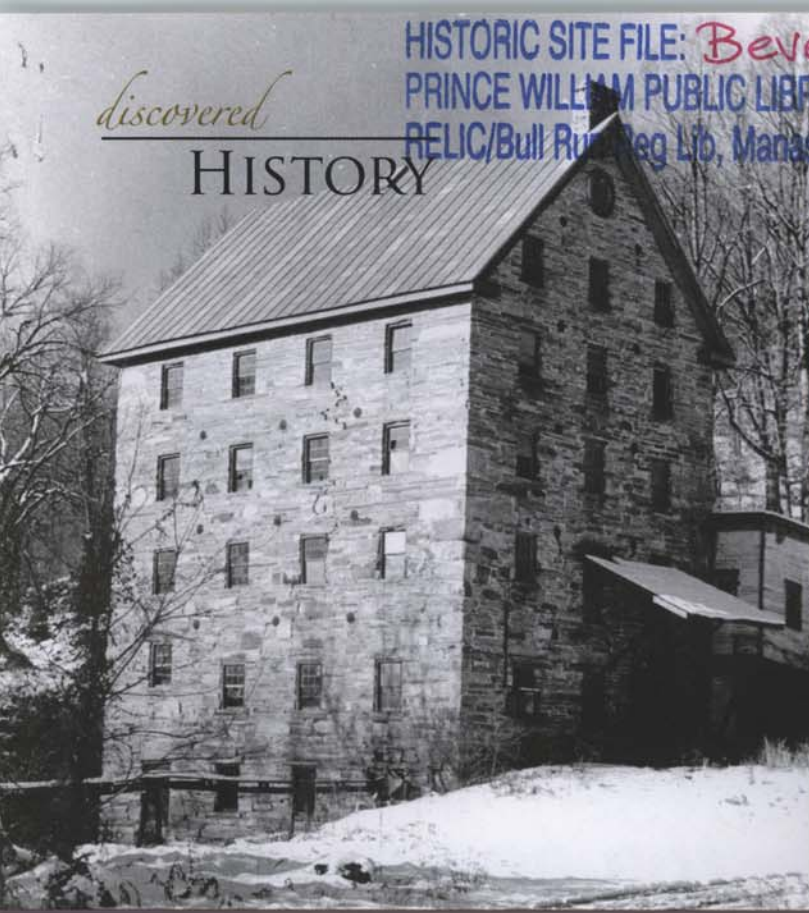


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HISTORY

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Chapman/Beverley Mill Rises from the Ashes

dedicated preservationists save historic mill after devastating fire

by: John Toler

Had vandals not torched it on Oct. 22, 1998, the Chapman/Beverley Mill on the old Gap Road (Route 55) at the western gateway to Prince William would probably have become a comprehensive interpretive museum focused on local industry in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

However this was not to be, but due to the efforts of those involved in the Turn the Mill Around Campaign, the burned walls were not allowed to be demolished or collapse into a pile of rubble, and what remains of the mill structure has been stabilized.

Completed in 2008 at a cost of \$1.5 million, the stabilization involved an internal anchor system reinforcing the mill's four walls, 65 windows and four doorways, as well as reinforcing the inside of the open, seven-story structure with steel beams.

Future restoration work on the mill is planned, including replacement of the gable ends and their unique faux chimneys.

Just as important, plans are in the works to develop the grounds around the mill as an historical industrial park, highlighting the unique archaeological and historic features found there, in the heart of Thoroughfare Gap.

In addition to stabilizing the beautiful stone walls, the massive, 29-foot steel water wheel will be replaced, and pathways and an observation deck will be built so that visitors can walk along the headrace and see the millpond, flume, sluice gateway and forebay. Also planned is an amphitheater with quarry stone seating

Interpretive signs will be installed explaining the milling process, the impact on

the local economy for over nearly 200 years, and the role the mill played during the Civil War. Archaeological work on the property will continue. The c. 1930 stone mill store – currently closed due to a deteriorated floor – will be rebuilt as an interpretive center, and a parking area for cars and buses will be built near the secured entrance on the east end of the property.

The Turn the Mill Around Campaign must rely on donations and grants to complete the improvements, which are currently going through the county approval process.

Early History

The story of the Chapman/Beverley Mill is inseparable from the history of Thoroughfare Gap, which by the early

Above Left: The mill had been closed for more than ten years when this photograph was taken in 1965, during the time it was owned by Cdr. and Mrs. Mack West. The Wests had an antique store in the old Furr house and used the mill for storage. Above Right: Those responsible for starting the disastrous fire that gutted the mill on the afternoon of Oct. 22, 1998, have not yet been apprehended. The loss of the mill and its contents were keenly felt by the community.

18th century was used by farmers from the Shenandoah Valley to pass through the Bull Run Mountains on their way to eastern markets. Another significant influence was the presence of Broad Run.

Englishman Jonathan Chapman acquired the land in Thoroughfare Gap in 1742, and he and his son Nathaniel built the first mill there sometime before Jonathan's death in 1749. Bertram Ewell lists the mill prominently in the survey relative to the creation of Fauquier County from Prince William in 1759.

Nathaniel's son, Pearson Chapman (b. 1745) inherited the property when his father died in 1760. He later married to Susannah Pearson Alexander, and the couple had five children, including twin sons John and George, born in 1769. The following year, Pearson Chapman petitioned the court in Fauquier County to build a water mill on Broad Run.

The mill was two-and-a-half stories high, and in the early 1800s enlarged to four-and-a-half stories. It was mainly used to grind "plaster," or limestone, into fertilizer. By changing the millstones, corn and grain could be ground as well.

Following Pearson Chapman's death in the early 1800s, the mill passed first to John, and upon John's death in 1812, to George, believed to be the first Chapman to live in Prince William County. George married his first cousin, Susanna Pearson Alexander, in 1799. They built Meadowland, the old home place near the mill and had 12 children.

Both George and Susanna (died 1856), and perhaps two of their sons, Nathaniel and Alexander, are buried in the small graveyard behind the ruins of Meadowland.

After George's death in 1829, the mill passed to their sons George Chapman Jr. (1820-1854), and John Chapman (1819-1866). John became the sole owner after his George's death in 1854, and was the last member of the Chapman family to own the mill.

"For 100 years, Chapman's Mill fostered the development of small family farms in the Shenandoah Valley, rather than tobacco plantations dependent on slave labor," according to Chapman/Beverley Mill: 300 Years in American History, published by the Turn the Mill Around Campaign. The mill's central location played a critical role in the processing and distribution process; corn and wheat was moved by wagon, and after 1852, by the Manassas Gap Railroad."

From there, agricultural products were shipped to Europe and South America. The Manassas Gap Railroad was built through

the Gap in the early 1850s, passing close to the mill, where a siding built. This was no accident, as the Chapman family had so much influence in the area at the time, according to Dr. Kay McCarron, executive director of the Turn the Mill Around Campaign. "Even so, it is remarkable that the family wanted the railroad separating the mill from their home," she added.

Twice previously damaged by fire, in 1858 John Chapman added two stories to the mill and installed the latest milling equipment. Burr Powell was the master stonemason responsible for the work. The business prospered, but as the Civil War approached, the future of Chapman's Mill in the strategic location was anything but certain.

Conflict Comes to Thoroughfare Gap

At the beginning of the war, the Confederate Army took over the mill. They built a slaughterhouse below the mill, and used the mill to store meat, according to Nettie Lee Moffett in Water-powered Mills of Fauquier County. In July 1861 – just before the First Battle of Manassas – Confederate Gen. J. E. Johnston reported that over two million pounds of processed meat, as well as herds of cattle and hogs in pens, were stored at the mill.

The use of the property as a meat processing plant ended on March 9, 1862, when Manassas was evacuated and the Confederates prepared to leave the gap. They took most of the beef, but left the pork. "When word came that the Yankees were coming, the meat that couldn't be moved away was taken out and burned," wrote Mrs. Moffett. "It was said that grease ran down Broad Run like water. The inside of the mill was also destroyed, so that the Yankees couldn't use it."

After Gen. Johnston, other commanders led their troops through the strategic gap, either on foot and horseback or by rail. In June 1862, Union Gen. James Shields and his troops marched past the mill on their way to fight Gen. T. J. "Stonewall" Jackson at Port Republic. The following August, Gen. Jackson's army passed through the "gloomy cleft" on a forced march from Culpeper to Manassas.

On Aug. 28, 1862, Gen. John Pope ordered Gen. James B. Ricketts to occupy the Gap in an effort to keep the regiments under Gen. Robert E. Lee and Gen. James Longstreet from passing through on their way to the Second Manassas would soon take place.

Local citizens who knew the lay of the land, notably Robert Beverley and a "Mr. Hurst" helped guide the Confederate forces

over the Biscake and Mother Leathercoat mountains that formed the gap. As the two armies fought in the woods and rocks around of the mill and in the mill itself, the "Battle of Thoroughfare Gap" was on.

After a fierce fight Gen. Ricketts was forced to retire, but not before Chapman's Mill was raked by rifle fire and other damage. Generals Lee and Longstreet pushed through to Manassas to join the Confederate forces there. "Historians say that if Ricketts had prevailed at the Battle of Thoroughfare Gap, which took place around the mill, the Second Battle of Manassas would never have taken place, and the war would have ended in weeks," according to Chapman/Beverley Mill: 300 Years in American History. Instead, the Battle of Second Manassas ended as a Confederate victory on Sept. 1, 1862.

Distressed by the damage and devastation at his mill, John Chapman is said to have gone mad, and died in Staunton in 1866 – in many ways, another casualty of the war.

Recovery, Economic Problems

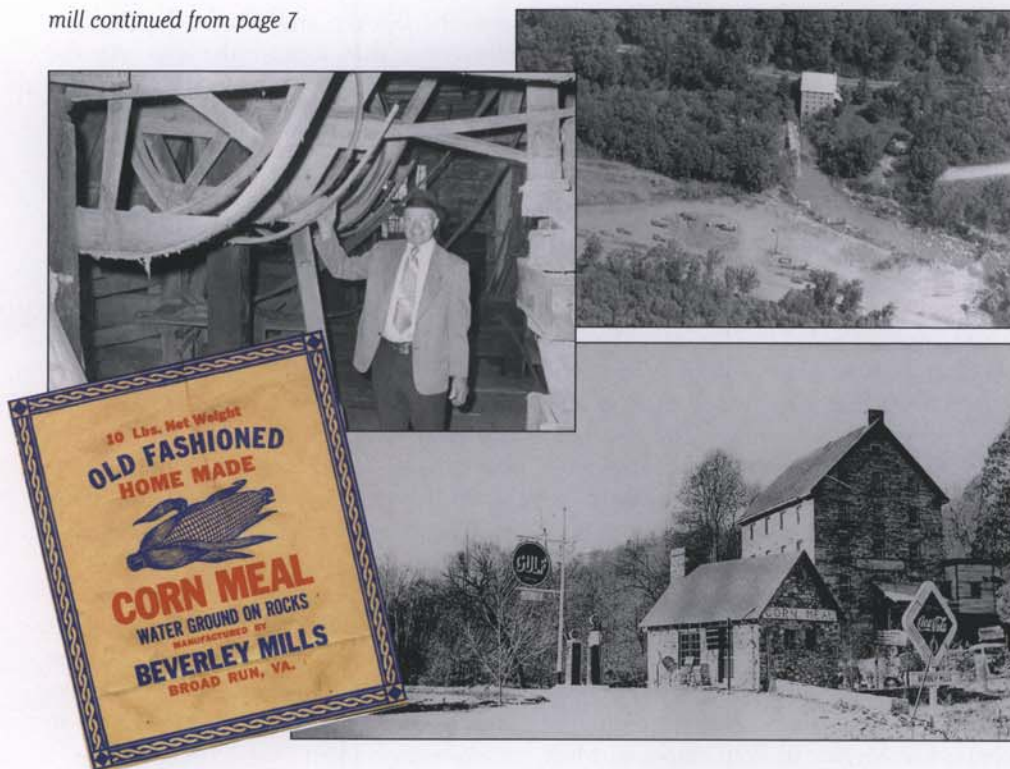
Like most of the surrounding countryside, the ruined mill stood empty until the end of the 1860s. With the railroad rebuilt and agriculture recovering, Col. Robert Beverley (1822-1901) of nearby Avenel saw an opportunity, and purchased the mill and 512 acres from the Chapman estate.

Col. Beverley turned the property over to his son William Beverley (1852-1937), who had the building repaired and resumed milling operations in the early 1870s. Again, both limestone and grain were ground at the mill, and by 1877, as many as seven boxcars were lined up on the siding to be filled with "plaster," which was delivered as far away as Baltimore and Georgia. At that, time the name "Beverley Mill" was adopted.

Business was good until the 1880s, when demand for lime dropped off, and by 1893, the mill was out-of-business, due to the economic crisis of 1892-93. William Beverley's widow sold the mill in 1896 to partners Hornbaker and Wolverton, who resumed grain milling.

The mill changed hands once more in 1901, when it was bought by William Jordan, and again in 1903, when it was acquired by Charles Craig Furr Jr. (1869-1962). Sadly, Meadowland, the former Chapman home above the mill, was destroyed by fire about this time.

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The Furr family lived in a frame house near the mill, and about 1920 Charles Furr's son-in-law, James Newton Kerr (d. 1939) became a partner in the business. In the 1920s, a Fairbanks-Morse diesel engine was installed to provide auxiliary power during dry spells on Broad Run, and the mill itself electrified for the first time.

Mr. Kerr's wife Audrey served as the mill's bookkeeper, and had many connections with the Haymarket community, including serving as a charter member and the first president of the Haymarket Woman's Club. Meetings were often held at her home.

About 1930, W.E. Herrill built the stone mill store – the brainchild of Mrs. Kerr – on the Gap Road (Rt. 55) in front of the mill. In addition to flour, cornmeal, and wheat germ, the Kerr's sold Gulf-brand gasoline and oil products. The quaint building was later used as the Broad Run Post Office.

Between the World Wars, demand for wheat increased, and Mr. Furr installed new milling equipment to increase production capacity. For brief period, Beverley Mill was in operation 24-hours a day. But the Great Depression took its toll. By 1937, Mr. Furr had fallen behind on his loan payments, and William Wilbur, of Warrenton, joined the business as a full partner and business agent.

Business improved during the 1940s, but

Far Left: During the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976, tours of the mill were offered by the Bull Run Preserve, Inc. R. J. Jacobs, of Rapidan, who worked in the mill in the 1940s, returned to explain the inner workings of the mill. Bottom Right: In the 1930s, flour and cornmeal were sold at the Beverley Mill store on the Gap Road, along with Gulf gasoline and oil. It was later used as the Broad Run Post Office. Upper Right: As work on I-66 continued in the late 1970s, adding a major highway through already crowded Thoroughfare Gap required the re-channeling of Broad Run, re-routing of Route 55, and building new bridges.

with the war over, demand decreased and it became increasingly clear that the days of small mills grinding grain with obsolete equipment were over.

Final Days in Business

In 1944, Mr. Furr and Mr. Wilbur sold the mill to Walter P. Chrysler, a wealthy Warrenton landowner and scion of the Chrysler Corporation. Mrs. Kerr moved from the Furr house to a new stone house about a quarter-mile east of the mill, which today is used by the Bull Run Conservancy.

Chrysler removed the old diesel engine, replacing it with a large electric motor, and made other improvements to the mill. Bud Cornwell, who lived at North Wales, Chrysler's estate near Warrenton, operated the mill for his boss.

Mr. Cornwell and millwright James Wines kept the mill going, supplying stores with stone-ground flour, cornmeal and other special products. Among the regular customers were the Warrenton Safeway store, the Herbert Bryant Inc. feed store, and the Mid-County Feed Store. The mill also provided a large amount of chicken feed for Chrysler's large poultry operation at North Wales known locally as "Chicken City."

At some point, representatives of the Food and Drug Administration inspected the mill,

which was cited for unsanitary conditions, the most serious being an unacceptable amount of rodent hair in the flour meant for human consumption. Mr. Chrysler was unwilling to make the required changes, and after fighting with the agency for several months, he shut down the operation for good on Jan. 15, 1951.

Later that year, Chrysler sold the mill, Furr house, and some of the surrounding property to Cdr. and Mrs. Mack West, of McLean, who operated an antique store in the Furr House for many years. The Wests used the mill to store antiques, but correctly considered it an attractive nuisance. For many years, it was boarded-up and marked with "No Trespassing" signs to keep out the curious.

With the impending construction of Interstate 66 through the Gap - which would have taken much of the traffic off of Route 55 - the Wests decided to sell the property and move on. It was purchased in 1973 by Mrs. Morton Smith (nee' Joan Irvine) of Middleburg, who initially planned to restore the mill as an operating showpiece.

Chapman/Beverley Mill Burns

By 1981, Mrs. Smith had divorced and moved back to the Irvine Ranch in Irvine, California, which she had inherited from her

grandfather. A caretaker was left in charge of the property, but for all intents and purposes, it was left abandoned and unprotected.

For the next 17 years, various entrepreneurs tried to buy the mill, offering such options as a restaurant, bed and breakfast, or even converting it to what would have been a spectacular private home. Preservation groups also tried to acquire the mill because of its great historic value. But to no avail.


After two small fires were discovered and extinguished in the mill in late in 1998, a group of local preservationists concerned about the future of the mill managed to get Mrs. Smith's attention by pointing out her liability, should anyone be hurt on the property. This finally convinced her to sell the mill to the group.

"The transaction would have been soon completed and the building once again securely boarded up," wrote former Turn the Mill Around Campaign executive director Ellen Percy Miller, in an addendum to Beverley (Chapman) Mill, A History and Preservation Plan written by Frances Lillian Jones in 1981. "However, on the afternoon of Oct. 22, 1998, just a few days before the final sale papers were to be signed, arsonists

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Left: Dr. Kay McCarron, of Warrenton, became the executive director of the Turn the Mill Around Campaign in 2011. Among her primary duties are outreach and raising funds for the completion of the interpretive park at the Chapman/Beverley Mill. Right: With the mill's walls stabilized, the Turn the Mill Around Campaign in the process of raising money and seeking grants to develop the property as a park.

entered a open window. The fire totally destroyed the interior of the mill."

The call came in at 4:02 p.m., and 35 fire and rescue units from three counties responded. Eventually over 100 firemen and 45 pieces of equipment were on the scene, fighting the fire for over nine hours. The wooden floors, beams, chutes and equipment fed the fire, which reached 1,200-1,500 degrees. Flames shot up over 75 feet as the roof caved in.

"For weeks afterward, the mill smoldered and people, numb with disbelief, came by to say goodbye, to cry, and share their anger that their building, the place that gave them a sense of time and place and beauty, had been so violated," wrote Ms. Percy Miller.

The Prince William County Department of Public Works inspected the ruins and condemned the site, declaring it dangerous and requiring the owner either repair or demolish it.

At this point, Mrs. Smith decided to donate the mill and surrounding property to the group that became the Turn the Mill Around Campaign. With the transfer of the property came the Bull Run Preserve, Inc., the 501-9 (C)(3) organization that Mrs. Smith had started.

'Turning the Mill Around'

The Turn the Mill Around Campaign had its work cut out for it. Charles H. Seilheimer, formerly of Warrenton and now living in Orange County, serves as chairman.

Initial funding consisted of a TEA-21 (Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century) grant of \$500,000 to be used to

stabilize the walls. This difficult restoration work was done by Cintec America, Inc., a subsidiary of the Cintec Co. that restored the Queen's Wing of Windsor Castle after a fire in 1992.

The work cost double the original \$500,000 estimate. The additional \$500,000 grant to complete Phase II of the stabilization project came from a private foundation, according to Earl Douple, treasurer of the Turn the Mill Around Campaign.

"Our third grant is the current \$300,000 TEA21 grant, which is being used to make the site accessible to the public. This grant is devoted to the east side of the mill grounds," notes Mr. Douple. "Future plans include developing the headrace and the western side of the parcel, replacing the mill wheel so that it is functional, and rebuilding the gable ends to return the stone walls to the stature they once enjoyed."

The mill and surrounding sites are currently open to the public on weekends. Once the park development is completed, Chapman/Beverley Mill will offer an unmatched educational experience, as well as a tangible link to an exciting past.

Tax-deductible donations can be sent to Turn The Mill Around Campaign, PO Box 201, Broad Run, VA 20137, or online at their Web site, <http://chapmansmill.org>.

Author John Toler is a writer and historian and has served Fauquier County for over 50 years, including 4 decades with the Fauquier-Times Democrat. He has written and lectured about many legendary characters in Fauquier County's history. Toler is the co-author of *250 Years in Fauquier County: A Virginia Story*, and author of *Warrenton, Virginia: A History of 200 Years*.

