

Thoroughfare Gap History

Thoroughfare Gap is a narrow gap between Bull Run and Pond Mountains, through which Broad Run flows as it descends 87 feet. The Gap was used by migrating buffalo and traveling Indians long before it became a transportation corridor for grain and goods between the Valley and the Atlantic. Mention of the Gap was first recorded in 1697, by a group of Marylanders passing through in search of a band of Piscataway Indians. Later Tidewater planters used the Gap as a route to the rich Shenandoah Valley.

During wartime its use became even more strategic: it was an escape route during the French and Indian War, during the Revolutionary War it was the route east to join the army, and during the Civil War, it was a strategic passageway for both armies. At the time of the Spanish-American War in 1898, 10,000 American troops were stationed at the Gap to avoid a typhoid epidemic in Alexandria.

For many years, the Gap has been a major east-west thoroughfare. Today, Interstate 66 takes thousands of people east and west in their travels, many commuting to the Washington, DC area to work. These travelers are able to see the charred walls of the mill. Hopefully, in the future they will be able to stop, safely explore the stabilized ruins and learn more about the mill and the surrounding area.

Beverley Mill

Repository of the history of national events and national trends.

Virginia Landmarks Register designation.

National Register of Historic Places designation.

Virginia Civil War Trails site

**Turn the Mill Around
Campaign
P.O. Box 207
Broad Run, Virginia
20137**

**Ellen Percy Miller
Executive Director
(703) 753-3273**

Preserve Beverley Mill

and

Its Place in American History



Photo Credit: PWC Fire & Rescue

*HISTORIC SITE FILE: BEVERLEY MILL
PRINCE WILLIAM PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM
RELIC/Bull Run Reg Lib Manassas, VA*

History of Beverley Mill

Beverley Mill was built in 1742 by Jonathan and Nathaniel Chapman, brothers from an enterprising, well-connected colonial family. Enlarged in 1758, the mill became a prosperous gristmill that fostered the development of the Shenandoah Valley as a wheat and corn producing region for the next one hundred years. Due to the mill's location between the Valley and the city of Alexandria, corn and wheat could be transported efficiently by wagon to the mill, ground into cornmeal and wheat, and then shipped from Alexandria to ever-expanding markets in Europe and South America.

In 1759 Fauquier County was created from old Prince William County, and the related documents noted that the boundary between the two counties passed through the mill, as it does today.

The prosperity of the mill was enhanced when, in 1852, the Manassas Gap Railroad was completed, passing beside the mill and reducing the travel time to Alexandria. In 1858 the Chapmans enlarged the mill, raising it to a total of seven stories and making it a model of agricultural technology.

Beverley Mill has ground cornmeal and flour for American troops during seven wars: The French and Indian, the Revolutionary, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and World War I and World War II.

The Civil War

By July of 1861 the Confederates had turned Beverley Mill into a meat curing warehouse and distribution center. Herds of cattle and pigs were enclosed in large pens, and more than two million pounds of Confederate meat were stored on the site. Confederates, leaving after the First Battle of Manassas, burned the meat and the mill to keep them from the advancing troops.

On August 28, 1862 Union General Ricketts was ordered to occupy Thoroughfare Gap to prevent Generals Lee and Longstreet from marching through the Gap and joining Confederate troops gathering for the Second Battle of Manassas. Historians say that if Ricketts had prevailed at the Battle of Thoroughfare Gap, which took place in and around the mill, the Second Battle of Manassas would never have taken place.

During much of the Civil War, Col. John S. Mosby and his Raiders traversed Thoroughfare Gap as they sought to disrupt the movement of Union provisions to their armies in the South.

By 1876 the Beverley family had restored the ruins to a very successful milling operation and the mill took on their name.

The Future of Beverley Mill

On October 22, 1998, Beverley Mill was tragically vandalized and gutted by fire. Soon afterwards, Turn The Mill Around Campaign, a 501(c)(3) tax exempt operating foundation, obtained ownership of the property and has begun the steps necessary to stabilize the walls of the mill. The goals of this non-profit organization are to preserve the structure of the mill, to provide public access, to develop an interpretive program of the history and significance of the mill and Thoroughfare Gap, and to raise the funds needed to carry out these goals.

Plans call for pedestrian pathways around the mill and along the head race providing views of the millpond, flume, sluice gate, forebay, 29 foot wheel and tail race. In addition, visitors will be able to enter the mill to gain a greater appreciation of the enormity of the mill and the beauty of the stone work. Interpretive signs will explain the milling process and the impact of the industrial site on the evolving economy of the area. The old stone mill store will be restored and used as a kiosk interpreting the history of Thoroughfare Gap.

HISTORY OF BEVERLEY MILL & THOROUGHFARE GAP

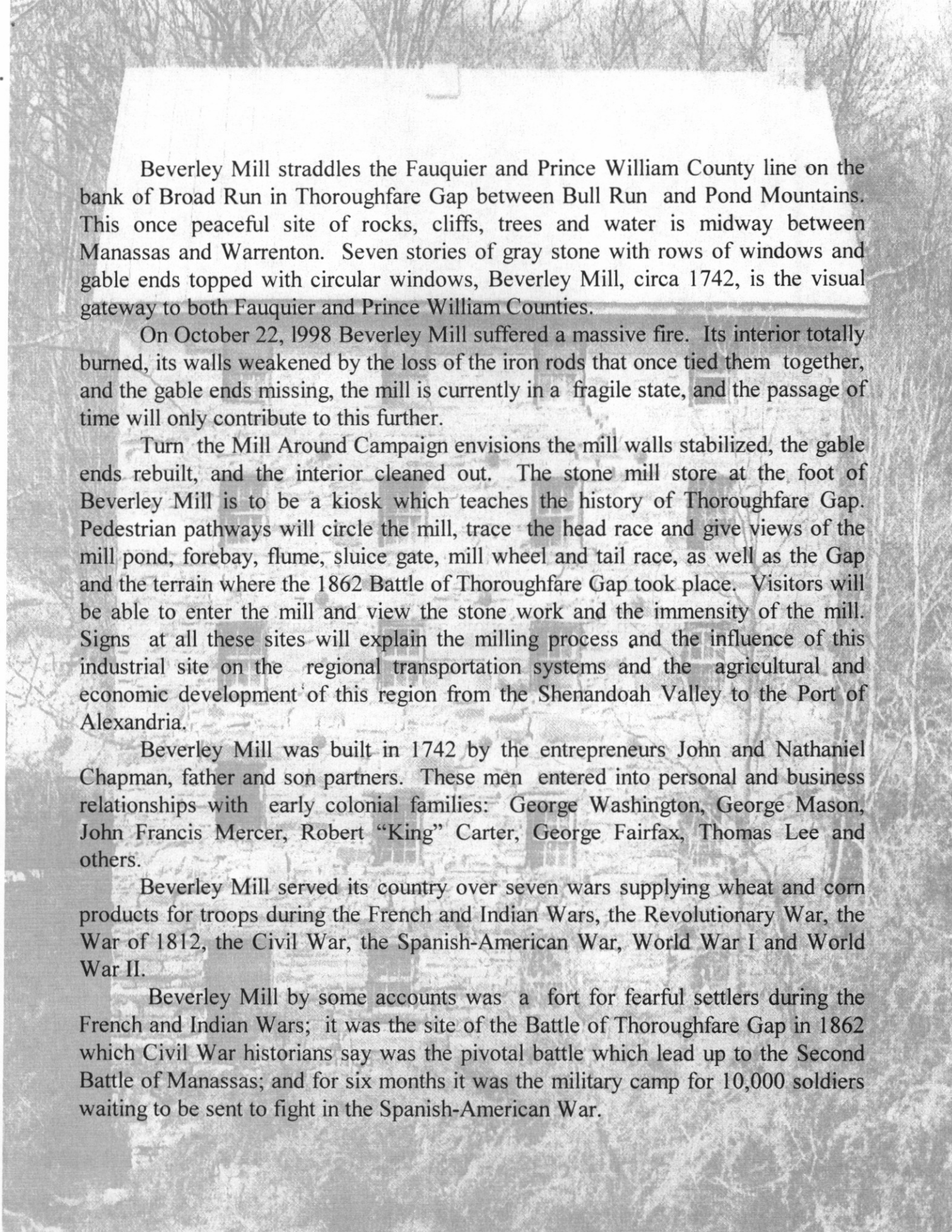
- Thoroughfare Gap was first used by buffalo that migrated through this area, then by Iroquois, Sioux and Algonquin Indians.
- First written record of Thoroughfare Gap was in 1697 when Maryland politicians went in search of a band of Piscataway Indians formerly of Maryland, thought to be in The Plains area. With relief they discovered the Gap through the Bull Run Mountains.
- George Washington surveyed the slopes and passages of the mountains and adjacent lands.
- Sons of Tidewater Plantation families settling in The Shenandoah Valley in 1722 made use of the Thoroughfare Gap pass when they fled back east after Iroquois uprisings during the French & Indian Wars.
- Men used the pass to travel east to join the army during the Revolutionary War.
- Thoroughfare Gap and its roadway was a primary tobacco and wheat route used to deliver these commodities to the port markets for shipping abroad.
- In 1852 the railroad, built by Irish immigrants, was completed.
- On August 28th 1862 The Battle of Thoroughfare Gap was fought one day before the Second Battle of Bull Run. The Confederate army's success in Manassas is attributed to the Thoroughfare Gap skirmish and military positioning. The quarry trench, across which the Battle of Thoroughfare Gap was waged, had provided the stone for Beverley Mill.
- Adjacent to Beverley Mill is the town of Thoroughfare, home to free blacks who patronized the mill. Some of these families were descendants of slaves who had built the mill.
- Spanish-American War troops numbering 10,000 men were stationed in the Gap in 1898 to escape the typhoid epidemic in Alexandria.
- From 1742 on, five generations of the Chapman family, followed by the Beverley family, and successive mill owners, milled corn and wheat from Beverley Mill, serving and spanning seven American wars. The Mill operated on a 24 hour basis to provide grain to the troops during WW I and WW II.
- In 1951, Beverley Mill went out of business on account of large national corporations centralizing flour production and, increased sanitation requirements.
- The mill at seven stories high on it's western side, is the tallest gristmill in the United States. As a result of Beverley Mill's unique architecture, age and history, it is registered as both a Virginia and National Landmark.

Turn the Mill Around Campaign

P. O. Box 207

Broad Run, Virginia 20137

703-753-3273



Beverley Mill straddles the Fauquier and Prince William County line on the bank of Broad Run in Thoroughfare Gap between Bull Run and Pond Mountains. This once peaceful site of rocks, cliffs, trees and water is midway between Manassas and Warrenton. Seven stories of gray stone with rows of windows and gable ends topped with circular windows, Beverley Mill, circa 1742, is the visual gateway to both Fauquier and Prince William Counties.

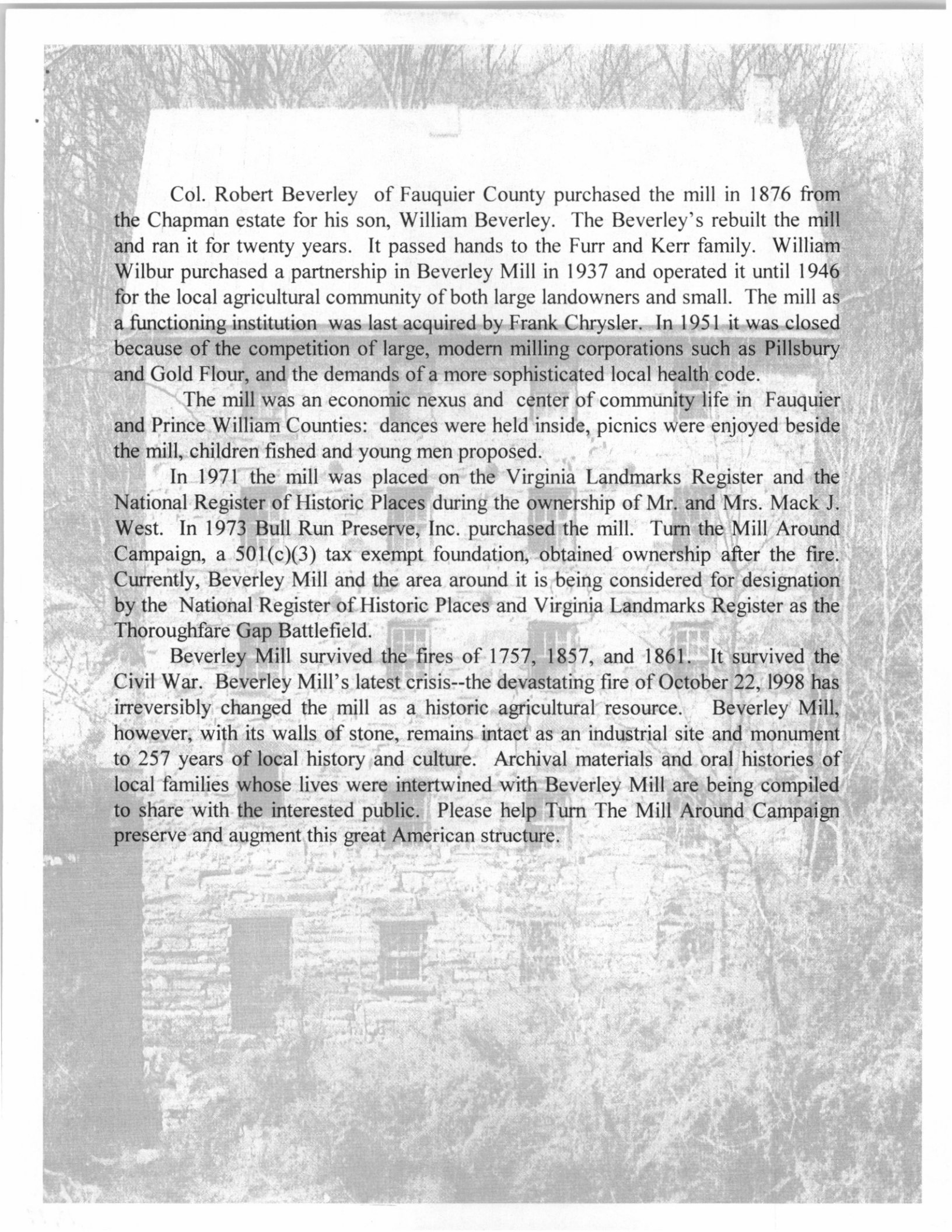
On October 22, 1998 Beverley Mill suffered a massive fire. Its interior totally burned, its walls weakened by the loss of the iron rods that once tied them together, and the gable ends missing, the mill is currently in a fragile state, and the passage of time will only contribute to this further.

Turn the Mill Around Campaign envisions the mill walls stabilized, the gable ends rebuilt, and the interior cleaned out. The stone mill store at the foot of Beverley Mill is to be a kiosk which teaches the history of Thoroughfare Gap. Pedestrian pathways will circle the mill, trace the head race and give views of the mill pond, forebay, flume, sluice gate, mill wheel and tail race, as well as the Gap and the terrain where the 1862 Battle of Thoroughfare Gap took place. Visitors will be able to enter the mill and view the stone work and the immensity of the mill. Signs at all these sites will explain the milling process and the influence of this industrial site on the regional transportation systems and the agricultural and economic development of this region from the Shenandoah Valley to the Port of Alexandria.

Beverley Mill was built in 1742 by the entrepreneurs John and Nathaniel Chapman, father and son partners. These men entered into personal and business relationships with early colonial families: George Washington, George Mason, John Francis Mercer, Robert "King" Carter, George Fairfax, Thomas Lee and others.

Beverley Mill served its country over seven wars supplying wheat and corn products for troops during the French and Indian Wars, the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I and World War II.

Beverley Mill by some accounts was a fort for fearful settlers during the French and Indian Wars; it was the site of the Battle of Thoroughfare Gap in 1862 which Civil War historians say was the pivotal battle which lead up to the Second Battle of Manassas; and for six months it was the military camp for 10,000 soldiers waiting to be sent to fight in the Spanish-American War.



Col. Robert Beverley of Fauquier County purchased the mill in 1876 from the Chapman estate for his son, William Beverley. The Beverley's rebuilt the mill and ran it for twenty years. It passed hands to the Furr and Kerr family. William Wilbur purchased a partnership in Beverley Mill in 1937 and operated it until 1946 for the local agricultural community of both large landowners and small. The mill as a functioning institution was last acquired by Frank Chrysler. In 1951 it was closed because of the competition of large, modern milling corporations such as Pillsbury and Gold Flour, and the demands of a more sophisticated local health code.

The mill was an economic nexus and center of community life in Fauquier and Prince William Counties: dances were held inside, picnics were enjoyed beside the mill, children fished and young men proposed.

In 1971 the mill was placed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places during the ownership of Mr. and Mrs. Mack J. West. In 1973 Bull Run Preserve, Inc. purchased the mill. Turn the Mill Around Campaign, a 501(c)(3) tax exempt foundation, obtained ownership after the fire. Currently, Beverley Mill and the area around it is being considered for designation by the National Register of Historic Places and Virginia Landmarks Register as the Thoroughfare Gap Battlefield.

Beverley Mill survived the fires of 1757, 1857, and 1861. It survived the Civil War. Beverley Mill's latest crisis--the devastating fire of October 22, 1998 has irreversibly changed the mill as a historic agricultural resource. Beverley Mill, however, with its walls of stone, remains intact as an industrial site and monument to 257 years of local history and culture. Archival materials and oral histories of local families whose lives were intertwined with Beverley Mill are being compiled to share with the interested public. Please help Turn The Mill Around Campaign preserve and augment this great American structure.