

Time's been unkind to historic mill

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BY CHARLES SOWELL
staff writer

You don't notice the building, while whizzing by on state Route 14 between Greer and Landrum, unless you're looking. Most people don't, and the state of Berry's Mill, a classic example of Upstate water-powered manufacturing, reflects it.

The passage of time hasn't been kind to the three-story building or the distinctive twin waterwheels that powered the mill's various operations through the years.

Ladson Berry, a direct descendent of Spartan Commodore Berry, the mill's namesake, said the family and others hope to raise money to restore the building.

The land surrounding the building is part of the Startex Jackson Wellford Duncan (SJWD) Water District and is held in a conservation easement with Upstate Forever. There is a 27-acre mill pond that is more than 100 years old, and upstream are more than 20 acres of wetlands that provide valuable habitat for wildlife, said Brad Wyche, director of Upstate Forever.

Beaverdam Creek, which flows through the property, is a tributary to the Middle Tyger River, one of the principal sources of the water supply in western Spartanburg County. SJWD acquired the property from Ladson and Carl Berry, and



Charles Sowell/Staff

ANCESTOR HONORED: A marker, put up by the descendents of S.C. Berry, commemorates the mill site's historic significance.

then granted a conservation easement to Upstate Forever to ensure preservation of the site, which is an important part of the watershed that supplies drinking water to SJWD's customers. This is only the second easement by a government entity in the Upstate.

"The site of the mill contains the foundation of one of the first textile operations in South Carolina. Textile pioneer John Weaver, from Rhode Island, established and operated a cotton yarn

mill about 1820 at Thompson's Beaverdam Creek near O'Neall, Greenville District," said Ladson Berry.

He said that mill was called Weaver Cotton Works and may have been the first textile plant in Greenville County. Weaver operated the mill until his >

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> death in 1862 and the facility ceased operations in the 1860s.

The mill site and adjoining property changed owners several times until the late 1800s, when Spartan Commodore Berry built on the foundation of the Weaver Cotton Works. S.C. Berry operated a cotton gin, a corn grist mill and a lumber saw mill. In 1912, he and

two sons, Broadus Carlyle and Claude Otis Berry, added a wheat mill to their operations.

The mills were powered by two large, metal water wheels and were operated until 1946. The wheat mill and water wheels still remain.

Contact Charles Sowell at 679-1208
or csowell@greenvillejournal.com.