

**V** DOES NOT CIRCULATE  
VA-MAG PR, WM. PUB. LIB. SYS.

July 2005  
Vol. 4, No. 3



# Prince William Reliquary

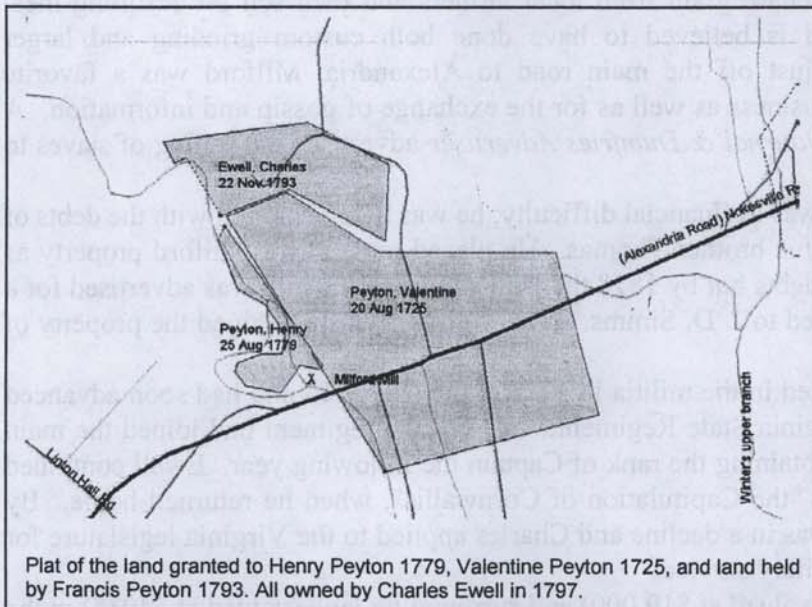
RELIC, Bull Run Regional Library, Manassas, Virginia

**REL-I-QUAR-Y:** (*noun*) A receptacle for keeping or displaying relics.

## Milford Mill – The Lost Landmark

By Charlotte Cain

Heading south on Route 28 just past Manassas, just as you pass over Broad Run is the site of what was once a prominent mill known as Milford Mill. The Broad Run loops around at



this location and was a natural spot for harnessing the water to power a grist mill. It also was a convenient place to ford Broad Run and that is probably how the location received its name as being the place to ford at the mill or Milford. Nothing of the mill remains today -- not even the foundations can be seen -- but the story of Milford mill is a story of many mills of a long ago era.

In 1725 Valentine Peyton was granted 253.5

acres on the north side of the Broad Run of Occoquan.<sup>1</sup> This land was part of the Northern Neck Proprietary granted by Thomas Lord Fairfax. By the time of his death in 1751 Valentine Peyton was in possession of two parcels of land in Prince William County, one of 1850 acres and one of 575 acres.<sup>2</sup>

In 1779 Henry Peyton, the son of Valentine Peyton, was granted 24 acres adjoining the Peyton patented land.<sup>3</sup> This land is a narrow strip roughly shaped like a boot that would later be known as the Milford mill tract. In 1781 Henry

### IN THIS ISSUE

Milford Mill – The Lost Landmark....	49
Report of Committee appointed to Examine County Clerk's Office, 1870 June 7 <sup>th</sup> .....	56
Death Records from Prince William County Estate Files Ca. 1913-1938.....	63
Dumfries District Court Land Causes 1793-1811.....	71

<sup>1</sup>Land granted to Valentine Payton [sic], Northern Neck Grants A (1722-1726): 159, microfilm reel 290, Library of Virginia (LVA), available online at [www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwehave/land](http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwehave/land).

<sup>2</sup>Prince William County Rent Roll for 1751/1752, microfilm copy at RELIC, Bull Run Regional Library, Manassas, [Prince William County, Virginia, Manuscripts in the Huntington Library] (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1984).

<sup>3</sup>Land granted to Henry Peyton, Northern Neck Grants I (1757-1781): 361, microfilm reel 294, LVA.



Peyton died and in his will he bequeathed to his son Timothy "all the Debt or sums of money he owes me also the depreciation of the money (if ever recovered from the Public) on the forage of thirty five barrels of corn & ten tons of hay already included in our accounts." To his son Thomas was left "one forth [sic] part of the profits of my grist mill during his minority ... likewise the tract of land whereon I now live after the decease of my wife together with the water grist mill."<sup>4</sup>

A deed has not been found transferring the mill ownership to Charles Ewell but it is known that by 1794 Charles Ewell (1760-1830) owned the mill and by 1797 lived on the large tract of land adjoining it.<sup>5</sup> In 1793 Francis Peyton, the brother of Henry Peyton deeded to Charles Ewell 67 acres of land bequeathed to Francis by his father Valentine Peyton and in the late possession of Col. Henry Peyton. This land is adjacent and just above the original 253 acres granted to Valentine Peyton.<sup>6</sup>

Many of the smaller grist mills at this time were custom mills grinding grain in small quantities for the local farmers in exchange for a sixth part of the final product. The larger manufacturing mills would purchase grain from local farmers and then sell the resulting meal and flour at market. Milford is believed to have done both custom grinding and larger production milling. Situated just off the main road to Alexandria, Milford was a favorite meeting place for conducting business as well as for the exchange of gossip and information. A notice in the 1796 *Republican Journal & Dumfries Advertiser* advertises the selling of slaves to occur at Milford.<sup>7</sup>

By 1797 Charles Ewell was in financial difficulty; he was being charged with the debts of his father Benjamin Ewell and his brother Thomas. He placed most of his Milford property as collateral for payment of these debts but by 1818 the land adjoining the mill was advertised for a public sale to pay what was owed to J. D. Simms.<sup>8</sup> The mill itself still remained the property of Charles.

Charles Ewell had enlisted in the militia in 1775 at the age of 15 and had soon advanced to a Lieutenant in the First Virginia State Regiment. In 1777 the regiment had joined the main Continental Army with Ewell obtaining the rank of Captain the following year. Ewell continued to serve in the army until after "the Capitulation of Cornwallis", when he returned home. By 1824 the economy of the area was in a decline and Charles applied to the Virginia legislature for a pension of half pay for his military service.<sup>9</sup>

He also placed the mill (valued at \$10,000) and surrounding land (valued at \$4035) in the hands of James and Silus Foster.<sup>10</sup> By 1830 Charles Ewell left Prince William County and

---

<sup>4</sup> Henry Peyton will (1781), Prince William County Will Book G: 119-122; Prince William County (PWC) microfilm reel 18, LVA.

<sup>5</sup> 1793(B) Land Tax List shows the property still owned by Henry Peyton's heirs. The 1794(B) Land Tax List shows Charles Ewell in possession. PWC Land Tax Lists, 1782A-1810A, microfilm reel R1, at RELIC; microfilm reel 258, LVA. [Missing deed perhaps recorded in lost PWC District Court Deed Book A (1789-1795). / DLW]

<sup>6</sup> Prince William County Deed Book 8: 105-107; PWC microfilm reel 10, LVA.

<sup>7</sup> Ronald Turner, *Prince William County Virginia 1784-1860 Newspaper Transcriptions* (Manassas, Va.: privately printed, 2000), 37, citing *Republican Journal & Dumfries Advertiser*, 11 August 1796. "To be sold at Milford ... 10 or 12 likely Negroes, for ready money by the Administrators of John Seldon, Deceased."

<sup>8</sup> Turner, *Newspaper Transcriptions 1784-1860*, 105, citing *Alexandria Gazette*, 25 November 1818.

<sup>9</sup> Petition of Charles Ewell of Prince William praying for his half pay or commutation, 14 December 1824. Virginia General Assembly Legislative Petitions, Prince William County, 1819 Dec. 15 - 1858; microfilm reel 165, Accession 36121, LVA.

<sup>10</sup> James & Cilus [sic] Foster entry, Prince William County 1824 (B) Land Tax List (Land above Cedar Run) page 19; microfilm reel R3, RELIC; reel 260, LVA. Remarks: "By deed from Charles Ewell and wife." The deed does not appear to be extant.

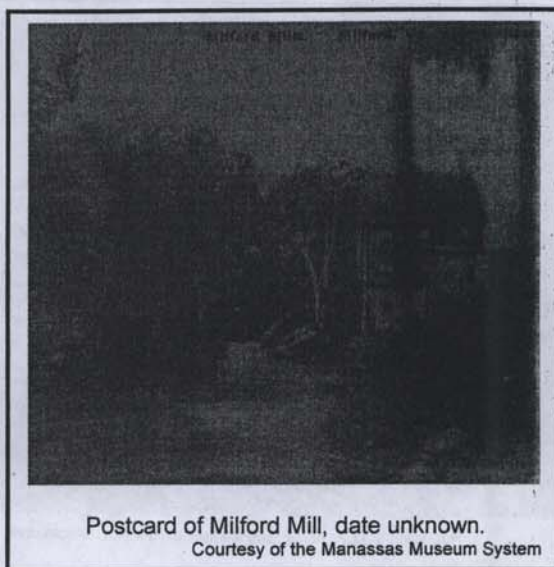


moved to McCracken County, Kentucky to live on bounty land granted to him for Revolutionary War service.<sup>11</sup> In his will Charles authorized the sale of all his land in Prince William County to be sold to pay his just debts. This included "my well known tract of land called Milford, including the mill and appendages thereto belonging..."<sup>12</sup> The County Court of Prince William subsequently decreed the mill be advertised for a trustee's sale in the *Alexandria Gazette*.<sup>13</sup>

In February of 1837, William J. Weir became the owner of the Milford mill and gradually purchased its surrounding property.<sup>14</sup> He paid \$3500 for the mill property but the value of improvements was shown as \$10,000 in 1838.<sup>15</sup> The grist mill was water powered with 2 pairs of stones for manufacturing corn meal and a pair of burr stones for the finer ground wheat flour. By 1850 the mill was the third largest in the county grinding 2,000 bushels of wheat and 10,000 bushels of corn which produced 400 barrels of flour and 11,260 barrels of corn meal annually. The mill was operated by the miller and his assistant who earned an average of \$15 a month.<sup>16</sup>

The mill maintained its status as a meeting place, becoming a post office in May of 1839. William Weir was also the postmaster for the area and had petitioned for the post office to be moved from Liberia to Milford Mills. The post office remained at Milford until 1852 when it was moved to Bristoe Station to be near the railroad.<sup>17</sup>

By 1860 William Weir's grist mill was grinding 500 bushels of wheat and 9000 bushels of corn plus other grains to produce 110 barrels of flour, 10,125 bushels of meal and 6500 pounds of offal and horse feed. He employed two men, probably a miller and assistant, who worked for an average of \$17 a month each.<sup>18</sup> David Franklin was the millwright in 1860 and was responsible for keeping the milling equipment in working order.<sup>19</sup> Cornelius Naylor, a slave



Postcard of Milford Mill, date unknown.  
Courtesy of the Manassas Museum System

<sup>11</sup> Charles Ewell entry, Kentucky Land Office, Military Warrant 583. Image available online at <http://apps.sos.ky.gov/land/military/revwar/>

<sup>12</sup> Charles Ewell will (1830), McCracken County, Kentucky Will Book A: 18. Transcribed and submitted by Vera Burnham, online at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~kymcrac/will/willchsewell.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Turner, *Newspaper Transcriptions*, 147, citing *Alexandria Gazette* 11 June 1830.

<sup>14</sup> Bank of Potomac and Joseph Janney to William J. Weir, deed dated 14 February 1837, Prince William County Land Records 1835-43: 387-400; PWC microfilm reel 16, LVA. Includes details of complex chancery proceedings regarding the property going back to 1797, and a plat showing its partition.

<sup>15</sup> William J. Weir entry, 1838 Land Tax List; Prince William County Land Tax Books 1824-1838; microfilm reel R3, RELIC; microfilm reel 260, LVA.

<sup>16</sup> William J. Weir entry, 1850 U.S. Census, Virginia nonpopulation schedules, industrial schedule, Prince William County, Virginia, page 130, line 5; NARA micropublication T-1132, roll 4.

<sup>17</sup> William C. Ritter, *Post Offices and Post Masters of Prince William County, Virginia 1776-1971* (Dale City, Virginia: privately printed, 1992); transcribed from NARA Record Group 28.3.2; copy at RELIC, Bull Run Regional Library, Manassas, Virginia.

<sup>18</sup> William J. Weir entry, 1860 U.S. Census, Virginia nonpopulation schedules, industrial schedule, Prince William County; NARA micropublication T-1132, roll 8.

<sup>19</sup> William J. Weir household, 1860 U.S. Census, Prince William County, Virginia, population schedule, Tudor Hall post office, page 479, dwelling 350, family 331; NARA micropublication M653, roll 1373 - David Franklin, millwright, living in household of Wm. J. Weir.



of William J. Weir, was the miller at Milford during the Civil War until the "Union Army came into Manassas."<sup>20</sup>

The Civil War added its own story to the Milford Mill. In November of 1861, William Weir's daughter Julia Willcoxon was widowed and moved her family from Locust Grove to her father's house, Liberia, near Manassas Junction. In the spring of 1862 the Weir family was ordered to evacuate and Julia moved her family to her brother's house at Sudley Mill. All of her possessions were crated and placed in the Milford mill for storage including a piano. At one point soldiers waiting to cross Broad Run decided to enter the mill and caused some damage. All of Julia Willcoxon's goods were carried off as spoils of war except for the piano. It too would

have been taken had not Fanny Weir, Julia's stepdaughter, been alerted to the theft. She raced to town in time to see the piano being driven away in a wagon and demanded that it be returned.<sup>21</sup>

With the threat of the arriving Union Army, many of the white families, including the Weirs, left Manassas to head for a safer place. A number of the slaves were left behind to fend for themselves and to protect their owners' goods as best they could. During the Civil War the mill was used by the slaves left behind to grind corn meal for their food. With the soldiers damaging the mill, a protest was made to the army headquarters by one of the Negroes,



requesting that the mill be protected or his people would starve. An assurance was given that the mill would be protected.<sup>22</sup> By the end of the war the mill at Milford had been destroyed, suffering \$4000 worth of damage.<sup>23</sup>

Following the war, on June 12, 1866, William J. Weir sold his mill at Milford plus the surrounding 30 acres to John R. Hornbaker for \$3000.<sup>24</sup> Thus was ended nearly thirty years of milling by the Weir family.

<sup>20</sup> Deposition of Neil Naylor – Southern Claim #21726, Claim of John W. Wilcoxson and Hattie B. Wilcoxson of Prince William County, State of Virginia; Records of the Southern Claims Commission, NARA; copies in the Manassas Museum.

<sup>21</sup> Depositions of Neil Naylor, Fanny Willcoxon, Richard M. Weir, and George W. Roseberry – Southern Claim #21726, Claim of John W. Wilcoxson and Hattie B. Wilcoxson. Additional information on the Weir family and their Civil War experiences may be found in: Charlotte Cain, "Divided Loyalties: an Account of the Family of William J. Weir during the American Civil War," *Prince William Reliquary* 3 (July 2004): 55-61, online at <http://www.pwcgov.org/docLibrary/PDF/002509.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> L.L. Crouse, "The Army Correspondent," *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* 27 (October 1863): 628, online at <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa>.

<sup>23</sup> William J. Weir entry, 1865 Prince William County Land Tax Book, William C. Merchant District, entry 20; Virginia Department of Taxation, Land Tax Books 1860-1870, microfilm reel 14016, RELIC; microfilm reel 532, LVA.

<sup>24</sup> Prince William County Deed Book 26: 361; PWC microfilm reel 15, LVA.



John R. Hornbaker was a native of New Jersey who moved to Prince William County at seventeen years of age. Undoubtedly John learned the milling business from his father who operated a mill in New Jersey in the early 1830's. Prior to the Civil War the Hornbaker family worked as farmers on their own land until John purchased the Milford mill in 1866. He then set about repairing the damage done to the mill, cutting timbers and hauling the lumber probably from his own saw mill.<sup>25</sup> By 1870 the mill was again in production producing \$3712 worth of wheat flour and \$5593 worth of corn meal on its two burr grinding wheels. It was the largest producing mill in the Manassas district and the third largest in Prince William County.<sup>26</sup> The 1880 Industrial Census describes the Milford Mill as grinding both for custom and for market sales. The mill used a two-wheel turbine system rather than the traditional overshot or



1910 Receipt for payment to Milford Mills

Photo Courtesy of Ronald Turner

undershot wheel. It ran at 260 revolutions per minute with an equivalent of 24 horsepower.<sup>27</sup> The reaction wheel was an early turbine built in the 1830's and was expensive to install although it reduced the amount of gearing necessary to run the mill.<sup>28</sup> Whether Hornbaker or Weir was the first to install the turbine is not known.

By 1880 John Hornbaker's son Edwin Latimer Hornbaker and his nephew William F. Bodine were the millers at Milford.<sup>29</sup> They worked an average of ten hours a day for a combined pay of \$200 a year.<sup>30</sup> Thomas Ashford took over as miller by 1900 and finally in 1909 John Hornbaker retired from the milling trade leaving the running of the mill to his son-in-law C. J. Meetze.

Christopher J. Meetze did not own the mill for long but during his ownership the mill was thoroughly overhauled and a new purifier installed at a cost of \$200. J.F. Britton was hired as the miller to give the customers flour "as good as any patent flour."<sup>31</sup> Milford offered White Rose flour and "the best corn meal, and buckwheat flour as well as calf feed, seed oats, beet pulp, cotton and seed meal and all ground by water power."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> John R. Hornbaker obituary; Ronald Turner, *Prince William County, Virginia 1900-1930 Obituaries* (Manassas, Virginia: privately printed, 1998), 158, citing *Manassas Journal*, 27 July 1917.

<sup>26</sup> J. R. Hornbaker entry, 1870 U. S. Census, Prince William County, Virginia nonpopulation schedules, industrial schedule, Manassas Township, page 1, lines 3 and 6; NARA micropublication T-1132, roll 15.

<sup>27</sup> J. R. Hornbaker entry, 1880 U. S. Census, Prince William County, Virginia nonpopulation schedules, industrial schedule, page 383; NARA micropublication T-1132, roll 32.

<sup>28</sup> "Outward Flow Reaction Wheel," *Mills and Power: an Introduction*, on website of Old Sturbridge Village, at <http://www.osv.org/education/WaterPower/Reaction.html>.

<sup>29</sup> John R. Hornbaker household, 1880 U.S. Census, Prince William, Virginia, population schedule, Manassas District, enumeration district 124, page 27D, dwelling 263, family 273; NARA micropublication T9, roll 1385.

<sup>30</sup> J. R. Hornbaker entry, 1880 U.S. Census, Prince William County, Virginia, nonpopulation schedules, industrial schedule, page 383.

<sup>31</sup> *The Manassas Democrat*, 14 March 1912, page 5, col. 1; 11 April 1912, page 2, col. 2; 20 March 1913, page 2; col. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Ronald Turner, *Prince William County, Virginia 1805-1955 Businesses* (Manassas, Virginia: privately printed, 1999), 158.

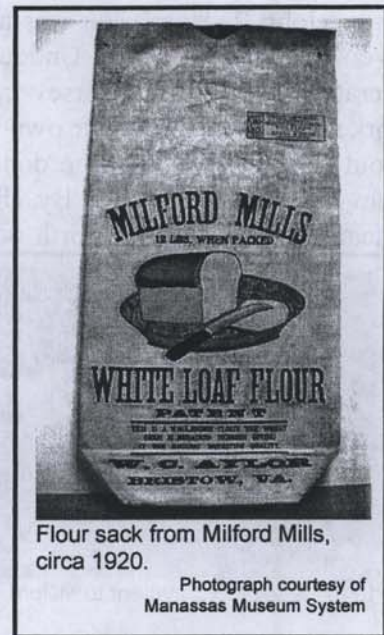


By 1914 C. J. Meetze had decided to devote his whole life to real estate and insurance and was advertising the mill for sale.<sup>33</sup>

Edwin D. Wissler and Jacob T. Drumheller were the next owners of Milford Mills, purchasing it for \$15,000<sup>34</sup> and selling it in 1919 to Walter C. Aylor for \$20,000.<sup>35</sup>

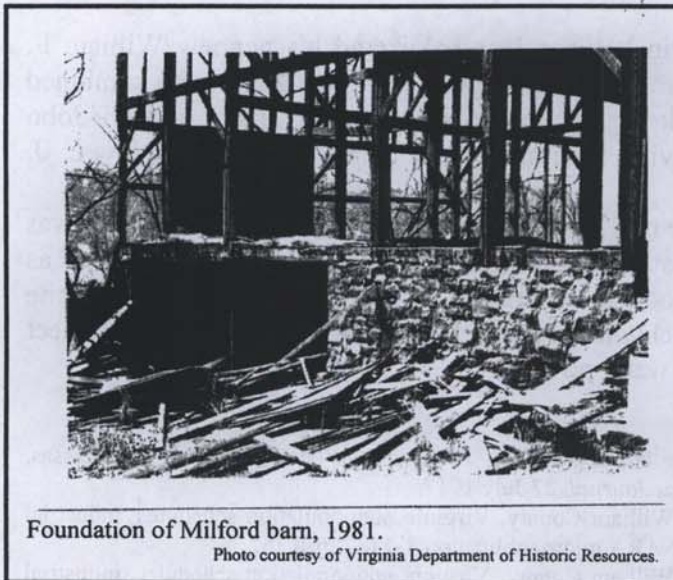
Walter Clifton Aylor came to Milford with 31 years of experience as a miller. He had previously been one of the proprietors of the Aylor Brothers Flour Mill in Culpeper before deciding to purchase Milford Mills. He and his son William Taliaferro Aylor ran the fifty-barrel-a-day roller mill for the next six years selling Milford Mills White Loaf Flour to many places in Virginia.<sup>36</sup>

In 1916 Bolling Lynn Robertson purchased the old Hopkins Candy Factory in Manassas and began converting it into a major flour producing mill complete with all new machinery.<sup>37</sup> The Manassas Milling company became a premier milling company in northern Virginia producing ninety barrels of flour a day as well as two car loads of mixed feed.<sup>38</sup> As part of his expanding business, Robertson decided to purchase the Milford mill and its surrounding 40 acres from Walter Aylor in 1925 for the sum of \$11,000 and a \$7500 debt owed to the National Bank of Manassas. Included in the sale were various office furniture, a 1200 pound safe, and assorted farming implements. The Aylors' reserved the right to harvest the potatoes they had planted in the outlying acreage.<sup>39</sup>



Flour sack from Milford Mills, circa 1920.

Photograph courtesy of Manassas Museum System



Foundation of Milford barn, 1981.

Photo courtesy of Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

A few years later Bolling L. Robertson expanded his milling business further, taking over the Riverton Mills just east of Front Royal, Virginia. By January of 1930 the stock market was in trouble and the economy was in a downturn. The Manassas Milling Company was in financial difficulty and a chancery suit was brought against the corporation. A court order issued in February of 1936 ordered that certain real estate and personal property of the corporation were to be sold at public auction. The Fauquier National Bank bought the Milford mill

<sup>33</sup> Turner, *Businesses*, 154.

<sup>34</sup> Prince William County Deed Book 63: 357-358; Prince William County Court House, Manassas, Virginia.

<sup>35</sup> Prince William County Deed Book 72: 291-292; Prince William County Court House.

<sup>36</sup> "Biographical Sketch of Walter Clifton Aylor," *History of Virginia*, 6 volumes (Chicago and New York: American Historical Society, 1924), 6:350.

<sup>37</sup> Turner, *Businesses*, 142.

<sup>38</sup> "Biographical Sketch of Bolling Lynn Robertson," *History of Virginia*, 6:398.

<sup>39</sup> Prince William County Deed Book 81: 70-71, 119-120; Prince William County Court House.



*Prince William Reliquary*  
is produced quarterly by the  
Ruth E. Lloyd Information Center (RELIC)  
for Genealogy & Local History  
Prince William Public Library System  
Bull Run Regional Library  
8051 Ashton Avenue  
Manassas, VA 20109  
(703) 792-4540

**Web site:**

[www.pwcgov.org/library](http://www.pwcgov.org/library) (click on RELIC)

A file of back issues will be posted on this site. All issues will be kept at RELIC.

**Editor:**

Carolyn G. Lynn, RELIC volunteer  
Email: [colepwco@comcast.net](mailto:colepwco@comcast.net)

**RELIC Staff:**

Don Wilson, Tish Como, Beverly Veness

**Submission Deadlines:**

Mar. 15, June 15, Sep. 15, Dec. 15

**Submission Guidelines:**

We welcome articles of historical or genealogical interest regarding Prince William County, Manassas or Manassas Park. Publication is not guaranteed and we reserve the right to edit if appropriate. All work submitted must include citations.

The conclusions of contributors are not necessarily those of the editor or staff of RELIC.

**Correspondence:**

Address all correspondence regarding *Prince William Reliquary* to RELIC at the above address or email the editor.

Questions for a RELIC librarian should be emailed to [relic2@pwcgov.org](mailto:relic2@pwcgov.org).

**Queries:**

We will publish queries regarding individuals who were in Prince William County. Please include your name, address, and/or email address. Queries may be edited for length.

Magazine is produced electronically.

You may print a copy for your own personal use. Articles written with an author byline may not be reprinted without written permission from the author. Unsigned articles may be reprinted provided *Prince William Reliquary* is cited.

©Copyright 2001-2005. All rights reserved. Ruth E. Lloyd  
Information Center for Genealogy and Local History,  
Bull Run Regional Library, 8051 Ashton Avenue,  
Manassas, VA 20109-2892

property with dam and race for \$5100, the remaining land, machinery and buildings held by the Manassas Milling Company were purchased for \$17,000.<sup>40</sup> By September of 1936 the Milford Mills and 100 acres of surrounding property was sold to T. R. and Elmer P. Hurst for \$6500.<sup>41</sup>

With the purchase by the Hurst family the Milford Mill property was turned into a farm and the mill was allowed to deteriorate. Shortly after 1960 the mill was disassembled and its boards were used by Mr. Hurst to build a barn and for other needed repairs.<sup>42</sup> By 1981 only the foundation of the original mill could be seen and even that has now disappeared.<sup>43</sup>

~~~~~

### SERIOUSLY INJURED IN MILL

As we go to press we learn that J. F. Britton, miller at Milford Mills was caught by a revolving shaft in the basement of the mill at 11 o'clock this morning and seriously injured. Dr. Buck was called to attend the injured man. We learn that besides the fracture of several ribs Mr. Britton is severely bruised about the body and head and probably may be internally injured

*The Manassas Democrat*, 14 March 1912,  
page 5, column 4.

~~~~~

<sup>40</sup> J. Donald Richards, Special Commissioner, deed to The Fauquier National Bank of Warrenton, 16 June 1936; Prince William County Deed Book 97: 160-163.

<sup>41</sup> Fauquier National Bank of Warrenton deed to T. R. and E. P. Hurst, 9 September 1936; Prince William County Deed Book 97: 385-387.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from E.R.C. [E.R. Conner III] to Mrs. W.E.S. [Anne P.] Flory, Prince William County Historical Commission, 24 March 1976; copy in Milford Mill Historic Site File, RELIC, Bull Run Regional Library, Manassas, Virginia.

<sup>43</sup> "Barn on S.R. 28 across Broad Run," photographs taken April 1981; Frances Jones, photographer; Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) negative 5180, Historic Site 76-314; copies in Milford Mill Historic Site File, RELIC.