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* Turn the Mill Around' has preservation goal

■ *Our view: Restoring fire-damaged Beverly Mill won't be easy, but group hopes to raise funds to save the historic mill.*

The Turn the Mill Around Campaign has its work cut out for it. Saving the historic Beverly Mill, ravaged by an arson fire last fall, is an expensive proposition, costing \$100,000 just to stabilize the stone building's walls. Completely restoring the mill will cost around \$425,000, according to estimates.

The mill has had a long history of service to the area. The first mill built at the site burned shortly after being constructed in 1742, but the present building was constructed in 1755, which makes it practically ancient by American standards. During its existence, the mill, which straddles Prince William and Fauquier counties, has been important economically and strategically and it even proved valuable during wartime.

For farmers, the Beverly Mill was a link to the ports of the upper Potomac, and it was also a place for them to have their crops milled before being shipped abroad. During the Civil War, the Confederacy used it as a meat curing and storage facility. It was the site of the Battle of Thoroughfare Gap. After the war it was rebuilt (it suffered fire damage during the war), and the mill was used well into this century. It also survived potential demolition during the construction of Interstate 66 back in the '60s, when it was listed on the Virginia Historical Landmark Registry.

In December, another Northern Virginia 18th-century mill, Midway Mill in Nelson County, was torn down for salvage. Midway Mill, built in 1787, had been on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic buildings. The wood and stone used in the mill will be used to build a nearby home.

With such a storied past, Beverly Mill deserves to survive in one piece. The Turn the Mill Around Campaign, with Ellen Percy Miller of Haymarket as its executive director, is fighting to save the crumbling stone building by raising funds and applying for grants. They have a lot of work ahead of them, but their goal is worthwhile. For more information about the Beverly Mill or the campaign, call the group at (703) 753-3273.