

Glendale

The history of the village of Glendale is an early one. In 1785, Arnold Smith purchased land along the Branch River from Jirah Ballou. The water privilege for the mill was given in 1785 for the purpose of supplying water to run a saw mill, corn mill, and other water works. Smith built a sawmill and then a grist mill on the site. In 1794 he bought an additional 22 acres of land from William Inman. In 1841, Anthony Steere purchased the mill and converted it to a cotton mill. Destroyed by fire in 1850 it was rebuilt as a stone mill. In 1853, it became a woolen mill under another owner and in 1873 was known as the Glendale Woolen Company.

William Orrell bought the mill property in 1889, remodeled it and added a large additional amount of machinery for processing. In 1894 the three-story high mill property consisted of 65 acres plus several outbuildings. Orrell built cottages and tenements for his workers. In 1894 the village of 400 people depended totally on the Glendale Mill for their employment. He continued in business until 1934 when the mills were purchased by Austin T. Levy who operated it as a weave shop until the 1960s.

The so-called New Village area of Glendale was built by Mr. Levy to replace houses he had torn down throughout the village of Glendale. His new houses were built of cement like the houses he had seen in his summer residence, the Bahamas. A new concept in housing for this area.

Glendale consists of not only the mill but also of Spring Lake. Once known as Herring Pond the name was changed to attract more visitors from the outlying areas. When the trolley line came through, its many attractions saw Woonsocket people arriving by trolley. One of the major attractions was Munroe's Hall where clambakes were held for many years on Sundays. The Hall in the early 1900s was used on Saturday nights by the campers as a dance hall. No electricity in those days so it was well lit by small lamps.

People came from miles around for the picnics, boating, swimming, fishing, and of course the oldest amusement penny arcade in this part of the country. One of the biggest days of the year for visitors was the Fourth of July. A large fireworks display was part of the celebrations that day.

Several years ago, the Town of Burrillville purchased Spring Lake and proceeded to tear down and rebuild that wonderful recreation area. The tradition of boating, swimming, entertainment, including the Arcade, and a refreshment stand have all been rebuilt for the enjoyment of the citizens of Burrillville and beyond. Glendale is a great place to visit for all.

©2003 Patricia A. Mehrtens,
Burrillville Town Historian