

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:

three ways to save the granary:

- Negotiate with the developers of an adjoining golf resort, the Robert Trent Jones International, to move the granary to their site, much as Ridge Development Co. reconstructed a mill in Lake Ridge as the centerpiece of Tackett's Mill shopping center.

- Move the building, at the city's expense, to a Manassas site such as the 12-acre city park planned near Quarry Road and Liberia Avenue.

- Salvage its cut stone and hewn beams for some city building project, or sell the granary for private salvage.

The City Council indefinitely

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

postponed any action, leaving it to staff members and the Historical Committee to propose a more specific solution.

The most sensible answer, City Manager John Cartwright says, is to find a private individual or organization that will salvage the building.

"To relocate it and set it down by itself on a piece of public land, as a granary, wouldn't have much educational or public interest value," Cartwright says. "It's got to be made part of a whole story about how mills operated in that period..."

"We have no place to make the granary an exhibit ourselves, so I don't see much possibility of the city doing it."

1920s, says Dr. Richard Debuts, a member of the Delaplane family.

"It was quite an operation for those days; they shipped flour all over the country," Debuts 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.

Thomas Thorpe, a Prince William school administrator who salvages historic buildings as a hobby, says he agreed with Cartwright's conclusion.

The building could be dismantled and rebuilt elsewhere, but only at great expense, Thorpe says.

"This is a lovely old building," he says. "It's just a shame it can't be redone where it is, but to take it apart and reconstruct it ... just would not be practical."

Debuts says he hopes the city will find a way to preserve his family's granary.

"If it can serve some good purpose historically, I think they ought to keep it. ... I hope they'll be able to make good use of it."

GRANARY / From A22

The tipoff came from the Prince William County Historical Commission, which was researching sites to be incorporated within a historic district proposed around Buckland. Kinsley granary could fall in the district, whose boundaries have not been decided, says Mavis Stansfield, the county planner who assists the commission. Manassas councilmen, told 17 months ago of the granary's precarious position, discussed it for the first time this past March. They reviewed a February 1986 memorandum from the city Historical Committee, which suggested