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Courtesy Manassas City Museum—Potomac News

This photograph from the 1960s shows Kinsley Mill, at left, and the adjacent stone granary building.

Buildings like Kinsley were community's hub

By CLINT SCHEMMER
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The stone walls of Kinsley Mill's granary are two feet thick. Pegs hold together window frames, roof rafters and window sills. Log beams of oak, hewn by hand, support its first floor.

That sturdy simplicity evokes a time when such buildings, built to last, were the hub of nearly every community within the region.

Grist mills have been known in Virginia since about 1740, when farmers began to grow wheat, turning away from tobacco cultivation.

Prince William and its neighboring counties comprised the Commonwealth's prime wheat-growing area. In 1810, during the boom years, Northern Virginia produced 70 percent of the state's flour and hosted 78 percent of its mills. Con-

estoga wagons hauled barrels of grain and flour from Fairfax, Prince William and Fauquier counties and the Shenandoah Valley to Alexandria, where it was exported on ships plying the Potomac River. They carried Virginia wheat, corn and flour to Portugal, Spain, England and the West Indies.

Turnpikes later supplanted the river trade. Buckland, the community of which Kinsley Mill was an integral part, prospered after the road between Warrenton and Fairfax Courthouse was built in 1818.

In the early decades of the American republic, some 75 to 100 mills operated throughout Prince William, according to E.R Conner III, a local historian who chronicled those along Catharpin Run.

Today, four mill buildings from that era are known to remain here:

Kinsley Mill's granary, Beverly Mill in Thoroughfare Gap, Buckland Mill and the mill house in Occoquan that's now a town museum.

The Kinsley granary, little known except to Buckland residents and some fishermen, lies within earshot of U.S. 29, less than a mile from the Fauquier County line. The stream on which it was built, Broad Run, once had 15 mills along its banks, more than any other stream in the county, Conner writes.

Kinsley Mill, taken apart in the mid-1960s as Manassas built its reservoir, replaced an earlier one built about 1794 by John and Charles Love. The Loves' land was eventually sold to Daniel Delaplane, whose descendants continued operating the mill until the 1920s, says Dr. Richard Debutts, a member of the Delaplane family.

"It was quite an operation for those days; they shipped flour all over the country," Debutts recalls, many of whose ancestors are buried on the hill nearby.

The granary, which predates the mill, was connected to the latter by a second-story walkway.

"The little building took care of grain on its first floor, and of the miller's family on its second," states *Prince William: The Story of Its People and Its Places*. "The mill did such a brisk business before the War Between the States that a story is told of 600 barrels of flour being dumped in Broad Run during the Second Battle of Manassas."

It also survived the Civil War, during which Union and Confederate troops destroyed many mills to

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deny foodstuffs to the enemy.

Kinsley's miller didn't take sides during the war, and the building quartered wounded soldiers from both sides during the fierce battles fought farther east along Warrenton Turnpike in 1861 and 1862, Debutts says.

When *Prince William: Its Story* was first published in 1941, a Confederate officer's canvas trunk lay

stored in the mill. The trunk's owner, Capt. Charles A. Stewart, had been severely wounded in the war, but was nursed back to health at Kinsley.

Returning to his South Carolina home, Stewart died before the trunk could be sent to him, the county history states. His daughter later visited his father's benefactors and married a member of the Delaplane family.