range but were generally prevented by the excavation from making physical contact. The soldiers on both sides later claimed that their musketry forced the opposing regiment to retreat several times. W.H. Andrews, who was evidently posted at a point where the quarry narrows, wrote a vivid account of the action from the Confederate perspective:

I was near enough to the federal line to have touched bayonets with the man in front of me....[The Federals were positioned along the far] edge of the ditch in solid line of battle, while the [Georgia] regulars were every man for himself. We soon routed [the enemy]...from their position and they tumbled down their side of the mountain; but halted within 50 yards, reformed and came at us again. [They] charged up to the ditch and fired a volley with no a rebel in sight, but as soon as their guns were empty a sheet of flame burst forth from every tree, stump and rock on top of the mountain. In a short time we routed them again and as they tumbled down the side of the mountain the [Georgia] boys sprang to the ditch to give them a parting shot.

It was like fighting on top of a house, and they did not have to go but a short distance to be out of range of our guns....then the federals were seen scaling up the mountain again, and it was rats to your holes, and the regulars disappeared behind the trees and rocks.

They again charged the ditch and fired a volley and received the same warm reception they did before. It did not take long to rout them the third time, and as they retreated they begged for quarter....[During the engagement] Capt. John M. Patton, commanding company F, walked our line within ten feet of the enemy's guns, killing a captain and two privates with his pistol without receiving a scratch. I saw the three men the next morning, each one having a pistol ball hole in his breast. //

-Andrews failed to mention, however, that the 11th Pennsylvania was placed at a disadvantage by the Confederate reoccupation of Chapman's Mill and the surrounding yard. The fight for that building had intensified when the Ninth Georgia, left behind when the rest of Anderson's Brigade moved up the quarry

ridge, apparently resumed the offensive. According to a Union account, one of Colonel Stiles' orderlies was forced by the firefight to seek:

...the shelter of the old stone mill, [then] started to return, against the advice of the force there posted. He arrived back at brigade headquarters with a rifle ball in the right leg, and was personally thanked by Col. Stiles....<sup>12</sup>

The Ninth Georgia and/or a regiment from another Confederate brigade eventually recaptured the building. Gray marksmen in its windows quickly directed a withering fire against the left flank of the 11th Pennsylvania and probably prevented that regiment from again holding a fixed position along the quarry.<sup>13</sup>

The rest of General Ricketts' regiments were also in increasingly- untenable positions. Skirmishing elsewhere in the gap increased, and additional Confederate brigades began climbing the main ridge on both sides of the pass. Seeing his division threatened with envelopment, Ricketts ordered the 11th Pennsylvania and the other Union regiments to withdraw towards Manassas at dark. General Anderson's victorious Confederates camped on the Thoroughfare Gap battlefield that night.<sup>14</sup>

The engagement on August 28 was essentially a fight between two brigades for possession of Chapman's Mill and the quartzite quarry. The movements of additional Confederate units, as noted above, convinced Ricketts to retreat, but Anderson's Brigade endured the heaviest fighting during its struggle with Stiles' Unionists. Although an accurate casualty figure for each side is difficult to determine, W.H. Andrews does claim to have counted the bodies of 45 Federals left behind at the quarry. These corpses presented a macabre spectacle upon being arranged by the Confederates for burial near the Chapman Cemetery, and Andrews later wrote:

No doubt many old soldiers will recollect the [Union] captain with his whiskers as he lay at the foot of the mountain, under a large weeping willow, with nothing but his knit underwear on.<sup>15</sup>



The exact impact of the engagement upon the industrial complex at Chapman's Mill is also difficult to determine. This uncertainty is due to the fact that Thoroughfare Gap was later the scene of numerous military encampments and at least three other engagements--in October 1862 and May and June 1863--between elements of the main contending armies. Enough of the interior of Chapman's Mill had survived by August 28, 1862 to enable the Massachusetts sharpshooters to ascend to its second floor, but, by July 1863, the building was described as "windowless and floorless" and, along with the adjacent structures, "deserted."<sup>16</sup> Much of this damage, along with later depredations here; at Meadowland; and at the Upper Mill, was the work of Union cavalymen occupying the strategic pass during the advance of the Army of the Potomac south from Gettysburg that month and the retreat of the same army north towards Bristoe Station and Manassas three months later.<sup>17</sup> In November 1862, a member of a civilian funeral procession to the Chapman Cemetery found the desolation at the complex oppressive and noted the nearby "spot where many Federal soldiers lie...in their shroudless<sup>18</sup> graves."

John Chapman also became a casualty of the war. Although the main armies never returned after October 1863, he was given no peace since fighting between Colonel John S. Mosby's Confederate partisans and various Union detachments continued in the area. Mosby's men skirmished with the Federals directly at the gap on at least one occasion; reportedly derailed a train there on another; motivated Union commanders to garrison the pass with two companies of the 202d Pennsylvania Infantry; and inspired those same officers to force civilians, including perhaps Chapman, to ride military trains as 'insurance' against the ambushes and derailments occurring elsewhere along the Manassa's Gap Railroad. Chapman eventually broke under the strain of incessant combat, and he died in an insane asylum in 1866. His beloved mill, however, was repaired after the war and successfully operated for nearly a century more.<sup>19</sup>

Civil War accounts add much to the story of the industrial complex at Chapman's Mill. One of the ironies of the 1861-1865 conflict is that its participants produced the earliest detailed descriptions of many Virginia landmarks, some of which were destroyed or severely damaged soon after the accounts were written. Such is the case with the sites and structures at Thoroughfare Gap. An examination of wartime accounts adds balance, dimension, and drama to our view of these precious historic resources.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Martin, Gazetteer of Virginia and the District of Columbia... (Richmond: J.W. Randolph, 1835), p. 275, cited in Frances Lillian Jones, "Beverley (Chapman's Mill, Thoroughfare Gap, Virginia: A History and Preservation Plan" (M.A. thesis, George Washington University, 1981), p. 37. Jones' thesis is by far the best of the studies of the industrial complex at Chapman's Mill.

<sup>2</sup> Jones, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> John Hennessey, Historical Report on the Troop Movements for the Second Battle of Manassas... (National Park Service, 1985), pp. 15-19, 22-26. Despite its focus on Manassas, Hennessey's superb Report is also the best general study of the engagement at Thoroughfare Gap.

<sup>4</sup> Hennessey, pp. 16-17, 25.

<sup>5</sup> Austin C. Stearns, Three Years with Company K (Rutherford, N.J. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1976), p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> Hennessey, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> W.H. Andrews, "General 'Tige' Anderson's Brigade at Thoroughfare Gap," Atlanta Journal, May 25, 1901. This article was among a large collection of Civil War accounts recently discovered by historian Keith Bohannon.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Edward P. Tobie, History of the First Maine Cavalry... (Boston: Press of Emery & Hughes, 1887), p. 217.

<sup>13</sup> Hennessey, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Andrews; Hennessey, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Andrews,

<sup>16</sup> Milo M. Quaife (ed.), From the Cannon's Mouth: The Civil War Letters of General Alpheus S. Williams (Detroit: Wayne State University Press and the Detroit Historical Society, 1959), p. 244.

<sup>17</sup> Jones, pp. 50-52.

<sup>18</sup> John K. Gott and Emily G. Ramey (eds.), The Years of Anguish: Fauquier County, Virginia 1861-1865 (Warrenton, Va.: The Fauquier County Civil War Centennial Committee, 1965), p. 33.

<sup>19</sup> Jones, p. 53; James J. Williamson, Mosby's Rangers... (New York: Ralph B. Kenyon, 1896), pp. 250, 254-55.

Map and photographs by Noel Harrison.