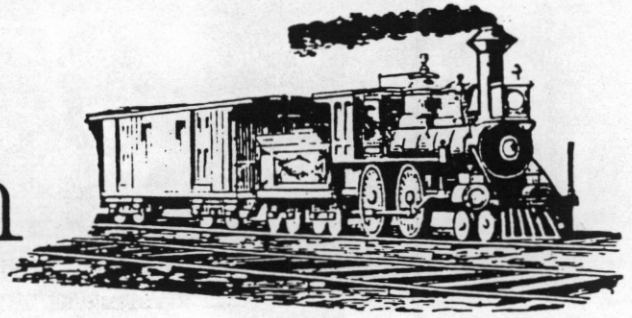


Word From The Junction



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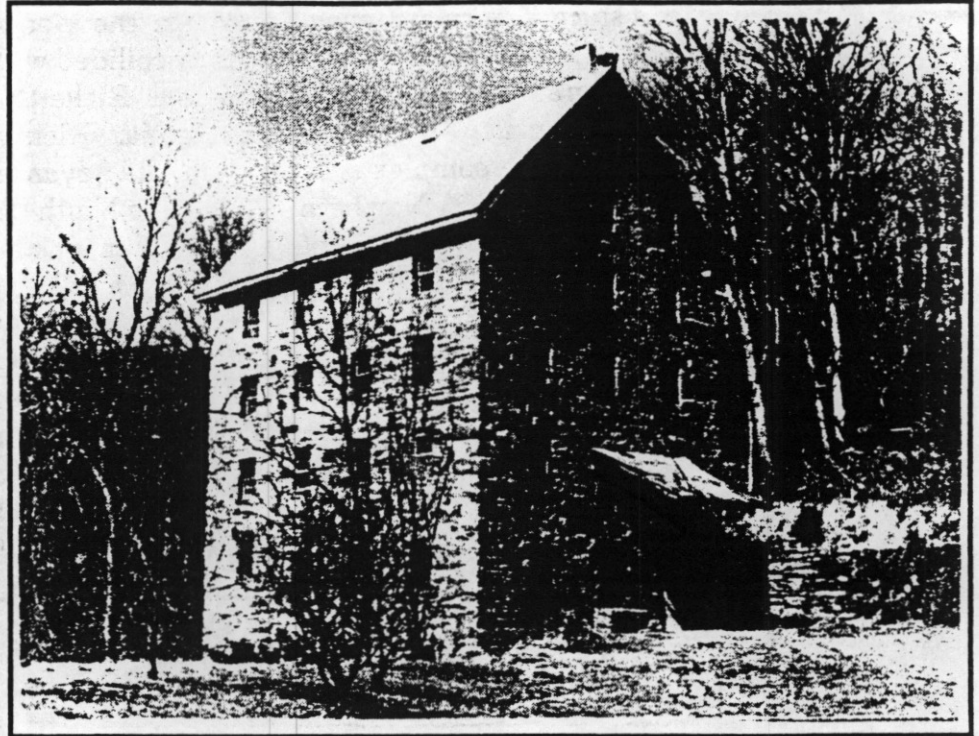
"Where Ideas Meet"

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Action at Chapman's (Beverley's) Mill August, 1862

by
Noel G. Harrison

[This new look at the battle at Chapman's (later Beverly's) Mill was written by Noel G. Harrison, Curator of History at the Fredericksburg Area Museum and Cultural Center. This is Noel's second article for *Word From The Junction*, his first being on Fairfax County's first "commuter rail" in the early 20th Century (July/August, 1989). ED.]



Chapman's (Beverley's) Mill at Thoroughfare Gap
(photographed by the author)

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. Travelers often commented upon the scenic "wild confusion of nature" encountered in the gap.¹ 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 (I-66).

By 1759 the Chapman family had erected a two and one-half-story stone mill on the north side of

Thoroughfare Gap, near the entrance to the pass and strategically on a wagon road connecting the farms of Fauquier County with other road systems leading to markets in Alexandria. In 1852, the Manassas 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 his masons to set an inscribed stone with his name and the names of his miller forebears into the enlarged north wall, still visible today.

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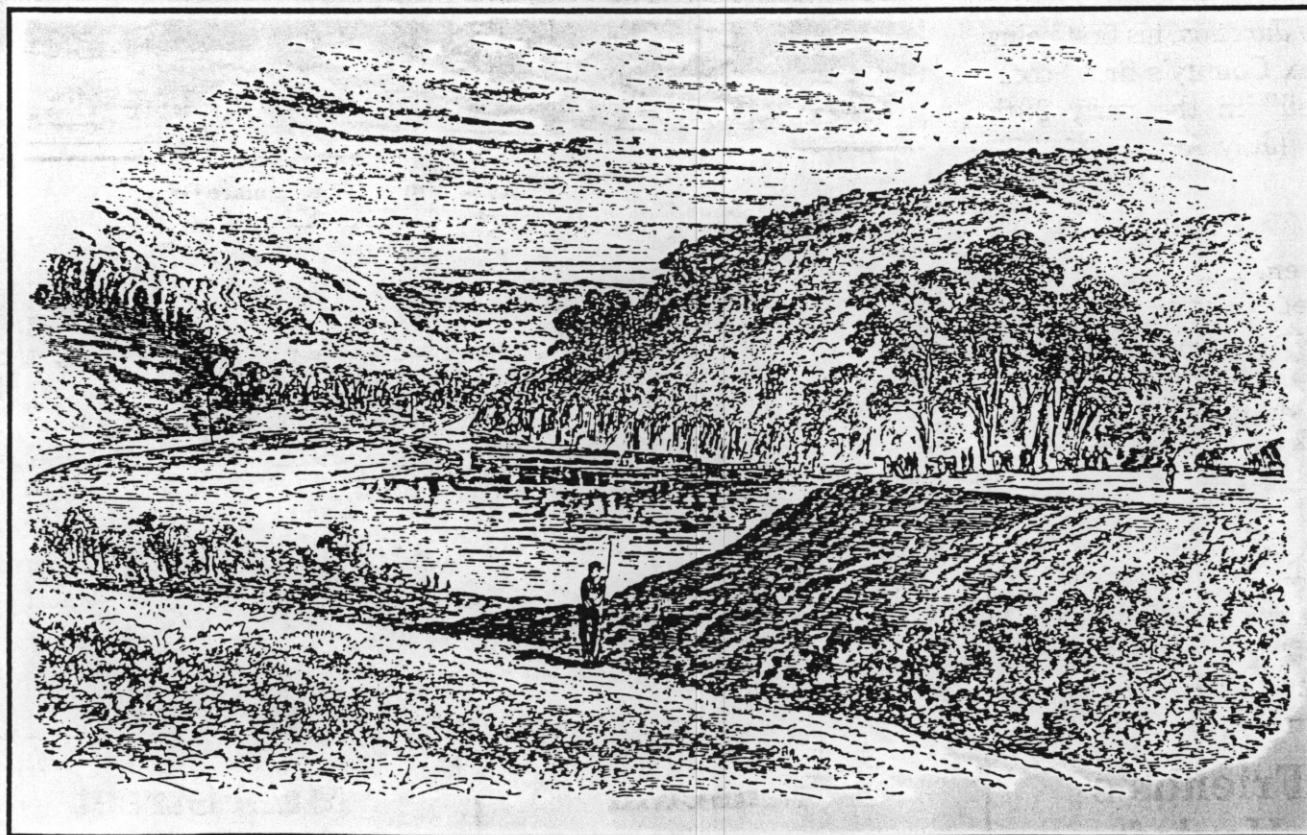
Other buildings in the complex include the ruins of two buildings also constructed by the Chapmans: a stone dwelling known as "Meadowland" and a half stone/half wood structure known as "Upper Mill." An overgrown yard west of the Upper Mill marks the site of the Broad Run Station on the Manassas Gap Railroad. The Chapman family cemetery, an enormous stone-lined icehouse or well, and the waters of a spring—formerly channeled 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 is as important to the industrial history of Northern Virginia as Chapman's Mill itself. This is the site of a quarry from which masons extracted most or all of the quartzite used to build the mill and other stone structures in the complex. These grounds were to become the scene of a strange and bloody confrontation between Union and Confederate forces as part of the Second Manassas Campaign.

On the afternoon of August 28, 1862, Gen. James Longstreet's First Corps of the Army of

Northern Virginia approached the west entrance to Thoroughfare Gap, en route to reinforce Gen. T.J. "Stonewall" Jackson's Second Corps positioned near Bull Run. The Ninth Georgia Infantry, one of the five regiments in Gen. 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 Gen. James Ricketts' Division of the Union Army of Virginia. Ricketts had orders to block any Confederate advance.²

The Ninth Georgia opened fire from behind an embankment on the curving railroad and then retreated into the gap. Col. J.W. Stiles' Brigade of Ricketts' Division pursued.³ A company of 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 . . ."⁴ Meanwhile, another regiment in



Union artillery positioned near Thoroughfare Gap.
(From *Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War.*)

the brigade, the 11th Pennsylvania Infantry, pushed past "Meadowland," ascended the ridge extending north from the mill, and formed a line along the east edge of the quarry.⁵

The soldiers in Gen. Anderson's four remaining regiments—the 1st Georgia Regulars and the 7th, 8th, and 11th Georgia Infantries—were waiting in reserve positions extending northwest 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 was opening the Second Battle of 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."⁶ 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.⁷ In an effort to outflank Chapman's Mill, Gen. Anderson directed the four arriving regiments to shift to the left and climb up to the quarry.

During much of the next hour, the First Regulars engaged in a bizarre firefight with 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.

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, appar-

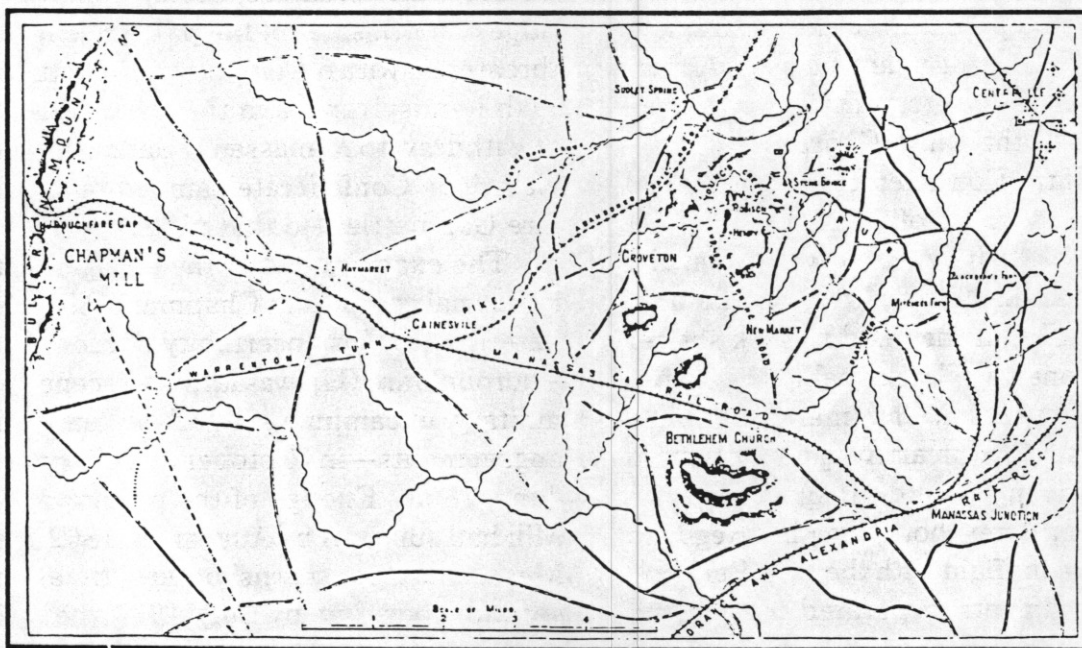
ently resumed the offensive. According to a Union account, one of Col. Stiles' orderlies was forced by the firefight to seek "the shelter of the old stone mill, [then] started to return, against the advice of the force there posted. He arrived back at the brigade headquarters with a rifle ball in the right leg, and was personally thanked by Col. Stiles . . ."⁸ The Ninth Georgia and/or another Confederate regiment 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.⁹

The rest of Gen. 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 to Manassas at dark. Gen. Anderson's victorious Confederate camped on the Thoroughfare Gap battlefield that night.¹⁰

The exact impact of the engagement upon the industrial complex at Chapman's Mill is 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. 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."¹¹ Although the main armies never returned after October, 1863, John Chapman was given no peace since fighting between Col. John S. Mosby's Confederate partisans and various Union detachments continued in the area. Chapman evidently 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 operated successfully for nearly a century more.¹²

NOTES

- ¹ Joseph Martin, *A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of Virginia and the District of Columbia* . . . Richmond: J.W. Randolph, (1835), p. 275, cited in Frances Williams Jones, "Beverley (Chapman's) Mill, Thoroughfare Gap, Virginia: A History and Preservation Plan." MA thesis, George Washington University, 1981, p. 37.
- ² John Hennessey, *Historical Report on the Troop Movements for the Second Battle of Manassas* . . . (National Park Service, 1985), pp. 15-19, 22-26.
- ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17, 25.
- ⁴ Austin C. Stearns, *Three Years with Company K*. (Rutherford, N.J: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1976), p. 101.
- ⁵ Hennessey, p. 17.
- ⁶ W.H. Andrews, "General Tige Anderson's Brigade at Thoroughfare Gap," *Atlanta Journal*, May 25, 1901.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ Edward P. Tobie, *History of the First Main Cavalry* . . . (Boston: Press of Emery & Hughes, 1887), p. 237.
- ⁹ Hennessey, p. 17.
- ¹⁰ Andrews; Hennessey, p. 15.
- ¹¹ 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.
- ¹² Jones, p. 53; James J. Williamson, *Mosby's Rangers* . . . (New York: Ralph B. Kenyon, 1896), pp. 250, 254-255.



Map showing Thoroughfare Gap and vicinity, c. 1862.
(From *Harpers Pictorial History of the Civil War.*)

"Damn Yankees" At The Hayloft Dinner Theatre

The Friends of the Manassas Museum are sponsoring a performance of "Damn Yankees" at the Hayloft Dinner Theater on Friday, April 27, at 7:00 p.m. A silent auction of interesting and unusual items will also be held. Tickets are available

from Friends members or at the Museum. Price is \$35.00 per ticket. Groups of 2 to 8 may be seated together. Call 330-6439 or 368-1873 for more details. Proceeds will benefit The Manassas Museum.