

Glenville Historic District

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Description

The Glenville Historic District comprises the historic core of the village of Glenville, located in the Town of Greenwich, Connecticut, about two miles west of its downtown. The Glenville Historic District can be readily defined by its two primary topographical features: a central, winding valley running in an east-west direction at an elevation of 130 feet; and the steep-sided Byram River which runs in a north-south direction, its channel bisecting the aforesaid valley. Unusual in its east-west orientation and virtually enclosed by rather steep, partially wooded hills, this valley or glen provides a natural route for Glenville Road, the area's principal highway, which leads to downtown Greenwich.

While this glen gave the community its name, the river was responsible for its formation, derived from the industry attracted to the river's waterpower which is most evident at the 30-foot high granite dam, the latest of several constructed to augment the river's natural falls. Besides Glenville Road, the district encompasses portions of five streets, all major thoroughfares which converge at this historic hub. Glenville Street is the western continuation of Glenville Road after crossing the Byram River. This street abruptly turns south at the intersection with Glen Ridge Road which continues in a westerly direction, climbing a steep wooded hill. Riversville Road runs northerly from its intersection with Glenville Road, just east of the bridge over the Byram River. Further to the east, Pemberwick Road runs southwesterly from Glenville Road and then more southerly, descending in elevation to run alongside the river, while Weaver Street, to the east, runs in a southerly course from Glenville Road but climbs a steep hill.

The Glenville Historic District contains 57 resources of which 51 contribute to its significance. The contributing resources include two mill buildings, a former elementary school, a firehouse, a mansion converted to office use, a veteran's clubhouse, two commercial buildings, five mixed commercial and residential buildings, ten one-family dwellings, four two-family dwellings, one three-family dwelling, and 15 outbuildings, primarily garages and barns. There are also four structures (two bridges, a dam, and a well), and four sites: mill yard, mill pond, factory yard, and Glenville Green. The six non-contributing resources were either built or radically altered after 1955 and include two large brick buildings at the mill, a community center in the Green, a gas station and two houses.

The Glenville Historic District can best be described by first acknowledging the open space which characterizes most of the central valley which is an essential component, not only for the space itself and the extensive vistas it allows, but as a setting for the buildings located within it and as a foreground for the buildings facing it. This continuous open space consists of Glenville Green (Castle Yard) on the east side of the river, the former Glenville School property to the south (Western Greenwich Civic Center), and the former mill property on the west side of the river including the mill pond. All three of these properties are located south of Glenville Road and its extension, Glenville Street, forming a continuous, park-like expanse of 17.78 acres.

Each of these multi-acre lots contains a prominent landmark. The former Glenville School at 449 Pemberwick Road was built of brick in 1920-21 in the Georgian Revival style with a T-shaped plan, its projecting, perpendicular auditorium wing including the main entrance, spanned by a large, leaded fanlight and sheltered by a pedimented, tetrastyle portico, its columns characterized by unusual capitals comprising a fluted necking rimmed by acanthus leaves. Located at the northern end of Glenville Green, the Glenville Firehouse (266 Glenville Road) was built in 1950, also in brick, in a modified Georgian Revival style featuring rusticated quoins and symmetrically placed garage doors framed by brick piers and surmounted by a single prominent entablature including its name.

Located directly across the millpond to the west is the large [Queen Anne](#) dwelling erected in 1886 for the felt mill's superintendent (6 Glenville Street). It features

paired front gables lit by Palladian windows and covered by wavy-patterned shingles, a half-timbered west gable, a front-gabled porte-cochere, and a stepped stair window at the rear elevation. Located at the south end of the mill pond, where its waters descend over the dam, are the two remaining mill buildings, both constructed of brick: the New Mill and the Depot Building. The New Mill at 340 Pemberwick Road is a three-story Romanesque Revival edifice constructed in 1881 and characterized by a battlemented roofline, an attached four-story, centrally placed tower with corbelled battlements, and intricate brickwork forming a variety of window arches, belt courses, dentil courses, and pilasters. Although visible from the central open space, its impact is not as pronounced as the district's other large buildings, not only because of its off-side location but also because it rises from a lower elevation and faces west towards the ravine below the dam.

Situated a short distance to the east is the long, 1-1/2-story, side-gabled Depot Building constructed in 1879 in a transitional Stick style/Queen Anne design (334 Pemberwick Road). Its decorative wooden trim includes triangular paired brackets supporting its eaves, foliated cut-work peak ornaments on the main gables and eight dormers, and prominent curvilinear rafter ends. Now occupied in part by a mixed-use brick complex built in 1984, the area directly to the west and south formerly included a much larger assemblage of factory buildings that reflected virtually the entire 165-year industrial history of the site. A footbridge that replaced an older span in 1955 leads to the south end of the mill yard which includes the site of the original grist mill of 1718, the nucleus of the community, located somewhere between the footbridge and the 1867 dam.

Most of the Glenville Historic District's remaining buildings face its open space and are generally smaller in scale comprising houses and commercial buildings.

Connecting the two sides of the community is the concrete arched bridge crossing the river at Glenville Street. Faced with cut granite, it replaced an older span in 1948. To the west, a row of four buildings on the north side of Glenville Street commences with a two-story commercial/residential building built in 1855 and expanded and remodeled in the [Italianate](#) style in 1882 (1 Glenville Street). Rising directly from the river, its foundation flush with the river's bulkhead, it features a continuous bracketed cornice and a two-story front porch showing an identical

cornice, chamfered posts, and lateral, bow-shaped brackets. Next door is a side-gabled vernacular [Greek Revival](#) dwelling featuring a side-lit entry framed by pilasters, frieze-band windows at the second story, and diamond-shaped attic windows of [Gothic Revival](#) derivation showing quatrefoil mullions (5 Glenville Street). To the rear of these buildings four barns, several dating to the 19th century, form an L-shaped complex enclosing a courtyard.

Further to the west is the Andrew Pottgen House, a larger, 2-1/2-story Queen Anne dwelling that retains its front porch, supported by bracketed, turned posts, and features a symmetrical, cross-gabled roof, the centered front gable showing scalloped shingles and a king-post truss ornamented with turned and cut-work elements while the side gables feature similar treatment but without the turned elements (9 Glenville Street). Ending the row is a side-gabled, 2-1/2-story dwelling covered with a spatter-dash covering of stucco and surmounting a high basement occupied by a liquor store (15 Glenville Street).

Further west, Glenville Street makes a 90 degree turn to the south while Glen Ridge Road continues to the west as it winds up a steep hill. At this corner, facing east, is a two-story front-gabled store dating to circa 1846 (23 Glenville Street, Dusenberry-Haight Store). Attached to its south side is the two-story Webster Haight House, an Italianate dwelling built in 1872 with a shallow hipped roof, beam-like modillions supporting its cornice, frieze-band windows, and a front porch showing a bracketed cornice (25 Glenville Street). To the south is a large board-and-batten barn of Gothic Revival influence, its centered front gable showing a king-post truss and its side gables' boards featuring an overlapping sawtooth edge. On the opposite eastern side of the street is a 2-1/2-story, side-gabled double house built as one of the original dwellings for mill workers circa 1840 and showing a front porch supported by chamfered posts with curvilinear brackets (30 Glenville Street). To the south is a 1-1/2-story stucco dwelling of [Craftsman](#) influence (34 Glenville Street), followed by a three-story building constructed in 1856 which is distinguished by a hipped roofline accented by a centered cross gable of Italianate influence at the facade and transformed into a gable at the rear elevation (36 Glenville Street, Glenville House Hotel).

On the east side of the river, Riversville Road runs northerly from Glenville Road, its west side including seven buildings, the third being the former 1904 firehouse now remodeled into a veteran's clubhouse (14 Riversville Road, Ninth District Veterans Association). Following its large parking lot are two vernacular dwellings, the first showing parallel front gables and the second showing a centrally placed gabled wall dormer. Both retain their front porches and are set close to the street (24 and 26 Riversville Road). The front-gabled house next door at 28 Riversville Road was built in 1887 as the Philip Finnegan House, set back from the street and featuring Queen Anne elements including a front porch and a basement-level side porch, both retaining their turned posts and curvilinear brackets, the latter perforated at the front porch. The row of buildings extending along the east side of Riversville Road and continuing along the north side of Glenville Road are not included, having replaced the original buildings over the last 50 years.

Further east, however, the historic streetscape reappears on Glenville Road with an enclave of four dwellings built into the hillside overlooking the valley. The most prominent is the John Chmielowiec Building, located directly on the street at 243 Glenville Road and consisting of a 2-1/2-story, front-gabled dwelling surmounting a high, cut-granite basement containing a restaurant lit by transomed plate-glass windows. The basement's cut-granite construction extends to the first story which features an L-shaped, Tuscan-columned, first-story porch sheltering the house's main entrance to the west and surmounting the basement-level restaurant. To the rear, but still visible due to its higher elevation, is the Michael Dorsey House (245 Glenville Road), a long, side-gabled, 2-1/2-story dwelling built in 1863 and also showing a high basement but with a full-length two-story porch supported by chamfered posts. Next door to the west is a 1-1/2-story vernacular I-house with a full-length enclosed porch and frieze-band windows (249 Glenville Road).

Running south from Glenville Road is Weaver Street, climbing a hill and overlooking the former school grounds to the west. It is lined with three vernacular, mid-19th century dwellings, the first and third retaining their front porches and diminutive scale (259 and 267 Weaver Street), showing close proximity to the street despite having rather spacious yards, and the first house also retaining a covered well.

Significance

The Glenville Historic District is of historic significance locally because it comprises the most comprehensive example of a New England mill village within the Town of Greenwich, and regionally as the primary example thereof in lower Fairfield County. It is also historically significant as one of the town's major staging areas of immigrants, predominantly Irish in the 19th century and Polish in the 20th century, and the primary settlement of Poles in the town. The Glenville Historic District is architecturally significant because it contains two elaborate examples of mill construction, designed in the Romanesque Revival and a transitional Stick-style/Queen Anne; an excellent example of a Georgian Revival school; and notable examples of domestic and commercial architecture, including a Queen Anne mansion and an Italianate store building.

One of a number of distinct villages within the Town of Greenwich, Glenville is defined by its historically industrial character which contrasts strikingly with the prevailing image of the town proper as an affluent suburb of [New York City](#). In fact it can be accurately categorized as a New England mill village, the most comprehensive example within the town and southern Fairfield County as well.

Glenville owes its very existence to the industry attracted by its situation at the falls of the Byram River. Its location was essentially selected by Josiah Quinby, a Quaker from nearby [Westchester County, New York](#), who was given permission by the town to build two mills on the Byram River, a sawmill in 1717 and a gristmill in 1718. The area's first roads were laid out in 1717 to provide access to the site Quinby selected for his sawmill: Weaver Street, leading northerly from the "Country Road," that is, the Boston Post Road; Glenville Road, leading westerly from Horseneck, present-day downtown Greenwich; and the lower end of Riversville Road, connecting Glenville Road to the sawmill. Constructed a short distance downstream, the gristmill would become the nucleus for the industrial complex of later years. Located on the river's west bank, across from later factory buildings, it was still in existence in 1867 when it was depicted in the Beers, Ellis & Soule atlas.

The first mention of industrial activity was in 1806 when the gristmill was sold along with one half of a carding machine. The first factory building was apparently constructed in 1814, mentioned in the deed from Jared Peck to the Byram Manufacturing Company in September of that year but not in January when Peck

bought the property from Jonathan Secor. The Byram Manufacturing Company had been organized the year before "for the purpose of manufacturing cloth and fabrics of woolen and cotton." In 1820 this company constructed a stone building that would become the nucleus of an extensive factory complex. In 1829 the property and its buildings were sold to Samuel G. and George Cornell of [Brooklyn](#), who converted most of the factory to the production of lead for paint.

The 23-year ownership of the Cornell family was largely responsible for the manner in which the village would develop. They apparently spearheaded the construction of the southerly portion of Glenville Street in 1830 as a more direct route to Port Chester, New York (then called Sawpit), the area's primary business center, thus avoiding the extremely steep route of colonial origin along present-day Glen Ridge Road. By 1844, they had constructed nine dwellings for mill workers and an elaborate stone castle for Samuel himself. This edifice, reputedly transported stone by stone from England, was located approximately where the present firehouse is located, at the northern end of Glenville Green. The remainder of the property was landscaped with gardens and became known as the Castle Yard.

At the south end of this property Cornell commissioned the construction of the Emmanuel Episcopal Chapel in 1842 for his employees, most of whom were English. Both castle and chapel are long gone, the castle having been dismantled in 1891 reportedly because of an epidemic among its residents, the building having been converted into a tenement for mill workers. The Castle yard, however, remained as open space, becoming the nucleus of the central open space that characterized the scattered layout of the village. Because of a decrease in the number of parishioners, the chapel discontinued services and was dismantled in 1910.

Of the original ten houses built by the Cornells, only the double house at 30 Glenville Street remains today, although a small, much altered dwelling on Sioux Place, outside of the district, may also date to this period. Besides transforming the existing hamlet then known as Sherwood's Bridge into a bona fide village, Cornell may have also coined the name Glenville which appeared in print as early as 1848 when Cornell organized the Glenville Manufacturing Company to produce "sheet lead, lead pipe, linseed oil, litherage, red lead, cotton goods, and grinding plaster and grain of every kind." In 1852 Ralph Henry Isham acquired the property from

Isaac Cornell, built a new 4-1/2-story mill around the stone mill, and introduced the manufacture of felt at the mill, while keeping "Glenville" in the new company's name: The Glenville Woolen Mills.

The development of the village itself was closely tied to the growth of the mill complex, virtually every household dependent directly or indirectly on its fortunes. In 1856 Pemberwick Road was laid out, the last of the district's thoroughfares to take shape and constructed primarily because Weaver Street, the original highway to the Post Road, was considered too winding and hilly to accommodate the increasing traffic generated by the mill and the village itself. At that time Glenville's incipient downtown included a blacksmith shop, several grocery stores, a post office within one of these stores, and a schoolhouse, the latter located at the northern end of the village, on Riversville Road. The Glenville Historic District's earliest commercial structure at 23 Glenville Street dates to this period and originally featured elaborate jigsaw-cut bargeboards of Gothic Revival derivation typical of this era.

Under various ownerships, the woolen mills continued to grow into a sizable assemblage of factory buildings and increasingly specialized in the production of felt, producing the first woven felt in the United States, previously only manufactured in Europe. In 1867 the currently existing, cut-granite dam was constructed, producing the present shoreline of the millpond. By 1875 the complex consisted of seven connected buildings and about a half dozen separate buildings prominently depicted in a sketch and survey drawn for the mill's new owners, William J. Tingue and Charles House, who merged two woolen companies in which felt was a major product and manufactured their products under the name Hawthorne Woolen Mills, named after Tingue's felt mill destroyed by fire in Hawthorne, [New Jersey](#), in that same year. Under Tingue's direction the two mill buildings that remain today and the superintendent's house were constructed, their architectural distinctiveness reflecting the success of the mills' operations.

The Depot Building or Picking House at 334 Pemberwick Road was built in 1879 as the company's freight depot for a railroad that was never built, and utilized for the storage of raw materials: wool, fur and hair. The New Mill was built in 1881 as the mill's centerpiece and focal point, appointed with an array of modern facilities

including an automatic sprinkler system, the area's first telephone system, the second electric generator produced by Thomas Edison (now on display at Ford's Edison Institute at Greenfield Village, Dearborn, [Michigan](#)), and the first electric lights in the area. The latter enabled night shifts at the factory and created a tourist attraction because of the novelty, people taking the train to Port Chester and switching to horse-drawn carriages to take them to Glenville. The superintendent's house at 6 Glenville Street was built in 1886 on a large landscaped lot comprising the north end of the mill yard and located across the millpond from the site of Cornell's castle. This imposing Queen Anne mansion continued the symbolic presence of the factory's upper management in the heart of the village and formalized the property's open space with park-like landscaping, thus extending the village's central open space initiated with Cornell's castle yard 45 years earlier. The 1880 census revealed that Glenville had grown into a village of 474 people with two-thirds of its households including from one to nine individuals employed at the woolen mills. The company owned 21 dwellings, including single and double houses and at least one boardinghouse. Also reflecting the growth of the community was the new Glenville School, built in 1882 on a lot just east of the mills, the first schoolhouse in the Town of Greenwich to be constructed of brick. Perhaps because so much of the village's downtown was open space, the commercial area had a scattered or dispersed layout of buildings. Although most fronted directly on the street, none were cheek-by-jowl in placement, and the commercial streetscape was often interrupted with one-family dwellings, some on good sized lots. Density never approached that of downtown Greenwich or even the outlying commercial districts of East Port Chester (Byram) or Mianus. Businesses tended to concentrate around the village's two major intersections: Glenville Road and Riversville Road, and Glenville Street, its southern extension, and Glen Ridge Road. These establishments included a billiard hall, a bakery, several grocery stores, and a three-story hotel, the latter known as the Glenville House, still standing today as a mixed commercial and residential building at 36 Glenville Street. Another prominent survivor of this period is 1 Glenville Street, rising straight from the river and originating as a one-story wheelwright shop built in 1855 which acquired a second story and two-story front porch embellished with Italianate details in 1882.

Glenville continued to grow steadily throughout the first 20 years of the 20th century. In 1899 the mills were purchased by the American Felt Company, formed by the four largest felt companies in the country, the Glenville plant being their largest facility, and as such becoming the largest and most diversified manufacturer of felt in the country, if not the world. Their advertisement read:

"What [Pittsburgh](#) is to steel...what [Detroit](#) is to automobiles...what Butte is to copper...Glenville is to felt." In 1902 St. Paul Roman Catholic Church was constructed on Glenville Street in a Shingle-style design; it had heretofore existed as a mission of St. Mary Church in Greenwich, organized in 1889 because of the large increase in the village's Irish population. In 1903 the village obtained fire protection with the formation of the Protection Engine Company No. 1, its firehouse completed in the following year at 14 Riversville Road. The 1920 census showed that Glenville had increased in population to 812 people while the felt mill had expanded to the point where it employed a substantial amount of workers from neighboring communities.

The zenith of Glenville's development can perhaps be symbolized by the construction of the new Glenville School (449 Pemberwick Road) in 1920-1921, which replaced the 1882 structure, now seriously overcrowded. Designed in the Georgian Revival style with an imposing classical portico, it provided a symbolic focus to the community in a geographic sense, by virtue of its centralized location in Glenville's central open space now including the expanded school grounds, and in a social sense, being large enough to accommodate a variety of community functions.

During the 1920s the Indian Spring Land Company, the real estate company owned by the J. Stillman Rockefeller family, acquired hundreds of acres of land on Riversville and Glenville Roads, most of it beyond their mansions which were closer to central Greenwich than Glenville. Not satisfied with controlling this essentially vacant land, the company also purchased adjacent lots with 16 dwellings, several stores, and numerous outbuildings which they demolished in favor of additional woodland, resulting in a correspondingly less urbanized Glenville. Meanwhile, the felt company demolished most of their workers housing, foreshadowing, perhaps,

the ultimate dissolution of the factory complex itself and further contributing to the contraction of the village.

Still, most of the vacant land to the south and west of the village was eventually developed by local residents and increasingly by middle-class buyers from adjacent communities, many of whom had no connection to the felt company, especially during the post-war period. The most notable addition to the village during this period of change was the construction of the Glenville Firehouse in 1950 at the north end of Glenville Green. Constructed of brick, its modified Georgian Revival design complemented Glenville School to the south and provided an additional municipal focus for the village, especially prominent as the vista termination for Riversville Road. The original firehouse was subsequently acquired as a clubhouse for the Ninth District Veterans Association (14 Riversville Road). The following years witnessed the gradual decline of the felt mill's importance and the abrupt departure of St. Paul Church, hastened by its destruction by fire in 1968 and the congregation's subsequent move to a new building on its King Street property, well beyond the village. Glenville School was closed in 1975, replaced by the present building north of the district, but it was recycled as the Western Greenwich Civic Center, thus maintaining its role as the community's municipal focus.

In 1968 the felt mill was acquired by GAF (the General Aniline and Film Corporation), at that time forming a conglomerate in which the felt company was a minor and ultimately disposable component. The valuable land was subsequently sold off in 1978 to Greenwich Associates, a real estate and development company headed by Ralph Schacter and Seymour Schwartz, who transformed the mill complex into office space and condominiums, restoring the two most architecturally significant mill buildings, the Depot Building and the New Mill, and preserving the superintendent's house at 6 Glenville Street and its surrounding, landscaped open space. This unusually sensitive redevelopment precipitated Glenville's second wave of gentrification, opening the floodgates of real estate speculation to a village that was suddenly no longer a remote factory town but an up-and-coming suburban community. Unfortunately, much of the subsequent development has not been sensitive to the historic character of the village and has resulted in replacing typically small-scaled residential and commercial buildings with larger and often

particularly pretentious examples, in many instances strikingly out of scale and out of character with the historic streetscape.

Glenville has long been one of the town's major staging areas for immigrants, in this case attracted by employment in the mills. It is best known as the primary settlement of the town's sizable Polish population but historically the Irish also figured prominently, particularly in the 19th century. The importance of ethnic identity is characteristic of this and similar traditionally working-class neighborhoods in Greenwich, further setting them apart from the wealthier ethnically homogenized neighborhoods that typify the town as a whole. Glenville's ethnic character dates back to the village's formation in the 1840s when Samuel Cornell commissioned the construction of the Emmanuel Episcopal Chapel for his English-born factory workers who, while differing linguistically only in their particular accent, were apparently Anglican in religion in an area that was dominated by Baptists and Methodists. By 1860 the English numbered 40 but were soon outnumbered by the Irish who totaled 256 in 1880 or over half of the village's population. In response to this large increase, St. Paul Roman Catholic Church was organized as a mission of St. Mary Church in Greenwich. The church building was erected in 1902, its stained-glass windows bearing the names of their Irish donors. By this time, however, the parishioners had become predominantly Polish. By 1920 the Irish population had declined to 66, the aspirations of many having outgrown the confines of a one-industry town.

If Glenville and the felt factory were synonymous during the 20th century, so was its Polish character. The first Poles did not arrive in Glenville until after 1885, when the directory listed not one Polish name. By 1920 they numbered 581 (immigrant and first generation) or over two-thirds of the village's population. Within the town as a whole they accounted for one third of the town's Polish population far outnumbering other concentrations in Byram, Davis Avenue, and Pemberwick. Although the felt mill was the *raison d'être* of the Polish settlement and by far its largest employer, the large estates of Greenwich provided significant employment for gardeners and domestics, allowing for a more diversified employment situation than in more isolated mill villages and creating a symbiotic relationship between the Greenwich of palatial estates and the Greenwich of industrial-based neighborhoods

who afforded a ready supply of those who didn't care for factory work. Unlike the Irish, who largely dispersed as their fortunes led them beyond a life dominated by the factory, the Poles tended to stay in Glenville after securing other employment and even after the mill closed for good in 1977. This may in part be attributed to improvements in transportation and the middle-class development of surrounding farm land in the post-World War II era.

The arrival of William J. Tingue as the principal new owner of the woolen mills in 1875 signaled a new era of architectural development in Glenville, creating a degree of sophistication not previously seen in the immediate area, Cornell's castle notwithstanding, and serving as a statement of his company's importance to the community, a statement that would outlive not only his company but industrial activity of any kind in the village. The three most notable buildings of his ownership were constructed during a relatively short period of time: the Depot Building in 1879 (334 Pemberwick Road), the New Mill in 1881 (340 Pemberwick Road), and the superintendent's residence in 1886 (6 Glenville Street). Elaborately detailed mill buildings meant to convey an image of importance were not unusual in the 19th century, but as the first local example thereof, the Depot Building must have raised a few eyebrows. Built as a freight depot in anticipation of a railroad line that was never constructed, it was more extravagant in design than local passenger depots on actual railroad lines. Its transitional Stick-style/Queen Anne design includes imaginative brickwork in the form of denticulated pilasters and stringcourses but its wooden trim is especially ornate, exhibiting Stick-style character in its large, paired, triangular knee-brace brackets supporting the wide eaves; and Queen Anne influence characterized by elaborate, jigsaw-cut peak ornaments decorating its main gables and its eight dormers. Such an over-the-top design for a secondary building probably anticipated the 1881 "New Mill" which became the mill's centerpiece by virtue of its Romanesque Revival design, a decidedly militaristic turn with a battlemented roofline showing engaged corner turrets and well-proportioned walls articulated with intricate brickwork forming stringcourses, pilasters, and arched window heads. The design is expertly accented with an attached, 55-foot tower featuring flaring corbelled battlements, leaving no doubt as to the importance of the enterprise occupying this edifice. The superintendent's residence at 6

Glenville Street also projects this aura of importance and prestige, albeit in a domestic vein, in this case making a statement in the middle of Glenville's "downtown" commercial area in full view of all passers-by. Its Queen Anne design of multiple, intersecting gables, Palladian windows, commodious front porch, and ornately appointed porte-cochere would not be out of place on the most fashionable streets of 19th-century Greenwich, but instead is located in a commercial area, and set off by a generous, landscaped setting, to remind the community of the prestige of the mill's upper management and perhaps echo Samuel Cornell's stone castle, located on the opposite side of the river and still extant at this time.

The Glenville Historic District's most architecturally significant institutional building is the former Glenville School which serves as the preeminent architectural focus of the community by virtue of its open setting facing Glenville Green. An excellent example of the Georgian Revival style and a major work by noted school architect James O. Betelle, it is unique among the town's eight Georgian Revival schools, the only one showing a T-shaped plan with the auditorium placed at the front of the building and distinguished by a prominent, pedimented, tetrastyle portico, its columns crowned by unusual capitals, each consisting of a fluted neck rimmed by acanthus leaves. The entablature includes a noteworthy cornice of dentils arranged in a Greek key design topped by a course of modillions, repeated in a modified form at the pediment's raking cornice. It should be noted that the Glenville Firehouse, built thirty years later to the north of the school, was designed in a modified Georgian Revival manner that clearly complements the school in a respectful manner.

Among the smaller contributing buildings in the district are several that are noteworthy on an individual basis. One Glenville Street is the most notable commercial building in the district, the result of an 1882 expansion of a smaller building in the Italianate style, reflected in its continuous bracketed cornice, which surrounds the building, and its two-story front porch which shows an identical cornice and lateral bow-shaped brackets. This building is not only an essential element of the Glenville Historic District, which retains relatively few commercial buildings, but is unique within the Town of Greenwich as a whole, no other commercial building featuring such an elaborately detailed second-story porch. Next

door, 5 Glenville Street is significant for its diamond-shaped, Gothic Revival attic windows with quatrefoil mullions, another element rare and possibly unique within the town as a whole.

To the west, the Queen Anne-styled Pottgen House is notable for its peak ornaments, the central one showing a sunburst of turned spindles, a design seemingly peculiar to the lower Byram River valley, this example being a northern outlier (9 Glenville Street). Also worth noting as an example of local vernacular stone construction is the John Chmielowiec Building at 243, Glenville Road, strategically overlooking the intersection of Glenville and Pemberwick Roads. Its high basement contains a restaurant and the cut-granite construction continues to the first story. Although the first owner was Polish, the builders were Italians from neighboring communities where such construction is more common, particularly in Italian neighborhoods.

Of particular importance is the Glenville Historic District's aforementioned central open space which serves as a setting for the larger buildings and provides wide vistas of these structures and the surrounding buildings set against a picturesque backdrop of wooded hills. The sheer volume of open space gives a dimension to the district which is generally not in evidence in more conventionally developed village centers that become constricted spatially as their population grows.

This visually all-encompassing characteristic perhaps best symbolizes the district as a whole, incorporating all of its primary architectural elements and historically deriving from Samuel Cornell's desire to maintain an extravagant presence at the heart of his fledgling mill village. As such, Glenville can be clearly defined as an essential component of Greenwich's overlooked working-class heritage and as a most unusual artifact of New England's manufacturing history. The former private space has been maintained as an impressive public space.

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† Nils Kerchus, consultant, Glenville Preservation Association, *Glenville Historic District, Greenwich, Fairfield County, Connecticut*, nomination document, 2005, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, Washington, D.C.

[See Map](#)

Street

Names: [Glen Ridge Road](#), [Glenville Road](#), [Glenville Street](#), [Pemberwick Road](#), [Riversville Road](#), [Weaver Street](#)