

Turn the Mill Around Campaign – Working to Save Beverley Mill



When Beverley Mill was destroyed by arson in October 1998, the community rallied together to save this local landmark by forming Turn the Mill Around Campaign.

Thoroughfare Gap has long been a major east-west thoroughfare, with Broad Run flowing through it. Today, Route 66 takes thousands of people through the Gap and past the charred walls of Beverley Mill, which was destroyed in 1998 by arson. Thanks to the work of *Turn the Mill Around Campaign*, these travelers will someday be able to stop, safely explore the stabilized ruins and learn more about the mill and the surrounding area. *Turn the Mill Around Campaign* plans to develop a public park that will interpret the Mill's significance as an early agricultural industrial site.

This is the second time local citizens have joined together to save Beverley Mill. In the early 1970s, the mill was slated to be demolished to make way for the building of Interstate 66. A citizens group formed and was successful in getting I-66 rerouted around the mill. This helped heighten awareness of the mill building and its historical importance.

Turn the Mill Around Campaign

In October 1998, Beverley Mill was tragically vandalized and gutted by fire. After the fire, all that was left was a shell, with the entire inside workings of the building destroyed. Fortunately, the mill was built exceptionally well back in the 19th century, so the walls that remain are strong. "Builders during that time period apparently overbuilt, so the mill was built almost to be a fortress," Eileen Vroom, executive director of *Turn the Mill Around Campaign*, commented, "which is why it's still standing after almost 150 years." The mill is a massive seven stories constructed of locally quarried stone.

Soon after the fire, *Turn the Mill Around Campaign* obtained ownership of the property and work is underway to stabilize the mill walls. The goals of this nonprofit organization are to preserve the structure of the mill, provide public access, develop an interpretive program

of the history and significance of the mill and Thoroughfare Gap, and raise the funds needed to carry out these goals.

Plans call for walkways around the mill and interpretive signs explaining the milling process and the impact of the industrial site on the evolving economy of the area. A small stone house in front of the mill that served as the mill store will be restored and used as a visitors' center.

Restoration Work

The Mill Campaign received \$300,000 in TEA-21 Transportation Enhancement funds from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), which was used to complete phase 1 of the stabilization project in May 2004. The project encompassed the structural stabilization of the south wall and corners, using the cutting-edge technology of an internal anchoring system. The 68 window and door openings were also reinforced with steel bars. "We did an emergency shoring of all the openings, to make the building more stable over a period of time," explained Vroom.

"One of the most difficult parts of the restoration effort was finding contractors to do the work and take on the challenge of figuring out how to keep the building standing," Vroom commented. "We finally found Cintec America, an England-based company that specializes in historic masonry building stabilization." Cintec also worked with other historic preservation experts from Conservation Solutions, Standard Restoration and Waterproofing, and Scaffold Resource.

Project Funding

With phase 1 of the stabilization complete, the Campaign must secure additional funding before proceeding with more work. "Due to our funding situation, we can't stabilize the building all at once, we have to work in stages," Vroom commented. "Once we secure more funding, then we can continue with our work to restore the mill.

"We have received money from individuals and corporate donors like NOVEC, and we are continuing to pursue private foundations," Vroom said. "We need \$500,000 more just to finish stabilizing the building to make it safe." Many other facets of the site development can't proceed until the building is stabilized. "It's a Catch-22. We must be sure that this enormous 40-x-50-foot building is secure before continuing with other plans."

Mill History

Originally constructed in 1742 as a gristmill by Jonathan and Nathaniel Chapman, a father/son partnership from a well-connected colonial family, Beverley Mill is one of the most important historic properties in Prince William County. It is on the National



The old mill store, which sits in front of the mill, will eventually be used as a visitors' center. In the 1930s, the store sold products from the mill as well as gasoline and other convenience items.

Register of Historic Places and is classified by the Comprehensive Plan as a Designated Cultural Resource. Believed to be the tallest gristmill in the United States, the mill is located on the Fauquier-Prince William border along Broad Run, which provided the water power to operate the grinding machinery of the millstones, up until the 1930s when a diesel engine was added for back-up power when the creek was running low.

The mill became a successful business that fostered the development of the Shenandoah Valley as a wheat and corn-producing region for the next 100 years. Built on an early colonial road, the mill had quick access to the Port of Alexandria where the flour was shipped abroad. The prosperity of the mill was enhanced in 1852 when 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.

After the Civil War, the Beverley family acquired the mill, which had been badly damaged, and by 1876 had restored it to once again be a successful milling operation. Originally known as Chapman's Mill, it then changed to Beverley Mill, the name that has carried through and remains today. The Beverley family owned the mill until it was sold to the Furr family who operated the mill until it closed in 1951.

As late as the 1940s, it was still grinding approximately 100,000 bushels of grain annually and had six employees. "People have commented to me that they were young and living in D.C. in the 1940s and they remember seeing Beverley Mill Flour at the Safeway on Capitol Hill," said Vroom.

The mill ceased operations in 1951, by which time large corporations had taken over most of the flour processing and small mills couldn't compete. At one time in history, mills existed in every community to provide local residents with flour and other products. For instance, in our area there was Aldie Mill and Buckland Mill, both of which are still standing today.

Civil War Activity

During the Civil War, the Confederates used the mill as a meat-curing center and distribution warehouse. Sometime after the First Battle of Manassas the Confederates burned the mill to keep it from falling into the hands of Union forces. In August 1862 in the woods surrounding Beverley Mill, Union General Ricketts attempted to delay Generals Lee and Longstreet as they passed through Thoroughfare Gap to prevent them from

meeting up with Stonewall Jackson's troops near Manassas. Although the fighting slowed the Confederates, they routed the Union troops and moved to join Jackson as they prepared for the Second Battle of Manassas. Historians say that if Ricketts had prevailed at the Battle of Thoroughfare Gap, the Second Battle of Manassas would never have taken place.

Chapman and Beverley Information Wanted

Turn the Mill Around Campaign is searching for information about the Chapman and Beverley families associated with the mill. Documents such as letters, diaries, invoices, bills of sale, etc., would help with the ongoing research of the mill's history. They're also looking for any paintings, portraits, drawings and photographs of the Chapman and Beverley families.

And, they are interested in speaking to anyone who has had an association with the mill, from childhood memories to those who may have worked there until its closing in 1951. Please contact Eileen Vroom, executive director, with any information you would like to share at *Turn the Mill Around Campaign*, P.O. Box 207, Broad Run, VA 20137, (703) 753-3273, mill@highstream.net.

Important Reminder!

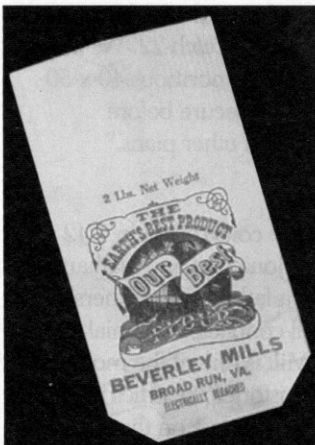
In its present condition, the Beverley Mill is a hazardous place. *Turn the Mill Around Campaign* and Prince William County remind you to stay off the property unless accompanied by a *Turn the Mill Around Campaign* staff member. This is for your protection as well as for the protection of this historic site. For a birds-eye view of the mill, hike the trails of the Bull Run Mountain Conservancy (BRMC) located next to the mill.

Help Keep The Walls Standing! Support The Beverley Mill Stabilization Project

Turn the Mill Around Campaign needs to raise funds to complete the stabilization project. Only one wall has been stabilized at this point and work must continue in order to prevent the other walls from collapsing.

**Please send your tax-deductible donation to:
Turn The Mill Around Campaign
P.O. Box 207
Broad Run, VA 20137**

Checks can be made out to TTMAC. For more information, visit their Web site at www.chapmansmill.org or call (703) 753-3273.



Mill Bags For Sale

Some of the original Beverley Mill cornmeal, flour and chicken mash bags (paper) dating from the 1940s are available for sale. Prices range from \$8-\$14. These are the real thing, removed from the mill when it closed. The bags are in mint condition and many people have purchased them to frame for decor. It's remarkable to note that these bags are so similar to the bags that flour is currently packaged in. Visit www.chapmansmill.org/bags.htm for details or call (703) 753-3273.