

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received APR 21 1987
date entered AUG 27 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic N/A
and or common COVENTRY GLASS FACTORY HISTORIC DISTRICT

2. Location

street & number Route 44 and North River Road N/A not for publication
city, town Coventry N/A vicinity of
state Connecticut code 09 county Tolland code 013

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Owners - See Continuation Sheet
street & number
city, town N/A vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Coventry Town Clerk
street & number Town Office Building - 1712 Main Street
city, town Coventry state CT

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1986 federal state county local
depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission
59 South Prospect Street
city, town Hartford state CT
JUL 13 1987

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Coventry Glass Factory Historic District is a cluster of 19th-century houses near the site of the long-ago demolished Coventry Glass Factory (1813-c.1845). The houses are widely spaced apart along two intersecting roads, Boston Turnpike (U.S. Route 44) and North River Road. The land is level but rises sharply both eastward and westward of the intersection, the topography reflecting the presence of a small stream, the Skungamaug River, which runs parallel to River Road. The district is a rural agricultural area, with extensive open land around the University of Connecticut experimental farm, which dominates the south side of Boston Turnpike, and other former meadow now becoming overgrown with shrubs and trees. In addition to the low-lying wetland which borders the river, there is a large pond formed from a tributary stream which borders the north edge of the district. Extensive walls mark out house lots and fields.

Of the eleven houses in the district, ten date from the period of the glass factory and one is a recently built contemporary design (330 North River Road, Photograph 16). Other noncontributing buildings are a small cabin, a relatively modern barn, and the experimental farm's barn/greenhouse structure at the southeast corner of Boston Turnpike and North River Road (Photographs 14 & 15). Of the fourteen buildings substantial in size and scale, ten were judged contributing. Most of the houses have small associated outbuildings, garages, and sheds which were not separately inventoried.

Most of the houses are small vernacular dwellings, though some include features from the Federal and Greek Revival styles. The Nathaniel Root House, 1046 Boston Turnpike (Photographs 1 & 2), is the most ornate, a large, well-preserved Federal-style house with an elaborately detailed entrance and cornice treatment. Other houses have corner pilasters, an elliptical gable window, fanlight transoms, and a corner-block entrance surround (Photographs 3, 7, 11, & 12). Three of the houses are brick, with flat-arched window lintels and S-shaped beam anchors visible on the exterior (Photographs 3, 7, & 10).

Most of the houses have been altered to some degree, but all retain sufficient original material to make obvious their early 19th-century origin. Old small-pane sash predominates, and most houses have chimneys of typical size and location. Victorian additions such as bay windows and porches are found on three of the houses. The district's historic frame houses are, with two exceptions, covered with modern siding material.

No structures or ruins mark the site of the glass factory which stood on the north side of the road near 1084 Boston Turnpike or the bottle house on the south side of the road (Photograph 5). However, the ground in the vicinity is still

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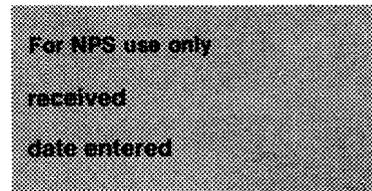
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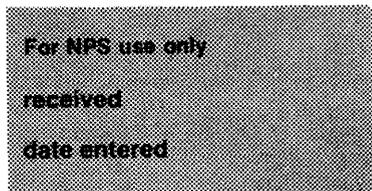


Owners of Property (continued):

Map/Block/Lot	Address	Owners & Address	Contributing/Noncontributing
23/29A/8	949 Boston Turnpike	Robert F. LaMarche & Pamela J. DeCandia	Contributing
23/29A/11	952 Boston Turnpike	Richard A. & Barbara J. Yost	Contributing
23/29A/12	962 Boston Turnpike	Robert M. & Maureen N. Marques	Contributing
23/31/8A	971 Boston Turnpike	Robert F. LaMarche & Pamela J. DeCandia	Noncontributing
23/29A/13	994 Boston Turnpike	Dorothy Shaffer	Contributing
18/25/11A	1046 Boston Turnpike	David J. Fales & Laurie Mallin	Contributing
18/25/11 (part)	Boston Turnpike	Salvation Army 855 Asylum Street Hartford, Connecticut	Contributing (glass factory site)
18/25/12	1084 Boston Turnpike	Salvation Army 855 Asylum Street Hartford, Connecticut	Contributing (glass factory site and building)
18/24/13-1, 13-2	1185 Boston Turnpike	Stephen T. & Leila K. Bowen	Contributing
18/24/2	241 North River Road	Sarah Ross	Contributing
18/31/7 (part)	290 North River Road	State of Connecticut University of Connecticut Storrs, Connecticut 06268	Contributing
18/24/1	North River Road & Boston Turnpike	State of Connecticut University of Connecticut Storrs, Connecticut 06268	Noncontributing buildings; contributing site (store and bottle house)
23/29A/14	330 North River Road & Boston Turnpike	Roxanne W. Elwell	Noncontributing
18/25/10	351 North River Road	William F. & Leigh H. Wajda	Contributing

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Description (continued):

littered with melted glass fragments (Photograph 6), and stone walls near 1084 Boston Turnpike incorporate both burned bricks and glass fragments. No professional archeological testing has been done; in the 1920s and 1930s, extensive collecting of bottle fragments, particularly on the site of the experimental farm, was undertaken by Harry Hall White.

INVENTORY OF CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

Map/Block/Lot	Address	Description	Photo.#
23/29A/8	949 Boston Turnpike	Vernacular/Federal, c.1830, 1-1/2 stories, 5-bay acade, aluminum siding, transomed doorway with corner-block surround. Old barn altered to garage/apartment at rear.	11
23/29A/11	952 Boston Turnpike	Vernacular/Federal, c.1820, brick, 2-1/2 stories, 3-bay facade, full cornice return. 20th-century barn at rear (noncontributing).	10
23/29A/12	962 Boston Turnpike	Vernacular, c.1840, 5-bay facade, aluminum siding. Garage.	9
23/29A/13	994 Boston Turnpike	Vernacular, c.1840, 2-1/2 stories, 3-bay gable-end facade, c.1890 porch. Small shed to rear.	8
18/25/11A	1046 Boston Turnpike	Federal, 1809, 2-1/2 stories, 5-bay facade, clapboarded, elaborate cornice and fanlighted, pedimented entry. Garage.	1,2
18/25/12	1084 Boston Turnpike	Vernacular, c.1830, 1-1/2 and 2-1/2 stories, gable end facing road, clapboarded.	4
18/24/13-1	1185 Boston Turnpike	Federal, c.1820, brick with brick and frame ell, 2-1/2 stories, cornice return, elliptical attic window, leaded fanlighted entry.	7

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Description (continued):

NONCONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

Map/Block/Lot	Address	Description	Photo #
23/31/8A	971 Boston Turnpike	Small novelty-sided cabin, c.1930	14
18/24/1	North River Road & Boston Turnpike	Barn, c.1920; attached greenhouse, c.1950; small shed or garage at rear	15
23/29A/14	330 North River Road & Boston Turnpike	Clapboarded house, c.1980	16

NONCONTRIBUTING OBJECT

Bridge, Route 44 (Hartford Turnpike) over Skungamaug River, c.1935 concrete beam bridge with paneled rail.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below				
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion	
___ 1400–1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science	
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture	
___ 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/	
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater	
___ 1900–	___ communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation	
		___ invention		___ other (specify)	

Criteria A,C,D

Specific dates See Inventory, Item 7 **Builder/Architect** Not Known

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary

Coventry Glass Factory Historic District is significant because of its associations with an enterprise important in the historical development of Coventry (Criterion A). Glass manufacture was one of the earliest and most extensive of a series of small industries, including hat-making, silk-thread and woolen manufacture, and woodworking, which transformed Coventry in the early 19th century from an agricultural community to one dependent on both farming and manufacturing. Although little is visible to mark the site of the factory itself, all the land in the district was owned by the glassworks owners at one time or another and nine of the eleven houses were put up by the owners or the glassblowers who worked for them. Though altered, all the houses have an early 19th-century appearance which substantiates their associative value; one (1046 Boston Turnpike, Photographs 1 & 2) is such a well-preserved representative example of a rural Connecticut Federal-style house that it appears individually eligible (Criterion C). The archeological resources of the district have not been professionally evaluated through excavation or other below-ground testing; however, the probability is high that subsurface investigation in the area will add to an understanding of the glassworks. Therefore, archeological potential contributes to the district's significance (Criterion D).

The Coventry Glass Company

The Coventry Glass Company was started in 1813 by local farmer-entrepreneurs and out-of-town glass workers. The War of 1812 created a market for glass formerly served by English manufacturers,¹ and throughout New England small glass-making enterprises appeared. Coventry was well-situated to market its products, accessible to both the Boston Turnpike and, half a mile down North River Road, the Windham Turnpike, the major route between Hartford and Providence. The workers (probably two dozen at most) included both English-born and Connecticut glassblowers, the latter perhaps experienced in previously established Connecticut glasshouses.² The products of the Coventry works included the medicine bottles, inkstands, and flasks similar to those produced by other New England glassmakers, as well as the figured commemorative flasks subsequently highly prized by collectors. Coventry is credited with the first American portrait flask, one produced 1824-1825 to commemorate Lafayette's visit to the United States. Others included portraits of Washington, Jackson,³ and DeWitt Clinton, as well as flasks heralding the coming of the railroad. The individual partners involved with the company changed over time, but the works stayed in production until about 1845, at which time the proprietors continued operating the nearby Willington Glass Company, in which many of the same people were involved. Several of the glassblowers continued to live in Coventry in the area of the district, while others moved to Willington or Stafford.

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Significance (continued):

The houses in the district recall in detail the history of this early Coventry enterprise. The company itself owned only the acre with the factory and one other lot with a house, although Coventry records reveal interests in both timber land (for fuel) and a woodworking shop (for packing crates), both of which were outside the area of the district. Most of the houses were built and owned either by individual proprietors or by workers in the glass factory. The workers' houses were mostly mortgaged to one or more proprietors and were often bought back by them when the workers moved or died. The most elaborate house in the district (Photographs 1 & 2), was the home of Captain Nathaniel Root, a well-to-do Coventry farmer who was an original proprietor. The large brick house across the street (Photograph 3) was built by another partner, merchant John Turner of Mansfield, who also owned a store and bottle house located across the intersection and who acted as the firm's business agent in the early years. After Turner's bankruptcy the house was owned and occupied first by Thomas Stebbins and then Rufus B. Chamberlain, Coventry men who seemed to have had the lead among the Mansfield, Willington, and Coventry men who made up the changing partnership. The brick houses at either end of the district (Photographs 7 & 10) were built by Eli N. Case and Uriel Andrews, the glassblowers among the original proprietors, and the Andrews house was later owned for many years by English-born glassblower George Gerrard. The two houses in between Andrews' and Nathaniel Root's (962 and 994 Boston Turnpike, Photographs 8 & 9) were owned by another one-time proprietor, Nathaniel Root, Jr., who lived in one and had the other as a tenant house. The house at 241 North River Road (Photograph 13) was built by glassblower Charles Hanover in 1825, whereas that at 351 North River Road (Photograph 12) was owned as a tenant house by Nathaniel Root, Sr. The house at 1084 Boston Turnpike (Photograph 4) is very near the site of the glassworks and may be one of a row of three small houses owned about 1850 by Rufus B. Chamberlain and formerly occupied by glass workers. Two of those houses no longer exist, and their sites, occupied by modern residential construction, probably lie outside the western end of the district. Only the house at 949 Boston Turnpike (Photograph 11) seems never to have been associated with the glassworks or its owners: it was built about 1830 by Lyman Hyde, a wagonmaker and blacksmith who operated a shop to the west. Hyde may have moved the shop from the north side of the road, for at one time Hyde occupied the brick house and a shop next to Nathaniel Root, Jr.'s property.

The proprietors of the Coventry glassworks were typical of the small-scale entrepreneurs active in most Connecticut towns of the period. Most were either well-to-do farmers or general merchants from the immediate area, and many had other manufacturing interests as well -- Nathaniel Root had a share in a woolen mill, and John Turner and Thomas Stebbins both were involved in small Coventry textile-manufacture schemes. Both in its original form and its re-

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Significance (continued):

formation in 1847, several glassblowers were among the proprietors, suggesting (as does the form of the settlement, with widely-spaced, individually built houses instead of company tenements) the economic power of skilled glass workers.

Architectural Significance

The Nathaniel Root house (Photographs 1 & 2) is a well-preserved embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of rural Connecticut Federal-style architecture. Although retaining the traditional five-bay form inherited from the 18th century, the house has the center-hall plan and elegant architectural ornament favored in the Federal period. The small scale and fine detail of the entrance treatment, fanlight leading, and cornice modillions epitomizes the Federal taste for light, freely interpreted Classical motifs. Although simpler, the Eli N. Case house (Photograph 7) is also a good example of rural Federal architecture, evident in its attic-story ellipse and its delicately leaded entry fanlight.

Archeological Potential

Oral tradition recorded by glass collector Harry Hall White in the 1920s suggests some degree of disturbance in the area. Stone and brick from the furnace itself were said to have been salvaged by local masons, and rubbish heaps plowed under to lighten the heavy loam soil. Near the presumed site of the glass house, a sand pit operation hampered White's surface collection. The history of the company suggests additional problems: the fact that the owners kept their other glassworks in operation after shutting down this one implies that anything useable and movable was taken to Willington, and the reversion of the land to agricultural use makes it likely that much of it was disturbed down to plow level. Finally, the documentary evidence is not sufficient to locate any structures or activity points except in general terms: the glass factory was on a one-acre lot on the north side of the turnpike carved out of Nathaniel Root's land near the bridge, and a barn, store, and bottle-house was somewhere on the nine-acre plot at the southwest corner of the intersection.

At the same time, the possibility still exists of locating meaningful archeological data. Glass manufacture is well-suited to archeological study because raw materials, structures, tools, and products are all durable. Such artifacts, even if removed from their archeological context, can add to what is known about the site from documentary sources. For example, in explaining the relative longevity of the Coventry site, it would be useful to know the sources of sand (local or New Jersey) and crucibles (bought or made on site). Excavations of other glassworks have made similar use of materials fairly

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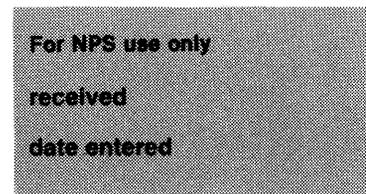
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Continuation sheet

Significance (continued):

devoid of context, even finding evidence to support the German ethnic origin of employees.⁴ Of course, the analysis of surface-collected bottle fragments has already provided extensive evidence of the products of the Coventry glassworks, placing the company in the mainstream of small New England bottle-makers. Further discovery of fragments, a heretofore unknown artifact deposit, or structural evidence of the glassworks can be expected to refine an understanding of Coventry and similar glassworks.

The research questions identified above - the source of sand, the source of crucibles and/or crucible clay, the ethnic origin of workers, the types and designs of glass products - bear directly on the historical context discussed throughout, the origin and development of small-scale industry, particularly glass-making, in Connecticut. Historical archeology seeks to explain, through the analysis of the remains of human activity, episodes of cultural, economic, technological, and social change such as the appearance, development, and passing of New England glassworks. The availability of raw materials - sand, fuel, crucible clay - can be hypothesized to have an effect on the practicability of such an enterprise. Importing sand from New Jersey, as was done at the Pitkin glassworks, would seem to put a company at a disadvantage to one with a ready source of appropriate sand. The ability to blow glass - known to be rare in America in the early 19th century - is an obvious prerequisite for making blown-glass bottles. Consequently, it would add to our understanding of the industry to know where this skill came from. Evidence of the German origin of glassblowers (German buttons were found at one New Hampshire glassworks) or distinctively English mold construction would suggest the skill was imported, at least in the early years. Analysis of bottle types and mold marks has demonstrated a high rate of migration of glassblowers among the various New England glassworks: this suggests a two-edged labor market, one in which skilled workers were available in the region, yet not a stable source of expertise for any given manufacturer. Finally, insight into the influence of popular taste and marketing considerations, important because glass bottles, like other Connecticut products, were intended to be sold for profit, can be expected from an analysis of what was actually produced at the site. Although museum collections contain artifacts attributed to one or another glassworks, archeological investigation has repeatedly been shown to refine and authenticate the provenance of certain products.

To re-iterate, the data likely to exist would include materials such as sand and clay; crucible fragments; discarded products and glass waste; tools and molds; and evidence of structures.

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Significance (continued):

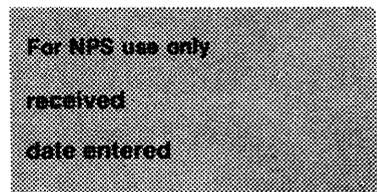
The site of the "bottlehouse," presumably a facility for the storage of finished products, might (if its location and size were determined) add to an understanding of how the Coventry company's products were distributed. The development of networks of large wholesalers in major cities is one of the critical developments in the economy of the nation in the early 19th century. However, a large bottlehouse might imply that the glassworks was storing significant quantities of its own products and therefore dealt directly with retailers or small wholesalers. Through documentary evidence and analysis of the interrelationship of the components at sites like Coventry, a better picture may emerge of how small producers fit into the developing regional and national economies.

Notes:

1. The Coventry glass factory is one of five Connecticut glassworks operating before 1850. The others are Pitkin, Manchester (East Hartford at the time of its founding about 1783); Mather, East Hartford; Glastenbury (the spelling later changed to Glastonbury); and Willington. Of these, only the Glastenbury site has been even partially excavated (by Old Sturbridge Village). Only the Pitkin site (listed on the National Register) has any above-ground remains of the glassworks.
2. Others such as Charles and George Hanover or Daniel, Francis, and Leonard Shaffer may have been of German ancestry. Glass-blower and proprietor Uriel Andrews lived in East Hartford in 1800, suggesting he may have been employed at the Pitkin or Mather glass factory.
3. Both the Corning Museum and Old Sturbridge Village have examples of Coventry products in their collections.
4. David R. Starbuck, "The New England Glassworks: New Hampshire's Boldest Experiment in Early Glassmaking," New Hampshire Archeologist 27 (1986).

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Geographical Data (continued):

UTM References:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
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| B: 18/720110/4630460 | L: 18/720400/4630830 |
| C: 18/720100/4630630 | M: 18/720460/4630830 |
| D: 18/719730/4630610 | N: 18/720510/4630870 |
| E: 18/719710/4630670 | O: 18/720510/4630790 |
| F: 18/719850/4630700 | P: 18/720490/4630700 |
| G: 18/719840/4630780 | Q: 18/720500/4630700 |
| H: 18/719970/4630770 | R: 18/720500/4630640 |
| I: 18/719150/4630800 | S: 18/720180/4630640 |
| J: 18/720220/4630780 | |

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary is shown on the accompanying map, traced November, 1986 from Coventry Tax Assessment aerial maps 18 and 23, scale approximately 1:2400. The boundary follows rear property lines in all but two cases, where it crosses lots with extensive back acreage. The properties included are from 949 to 1185 Boston Turnpike on the south side of the road; 952 to 1084 on the north side; 241 to 351 North River Road, west side; 290 to 330 North River Road, east side.

Boundary Justification:

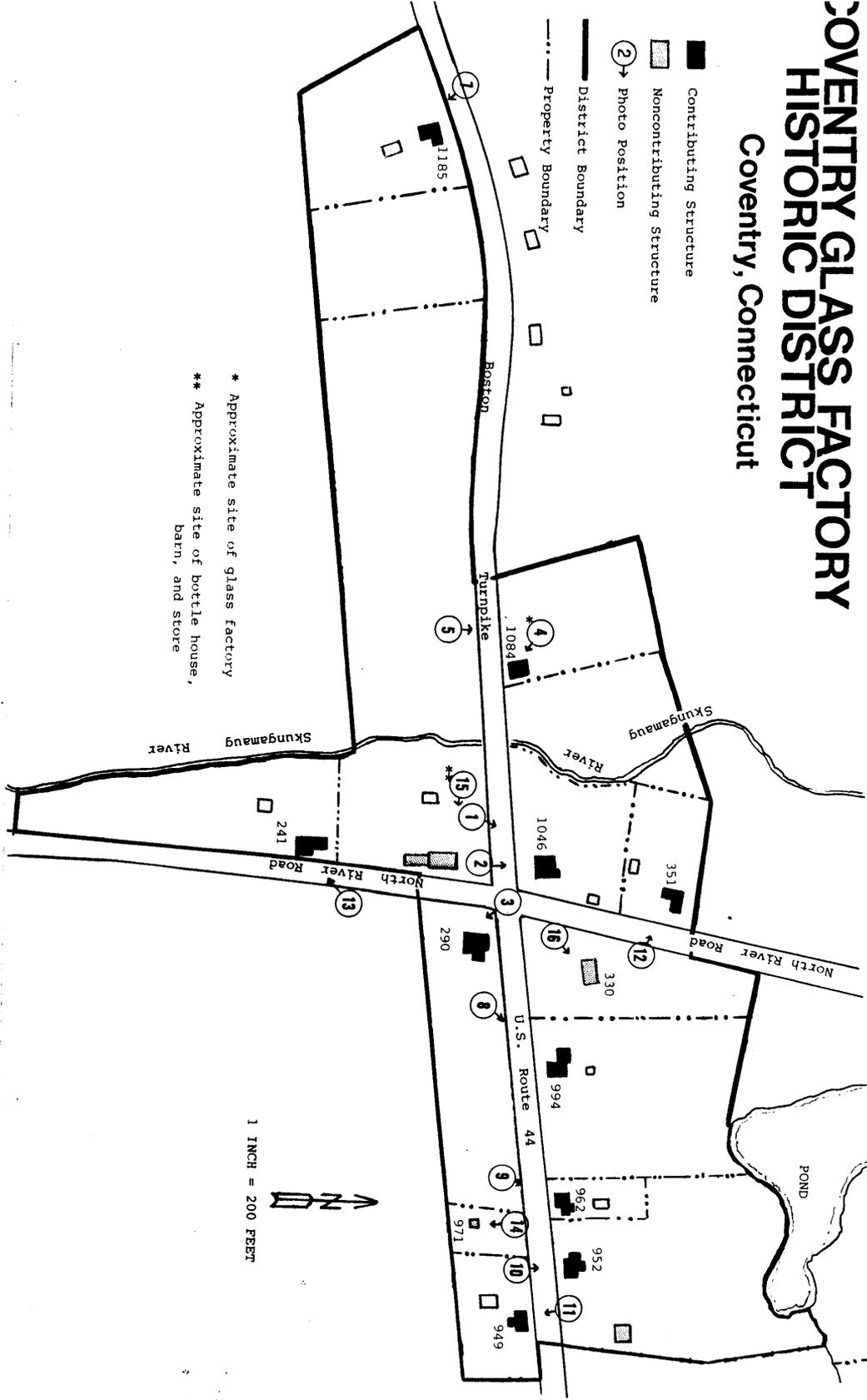
The theme of the district is primarily conveyed by the historic houses which were associated with owners and workers at the glass factory. Therefore the boundary follows the property lines which go with these houses. In the case of the northeast and southwest corners of the district, the boundary also follows natural features, the pond and Skungamaug River. To avoid excess acreage, the boundary cuts across the parcel on the southeast corner of the intersection owned by the University of Connecticut experimental farm, in a line with the rear property boundary of the next lot east.

The largest extent of open land in the district is on the south side of Boston Turnpike between the experimental farm's barn/greenhouse and the house at 1185 Boston Turnpike. This area, partly overgrown meadow and partly wooded, is important to the district because it links 1185 Boston Turnpike to the rest of the district; because the precise site of the bottlehouse on the south side of the road is not known and may lie within this open land; and because the land historically was open (no houses show on either of the 19th-century maps). The tract also relates visually to the district because of the presence of stone walls paralleling the road and running back along former field lines, as is characteristic of the rest of the district.

(continued)

COVENTRY GLASS FACTORY HISTORIC DISTRICT

Coventry, Connecticut



* Approximate site of glass factory
 ** Approximate site of bottle house, barn, and store

1 INCH = 200 FEET