

GLENVILLE

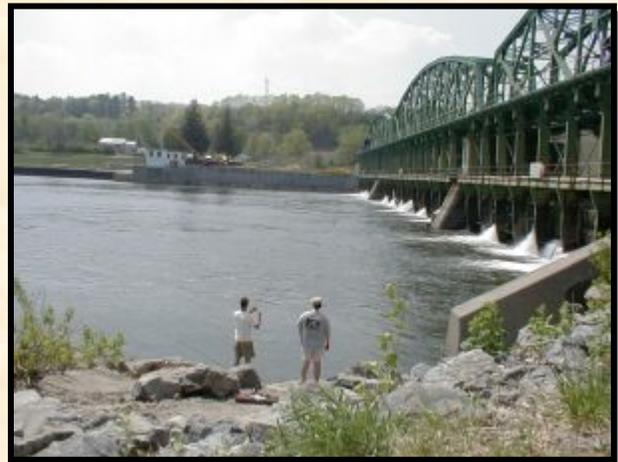
Edited and added to by Cynthia Seacord from material found in the Images of America Glenville book published in 2005 by the Schenectady County Historical Society

At the time of Schenectady's incorporation as a city in 1798, the area that became Glenville was known as the fourth ward of the city. The Town of Glenville was incorporated at the same time as the Town of Rotterdam on April 14, 1820 and is the only town in Schenectady County located north of the Mohawk River. Although it is, with Rotterdam, the youngest of Schenectady County townships, its occupants can claim the oldest European settlement. It was named for Alexander Lindsey Glen, a native of Scotland, who came to New Netherlands from Holland in 1639, and is understood to have been settled in present-day Scotia well before Schenectady's first settlement in 1661. A house built in 1713 by his son, Captain Johannes Glen, is one of the County's most notable historic structures. The Glen-Sanders Mansion stands on land that was held by the same family for more than 300 years.

In 1669 at Wolf Hollow, the area of what currently marks the western border of Glenville, a bloody battle was waged between the Mohawks and Algonquins. As the Algonquins were retreating from the fight, they were ambushed, resulting in the death of fifty Algonquin warriors and their chief. This battle left the Mohawks in control of the eastern end of the Mohawk Valley to the Hudson River. The area of Glenville again saw fighting on July 18, 1748 during the French and Indian Wars. In the Battle of Beukendaal, nineteen men of European descent were killed, while another eleven were wounded.

When Schenectady was incorporated in 1798, its fourth ward contained a wooded area called Glenville Hills that served as the commons. Any Schenectadian could cut trees for timber or firewood there. This land began to be sold in twenty-acre lots to residents of the city. It was not until 1883 that the city sold the last of these lots. The proceeds that were made from these lots were divided among the county's then existing churches.

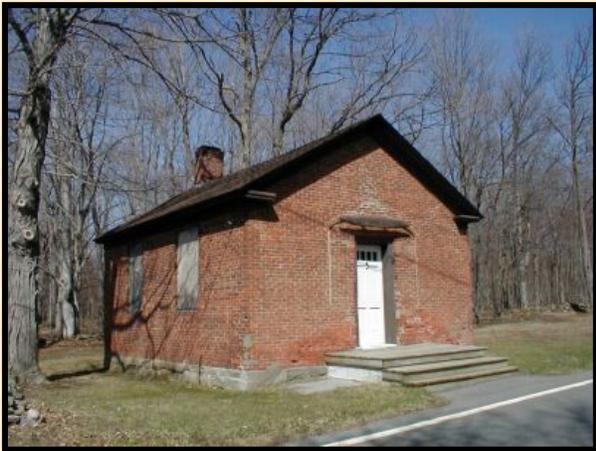
Several hamlets existed in the town upon its incorporation. The oldest settlement was Scotia, Glenville's largest village, which was itself incorporated in 1904 shortly after electric trolleys began crossing the bridge from Schenectady onto Mohawk Avenue. The area of Scotia was built up around the Glen-Sanders Mansion, and the home of Abraham Glen, built in 1730, that today houses the Scotia branch of the Schenectady County Public Library. The village was connected to the City of Schenectady in 1808 by the old wooden covered bridge designed by Theodore Burr. The bridge was one of the earliest uses of a suspension bridge in the country and the longest suspension bridge built at the time. It was purchased by the Town of Glenville in 1874 which replaced it by an iron bridge. Residents and taxpayers of Glenville could cross the bridge free, but others had to pay a toll until about 1920. As cars became more popular, the tolls generated from the bridge paid most of the town's expenses.



Fishing at Lock 8 in Glenville
*Photo courtesy Cornell Cooperative Extension,
Schenectady County*

On the Scotia end of the bridge, the Mohawk Turnpike began. This road connected Schenectady to Rome and helped make the Schenectady area the gateway to the west. The village of Scotia profited greatly by its location along this important road. The Turnpike, now Scotia's Mohawk Avenue and Route 5, was said to have a tavern for each of its 80 miles from Schenectady to Rome. The first tavern stood just north of the old covered bridge, on a half mile of raised road, called the Dyke, leading into Scotia.

Another hamlet west of early Scotia, and also along the Mohawk Turnpike, where Sacandaga Road intersected, was called Reeseville. It boasted the only schoolhouse for the two communities for a number of years. At the far western end of Glenville, where a steep road down Wolf's Hollow meets the Mohawk River, was Hoffman's Ferry, later called Vedder's Ferry, which provided scow transportation across the Mohawk River to Pattersonville. North and east, in the foothills of the Glenville Hills, was Glenville Village, now called West Glenville, home to Glenville's oldest surviving church, the West Glenville Reformed Church. The community of East Glenville, with its tavern, sprang up where the Charlton Stage Road branched off the Ballston Road, while the High Mills settlement grew where Ballston Road crossed the falls of the Alplaus Kill that provided it with water power. The Swaggertown community formed at the current junction of Spring and Swaggertown Roads, where nearly every house in either direction was at one time owned by someone from the Van Eps family. In the 19th century these settlements grew acres of broom corn, along with other crops. Raising, harvesting and storing broomcorn, as well as the manufacturing of brooms, was a major industry in Glenville from about 1835 through 1886, with the town's farmers growing more than a third of the broomcorn grown in the County.



Green Corners Schoolhouse in Glenville
*Photo Courtesy Cornell Cooperative Extension,
Schenectady County*

Only a few of the onetime fifteen Glenville school districts survive. Brick schools at Greens Corners and Alplaus survive. The one at the former can be toured during the summer, while the latter was converted into a house. The eldest school to survive is the frame building on the corner of Mohawk Avenue and Sacandaga Road where, in an upstairs room, John Hetherington ran the Maalwyck School for a number of years before he died in 1803.

In addition to the old Reformed Church in West Glenville, is one organized in Scotia in 1818. In 1840 both the Glenville Center

Methodist and Scotia Baptist churches were founded. Another Christian church located near Swaggertown before 1900, while a Methodist church was built in West Glenville. Today, Glenville contains at least one church of nearly every denomination, including several Roman Catholic parishes.

The area of Scotia began to become very populated at the turn of the twentieth-century as jobs in Schenectady continued to grow, especially because of the business generated by the General Electric and American Locomotive Companies. Upon its 1904 incorporation, the village quickly introduced a water system, sewers, streetlights, paved streets, a village hall, and a fire station. The rural area between Scotia and Reeseville eventually disappeared.

Over time the rest of the town gradually changed from being a farm area to a growing suburb of Schenectady. The Town of Glenville during this time of growth also became home to the Schenectady County Airport. The land for the airport was purchased in 1927 by Schenectady Airport Inc. The airport would be sold to Schenectady County in 1934 for \$79,000. In 1949, 35 acres of land owned by the airport were leased to the Air National Guard for the 139th Fighter Squadron. Glenville also became the home of the U.S. Naval Supply Depot.

Today nearly half of Glenville, aside from Scotia, is largely a built-up suburban area. Beginning in the 1950s, as happened in many other rural sections of the County, many of Glenville's old estates and farms were divided into developments and subdivisions. Still, Glenville contains many beautiful vistas, especially in its hills, and along its creeks, that keep its country "feeling" alive.