



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historical name \_\_\_\_\_

other names/site number Rossie Velvet Mill Historic District

2. Location

street & number see continuation sheet 2:1 not for publication N/A  
city or town Stonington vicinity N/A  
state Connecticut code CT county New London code 011  
zip code 06355

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets        does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant        nationally X statewide        locally. (       See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 1/15/06  
Signature of certifying official Date  
J. Paul Loether, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
Commission on Culture & Tourism, Historic Preservation and Museum Division  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property        meets        does not meet the National Register criteria. (       See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register  
See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register  
See continuation sheet
- other (explain):

[Signature] 3/9/2007  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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CONTINUATION SHEET

**Rossie Velvet Mill Historic District, Stonington, New London County, CT**      Section 2      **Page 1**

Bruggeman Court, 7

Bruggeman Place, 2, 4, 3, 5, 9, 11, 13, 14, 19, 27, 28, 29, 32, 36, 40, 41

Greenmanville Avenue, 54, 58, 62, 72, 90, 112, 123, 130, 132, 134, 136, 140, 142, 144

Hinckley Street, 6, 8, 10, 12, 20

Pleasant Street, 3

Rossie Street, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 20, 21

Velvet Street, 3, 5

**Rossie Velvet Mill Historic District, Stonington, New London County, CT**

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>51</u>	<u>5</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>16</u>	<u>3</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>67</u>	<u>8</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing \_\_\_\_\_ Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling  
MILL

Cat: DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling  
MUSEUM

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
 (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival  
LATE VICTORIAN  
LATE VICTORIAN AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY MOVEMENTS/Craftsman

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone  
brick  
 roof asphalt shingle  
  
 walls weatherboard  
brick  
stone

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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The Rossie Velvet Mill Historic District is north of the village center of Mystic; it extends along the spine of Greenmanville Avenue between Pleasant Street on the northernmost edge of the district to the remnants of a tidal marsh near Mystic Seaport's southernmost parking lot. Residential streets running east off of Greenmanville Avenue north and south of the large red brick Rossie Velvet Mill (built 1898; 112 Greenmanville Avenue, Photographs #15, #28-32) are included, as well the mill complex itself and the mill owners' houses (Ernest Rossie House, 72 Greenmanville Avenue, Photograph #12, and Bruggeman-Rossie-Blanchette House, 3 Bruggeman Place, Photograph #16). On the side streets the first lots to be built on were those on the relatively flat land nearest Greenmanville Avenue, but soon others were developed on the hillside. A ridge of high ground parallels Greenmanville Avenue, marking the easternmost limits of the district. The western boundary of the district is Greenmanville Avenue itself and, in the case of the former blacksmith shop for the mill and an adjacent house, the Mystic River, which flows roughly parallel to Greenmanville Avenue.

The Rossie Velvet Mill Historic District is comprised of 51 properties. The smaller buildings are mainly residential, built between 1850 and 1950, with the bulk being constructed between 1900 and 1950. The increased need for housing, spurred by general population growth in the late 1890s, and the founding and expansion of the Rossie Velvet Mill on Greenmanville Avenue, led to the establishment of new streets east of Greenmanville Avenue. Construction of single and multi-family houses along the new streets extended an existing residential area along Greenmanville Avenue, and the latter became more intensively developed. Most of the earliest houses are vernacular Victorian structures like the Ralph Hughes House at 130 Greenmanville Avenue (Photographs #2, #9, #28, and #32). The late nineteenth and early twentieth-century residences were mainly built in the Colonial Revival, Shingle, and Bungalow styles. A fine example of the Shingle Style in the district is the Thomas Weir House at 5 Bruggeman Place (Photograph #3). A number of large Colonial Revival-style houses like those at 132, 136, 140, and 144 Greenmanville Avenue (Photographs #1-2, #11, #28, #31), and 3 Rossie Street (Photograph #12) grace the district. Slightly smaller single-family houses built between 1900 and 1935, mainly bungalows, are also represented in the district. Examples of two different types of smaller houses are the Henry Fain House, 19 Bruggeman Place (Photograph #7) and the Menge House, 4 Rossie Street (said to have been manufactured by Sears Roebuck). Compact Victorian Vernacular and Colonial Revival houses are also part of the streetscape (see 142 Greenmanville Avenue, Photographs #1, #7, and #28 for the former). The shingled John Spicks House (20 Rossie Street, Photograph #9) seems to be inspired by the Craftsman Style, and the neighboring John Litterscheitt House at 21 Rossie Street has some Colonial Revival features. Some houses were built or converted for multi-family use. The largest multi-family structure was dubbed "The Block" or "The Square House" (5 Velvet Street).

The non-residential properties include the Rossie Velvet Mill (112 Greenmanville Avenue, Photographs #15, #28-32), a warehouse (123b Greenmanville Avenue; the former blacksmith shop for the mill), a former auto showroom and repair garage (90 Greenmanville Avenue, Photograph #20), and the Social Society Frohsinn (or German Club; 54 Greenmanville Avenue, Photograph #14). Vacant lots in the district have been filled with small frame capes and ranches dating from the 1940s through the 1960s, like the Elsie Edelhoff House, built in 1952 (28 Bruggeman Place, Photograph #19).

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Inventory

C=contributing NC=non-contributing

<u>Street and Number</u> [Tax Lot Number]	<u>Name/Style/Date</u>	<u>C/NC</u>	<u>Photo #</u>
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**Bruggeman Court**

7 [173/5/19]	<u>Frensch/Marseilles House:</u> 1 ½-story frame gable-roofed house (1916).	C	#13
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**Bruggeman Place**

2 [173/5/26]	<u>Weyer-Scussel House:</u> 2 ½-story frame Colonial Revival-style house (1906). Gable roof; upper floors sheathed in shingles, first floor in clapboards. Garage.	C  NC	
3 [173/4/2]	<u>Bruggeman-Rossie-Blanchette House:</u> 2 ½-story frame house set gable end to the street; sheathed in stucco (c. 1905). 3 bays wide; 2-story ell at rear. Shaped barge boards.	C	#16
4 [173/5/25]	<u>Esperig-Brown House:</u> 2 ½-story frame Colonial Revival-style house (c. 1900). Gable roof; upper floors sheathed in shingles, first floor in clapboards. Garage.	C  NC	
5 [173/4/3]	<u>Thomas Weir House:</u> 2-story frame Shingle Style house (c. 1890). Cross-gable roof; wraparound porch, partially enclosed. Garage (1920); shed (1969).	C  C NC	#3
9 [173/4/4]	<u>Fred Hermes House:</u> 2 ½-story frame Colonial Revival house (c. 1911).	C	
11 [173/4/5]	1-story frame cape (1955).	NC	

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<b><u>Bruggeman Place cont'd</u></b>			
13 [173/4/6]	<u>Arcangelo PraLevis House:</u> 2 ½-story frame Colonial Revival house (1906) with a cross-gable roof. Enclosed front porch. Shed (1988).	C    NC	
14 [173/5/24]	<u>Fortunato Panciera House:</u> 1-story brick house set on a stone foundation that forms a raised basement (1914). Frame bank barn sheathed in shingles with a brick foundation at rear.	C   C	#17-18
19 [173/4/7]	<u>Henry (Romano) Fain House:</u> 1-story frame house with stone foundation (1916). Built as a two-family house. Garage (1930).	C  C	#4
27 [173/4/8]	<u>John (Giovanni) Favretti House:</u> 1 ½ -story frame house (1924). Built by Giovanni Favretti and Arthur Panciera, carpenters; Agostino Lazzaris, mason. Garage (originally a shed on the northwest corner of the lot; it was moved and renovated c. 1924. current roof is a replacement).	C  C	
28 [173/5/22]	<u>Elsie Edelhoff House:</u> 1-story frame cape (1952).	NC	#19
29 [173/5/8]	<u>John Cremers House</u> 1/1/2-story frame house (1925).	C	#25
32 [173/5/21]	<u>Alexander Nasiatka House</u> 1-story frame bungalow with a gable roof with a clipped gable (1936).	C	#23, 26

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<b><u>Bruggeman Place cont'd</u></b>			
36 [173/5/20]	<u>Emily Frensch Marseilles House</u> 2-story frame Craftsman-Style house set on a raised basement (1916). Gable roof set gable end facing the street. Enclosed shed-roof porch.	C	#22-23
40	<u>James Barden House</u> 1 ½-story frame modified cape with a gable roof set on a stone foundation (1915).	C	#24
41 [173/4/12]	<u>Edward Pinkman House</u> 1 ½-story frame house with a gable roof and shed-roof dormer (1914). The main roof extends out over the front porch. First floor is stuccoed.	C	#21, #23
<b><u>Greenmanville Avenue</u></b>			
54 [173/5/3]	<u>Social Society of Froshinn (German Club)</u> 1 ½-story frame meeting hall set on a raised brick basement (1906).	C	#14
58 [173/5/2]	2 ½-story frame Colonial Revival-style house (c. 1900). Gable roof; upper floors sheathed in shingles, first floor in clapboards. Garage.	C NC	#5
62 [173/5/1]	2 ½-story frame Colonial Revival-style two-family house (c. 1899).	C	
72 [173/4/1]	<u>Ernest Rossie House</u> 2 ½-story frame Colonial-Revival-style house with a wraparound porch (c. 1905). Gable roof; set gable-end facing the street. Sheathed in stucco.	C	#12

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<b><u>Greenmanville Avenue cont'd</u></b>				
[173/3/1]	Parking lot.	NC		
90 [173/2/2]	<u>Santin Garage</u> 1-story frame commercial building; gable roof set gable end to the street; sheathed in wood shingles (1910).	C	#20	
112 [173/2/1]	<u>Rossie Velvet Mill</u> Brick mill complex now covering 3 ½ acres (built 1898; 5 additions between 1902 and 1932; designed by Robert D. Kohn).	C	#15, #28-32	
123a [172/1/1]	<u>Lovelace House</u> : 2 ½-story frame Shingle-Style house (c. 1900). Upper Floors are sheathed in shingles; first floor is clapboarded.	C	#28, #31	
123b [172/1/1]	1-story frame warehouse (1898). Former blacksmith shop for Rossie Mill; by the 1930s the northern end was used as a stone- cutter's workshop by Bortolo Panciera.	C		
130 [172/3/8]	<u>Ralph Hughes House</u> : 1 ½-story frame Victorian Vernacular house (c. 1850). Front porch with turned columns and sawnwork decoration. Garage (1910).	C	#2, #9, #28, #31	
132 [172/3/7]	2 ½-story frame Colonial Revival three- family house (c. 1900). Cross-gable roof; front porch with turned columns and sawnwork decoration.	C	#2, #28, #31	
134 [172/3/6]	<u>Joe Blair House</u> : 2 ½-story Colonial Revival frame house (c. 1900). Gable roof; two-story front porch. Garage (1950).	C	#2, #28	



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[Tax Lot Number]

Name/Style/Date

**Greenmanville Avenue cont'd**

136 [172/3/5]	<u>Jacob Eidesheim House</u> : 2 ½--story Colonial Revival frame house (c. 1910). Cross-gable roof; three-sided bay on second floor; front porch with turned columns.	C	#2, #17
140 [172/2/11]	<u>Wilhelm House</u> : 2 ½-story Colonial Revival frame house (c. 1910). Enclosed front porch.	C	#1
142 [172/2/10]	1 ½-story frame Victorian Vernacular house (c. 1900). Front porch with turned columns and sawnwork decoration. Garage (1950).	C C	#1, #10, #28
144 [172/2/9]	<u>Dunsbar House</u> : 2 ½-story Colonial Revival frame house (c. 1900). Gable roof. Front porch with turned columns. Garage (1920).	C C	#28

**Hinckley Street**

6 [173/3/31]	1-story frame cape (1990).	NC	
8 [173/3/32]	1-story frame ranch (1954).	NC	
10 [173/3/30]	1-story frame cape (1949).	C	
12 [173/3/28]	1-story frame cape (1963).	NC	
20 [173/3/27]	<u>Quinto Basilli House</u> : 2 ½-story frame Colonial Revival house with gambrel roof (c. 1930).	C	

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Street and Number  
[Tax Lot Number]

Name/Style/Date

C/NC

Photo #

**Pleasant Street**

3  
[172/2/12]      1 ½-story frame Colonial Revival house (c. 1903). Cross-gable roof; enclosed front porch.  
Garage (1903).      C

**Rossie Street**

3  
[173/3/32a]      Nauen House: 2 ½-story frame Colonial Revival house (c. 1912). Gable roof with cross-gable wings. Front porch with turned columns.      C

4  
[173/4/30]      Menge House: 1-story frame bungalow (c. 1930).      C

5  
[173//3/2]      Sebastiano Santin House: 2 ½-story frame Colonial Revival house (c. 1910). Gable roof with cross-gable wings. Garage (1910).      C

6  
[173/4/29]      Amerigo Colechia House  
2 ½-story frame Colonial Revival house with enclosed side porch (c. 1933). Garage (1932).      C

7  
[173/3/3]      1-story frame ranch (1960).      NC

8  
[173/4/28]      Marchand House  
1 ½-story frame Colonial Revival cape (c. 1932). Pedimented stoop supported by paired Doric columns. Garage (1932).      C

9  
[173/3/4]      1 ½-story frame cape (c. 1940) Garage (1950).      C

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[Tax Lot Number]

Name/Style/Date

C/NC

Photo #

**Rossie Street cont'd**

12 [173/4/27]	<u>John Fain House</u> : 1 ½-story frame house (1925). Garage (1925).	C C	
14 [173/4/26]	<u>Henry (Romano) Fain House II</u> 2 ½-story frame Colonial Revival house (c. 1947). Built by Douglas McDonald of Mystic. Gambrel roof; enclosed porch. Shed (1989).	C  NC	
20 [173/4/25]	<u>John Spicks House</u> 1 ½-story frame house, sheathed in shingles (1926). Gable roof; shed roof dormer (added after 1950); side porch. Garage (1926); shed (added after 1950).	C  C NC	#9
21 [173/3/6]	<u>John Litterscheitt House</u> 1 ½-story frame Colonial Revival house (c. 1920). Garage (1920).	C C	

**Velvet Street**

3 [172/3/9]	2 ½-story frame Colonial Revival house (c. 1916). Multi-family house with a gable roof with cross-gable wing.	C	#31
5 [172/3/10]	<u>The Square House or "The Block"</u> 3-story frame apartment building with hipped roof (c. 1900). Six-family unit with entrances from side porches sheltered by upper floors.	C	

**Rossie Velvet Mill Historic District, Stonington, New London County, CT**

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria  
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

Areas of Significance  
(Enter categories from instructions)  
ARCHITECTURE

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

Period of Significance  
1850-1951

Significant Dates  
N/A

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Significant Person  
N/A

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

Architect/Builder  
See inventory

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

Primary Location of Additional Data

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

State Historic Preservation Office

previously listed in the National Register

Other State agency

previously determined eligible by the National Register

Federal agency

designated a National Historic Landmark

Local government

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

University

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Other

Name of repository: Mystic River Historical Society

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The Rossie Velvet Mill and its immediate neighborhood is a testament to the sustaining power of the textile industry as an engine of economic development from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. The housing on the residential streets running east from Greenmanville Avenue was built partly in response to the establishment of the Rossie Mill. The district contains not only a well-preserved example of a textile mill, but also typical examples of the kind of residential structures which often sprang up in the vicinity of mill buildings to house the immigrants who usually worked at such mills. A rare survival in the neighborhood is the original Social Society of Froshinn (German Club) building, constructed only a few years after the mill, and used to this day for its original purpose; some current members are the descendants of the first mill employees.

Historic Background

By 1850 the present day village of Mystic was a community that had moved away from its agricultural roots towards a market economy based on the sea and industry. The wealthiest and most influential citizens were those associated with ship building, ocean-going commercial ventures, and local industry. Mystic, like so many Connecticut villages during the last half of the nineteenth century and well into the early part of the twentieth century, saw rapid shifts in its population. The local economy, largely dependent on the dwindling revenues from shipbuilding, fishing, and maritime commerce in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, was, like much of the United States, in a period of depression, or even deflation. Civic leaders were desperate to find a means to diversify and expand the economic base. The village had been from the early nineteenth century the site of various textile enterprises. Mid-century a woolen mill (now part of the Mystic Seaport campus) was built on the east bank of the Mystic River. By the late nineteenth century this east bank of the river, formerly dominated by the Joseph Stanton Williams Farms on the east side of what is today Greenmanville Avenue, became an industrial section of the community.<sup>1</sup> In 1897 the Mystic Industrial Company was incorporated to attract other manufacturing concerns. Perhaps inspired by the velvet mills established in 1892 by Charles Wimpfheimer in nearby Stonington Village, the corporation raised \$22,000 to bring a "German velvet mill" to the neighborhood. Elias Williams, who had inherited his father's northern farm (also known as "Elm Tree Farm"), donated two acres of land to the stockholders of the Mystic Industrial Company, of which he was a director. The Rossie Velvet Company opened the following year, leased by the proprietors of a Süchteln, Germany, velvet mill, on the shores of the Mystic River. The high tax on imported goods assessed by the McKinley Tariff of 1890 had led these entrepreneurs to seek a manufacturing facility in the United States. The introduction of the a new mechanized loom c. 1880 had caused a surplus of experienced German weavers, so it was only natural that some of these artisans were recruited for the new American-based enterprise. The mill was rapidly completed, and by mid-March, 1898, textile production had begun. At the peak of its business the mill was Mystic's largest employer. It had 150 looms and over 200 workers working three shifts by the 1920s, and the number of employees later rose to near 500.<sup>2</sup> One of the highlights of the year was the annual employee picnic, which was an elaborate affair until the Depression, after which it was scaled back somewhat.

Many of the weavers were German immigrants, and although a trolley line was extended along Greenmanville Avenue by 1911, a good number sought housing in the immediate neighborhood. The Social Society of Froshin (German Club) founded by these immigrants is also within the district. Following the construction of the mill Elias Williams sold more land to the Rossies, and after his death his wife, Sarah P. Williams, sold still more. Early views of the mill show Elm Tree Farm's largest barn which

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was located, along with the farmhouse, on the high ground east of the mill (Photographs #31-32). The Williamses also sold off land for building lots to the north and south of the mill. New streets were laid out, stretching from Greenmanville Avenue to the east; all but Bruggeman Place stopped at the top of the ridge. Bruggeman Place was the longest and extended past the crest of the ridge. The street names, especially Rossie Street, Velvet Street, and Bruggeman Place (Peter Bruggeman was a stockholder of the Mystic Industrial Company, and a member of the building committee for the 1906 expansion of the mill, as well as its first superintendent) illustrate the close relationship between the mill and the neighborhood. The 1916-1917 Mystic directory shows that more than 50 neighborhood residents were employed at the mill. This was a period when almost every Mystic family, Yankee or immigrant alike, had a relative working there. Helen May Clarke, the offspring of two old local families, gives an account of her stint as an employee in her diary. Her first impression in March, 1925, was that of a "vast place of crashing machinery." In her diary she speaks of the frenzied pace of work, as well as the constant noise, and the terrible heat workers endured on humid summer days despite awnings and fans: "The mill itself is little short of an inferno... the switch-board buzzes like a nest of enraged hornets".<sup>3</sup> The physical plant of the mill expanded five times between 1898 and 1932, despite labor strife and troubles experienced during World War I when the mill had to cut its production due to a shortage of imported materials necessary to the mill's operation. The mill specialized in what was called "transparent velvet," a high-quality crush-resistant cloth that was popular for winter party dresses. Also in demand for women's hats was the mill's line of velvet that resisted water-spotting. The quality of the mill's product was maintained by employing only the most skilled workers and limiting the number of looms worked by each weaver to two. The docking of the German submarine *Deutschland* in New London in October, 1916, created a huge sensation. It brought the aniline dyes to create the deep, rich colors that made Rossie velvet so popular. These German-manufactured dyes were considered superior to American-made dyes.<sup>4</sup> The captain and crew of the submarine were entertained at a dinner at the German Club during their stay in Connecticut. Once the United States entered the War anti-German backlash took its toll on the Rossie Velvet Mill, and its first and second-generation immigrants of German origin. In March, 1919, 500 shares, all the capital stock of the Rossie Velvet Company, were sold at auction by the Alien Property Custodian.<sup>5</sup> Majority ownership of the mill seems to have been retained by William Oppenhy & Sons of New York, who originally served as the commission merchants for the mill's products, but the Elias Williams family also retained a large interest in the mill. John T. Rossie, who had come from Germany in 1910 to be the firm's chief executive in Mystic, continued to run the mill. Ernest Rossie's house is located within the district south of the factory; John Rossie lived for a few years in an adjacent house at 3 Bruggeman Place, originally the home of the mill superintendent, Peter Bruggeman.

The Great Depression brought more severe hardship, and in 1937 the mill was closed and its contents were sold at auction. The following year John Rossie, undeterred, purchased a majority share of the company's stock, and weaving operations were back under way by the end of June in the reorganized J. Rossie Velvet Company. Although the new company was reduced in size, it continued to produce high-quality velvet. Initially the cloth was rayon velvet, and later the velvet was made of nylon. In 1955 the company was sold to a new owner, Harry W. Baumgarten; it continued to produce high quality velvet until 1958, when like many other northern mills it succumbed to competition from textile mills in the south where labor costs were much lower. By time the mill closed for good, the workforce had dwindled to 76.<sup>6</sup>

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As the mill's output declined, several other companies leased space in the complex. In April 1940, Foxcraft, Inc. began to produce tufted bedspreads there. Another occupant was the Temple Radio Company. Although the main headquarters was located in nearby New London, the firm utilized space in the mill to assemble cases for the line of radios, known as "Templetone"; this firm was an early innovator in the design of television sets, and these television cases were also built at the Rossie Mill, where a number of neighborhood residents were employed.<sup>7</sup>

The neighborhood bordering the upper end of Greenmanville Avenue was not strictly industrial; it was also residential. This area attracted not only German textile workers, but also other new immigrants. Although these immigrants came from a variety of places, one particularly notable group put down roots in Mystic. They were from the valley of Zoldo, high in the Dolmites, now part of Italy. These immigrants began to arrive in America in the 1880s, but by the 1890s their number increased, peaking between 1900 and 1910. Finding work in the Rossie Mill and other businesses in town, the Zoldani purchased or constructed a number of the houses in the district. Among this group were skilled masons and carpenters, and their craftsmanship can still be appreciated in the houses they occupied in the neighborhood. Among those specializing in woodworking were Antonio (Arthur) Panciera, his father, Giovanni-Battista Panciera, and Giovanni Favretti, Vittorio Brustolon, and Libero Pra. Arthur Panciera studied at the Lowell Institute (then part of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and not only built, but also designed residences. He was known especially for his work on the restoration of eighteenth-century houses. In the district there is at least one example of the work of Agostino Lazzaris, one of the masons who worked on William Gilette's Gilette Castle, and the springhouse and bridge in Park Spring (now Alex Caisse Park) in Willimantic, Connecticut; he constructed the foundation of the Giovanni Favretti House (#27 Bruggeman Place). Of this group only Giovanni Favretti lived in the district. Other houses owned and occupied by Zoldani within the district include the Henry Fain House (#19 Bruggeman Place), the Santin House (5 Rossie Street), and the John Fain House (#12 Rossie Street). Prominent Zoldani businessman Sebastiano Santin (1872-1955) opened one of Mystic's first automobile dealerships on the corner of Greenmanville Avenue and Hinckley Street (#90 Greenmanville Avenue). The dealership was owned by Santin and his sons Giuseppe (Joseph) and Aldo, and operated on the site from 1920 until 1938, when the business moved to larger quarters on Holmes Street. Like their German counterparts, the Zoldani established a social club that was very active until hard economic times during the Great Depression. World War II caused its closure. The Club Alpino (Alpine Club) hall was built around 1922 on Slaughterhouse Hill a few blocks outside the district boundaries, but before the clubhouse was built several families united to build a bocce court (now demolished) on the property of Henry Fain (#19 Bruggeman Place). This court continued to be a Zoldani gathering place even after the construction of the club house.<sup>8</sup>

The neighborhood in the twentieth century was a mixed-use area. The Rossie Velvet Mill was surrounded by single- and multi-family houses, as well as nearby establishments like the delicatessen where Helen Clarke went for hot dogs. The Santin garage was south of the mill. The biggest change in use in the neighborhood came with the establishment in the late 1940s of the Mystic Seaport museum complex, which incorporated historic buildings moved from other parts of town and other places in a village setting on the sites of the former Greenman shipyard and the former woolen mill on the west side of Greenmanville Avenue. Other new buildings were constructed within the complex, most dating between the mid-1950s and the mid-1970s. Properties associated with the Rossie family on the east side of Greenmanville Avenue,

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including the velvet mill and houses occupied by the Rossie brothers, were eventually added to the museum complex, and other single-family houses in the neighborhood were also purchased as the museum expanded. The wetlands south of the mill were partially filled and a parking lot for the museum was constructed on Greenmanville Avenue south of Bruggemann Place on a larger wetland.

Architectural Significance

The largest building in the district, covering 147,000 square feet, is the Rossie Velvet Mill. The contract for the construction of the first section was let in late 1897; it was designed by New York architect Robert D. Kohn, and built by the Meriden firm of H. Wales Lines & Co. Kohn (1870-1953) is best known as the architect of the R.H. Macy Department Store, Montefiore and Mt. Sinai Hospitals, the New York Ethical Society Meeting House, and Temple Emanu-El in New York City, but he was also the designer of industrial buildings such as the H.R. Black Garment Factory in Cleveland, Ohio. Kohn received his training at Columbia University and the Ecole des Beaux Arts. By 1895 he had established his own practice in Manhattan, and was already identified with a movement to improve the nation's housing stock. He was prominent in professional organizations, serving as the president of the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1913 (he was named a Fellow of the AIA in 1921), and the National Fire Protection Association (1913-14), and he was one of the leading figures of the Regional Planning Association of America. As the long-time president of the Ethical Culture Society, he was deeply involved in the Progressive Movement. His later career saw him named by President Roosevelt as the Director of the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration (1933-34), and he was vice-president and a member of the board of design for the New York World's Fair of 1939.<sup>9</sup>

The cost for the earliest part of the mill was estimated at \$24,000, and the main block was comprised of six sections with a sawtooth roof, and it was illuminated by 9,000 square feet of glass. The contract called for the main block, boiler, and engine house to be completed by February 1, 1898.<sup>10</sup> An addition was made in 1902, and in 1905 the Mystic Industrial Company voted to increase their capital from \$90,000 to \$175,000 in order to double the mill's size. This work was completed in 1906. Three other expansions were made in 1913, 1928, and 1932.<sup>11</sup> Two large steam generators powered the mill machinery; these were fueled by soft coal brought up the Mystic River to a point opposite the mill near the former site of Mystic Seaport's New York Yacht Club Station. An overhead crane lifted the shipments onto an electric truck that ran through a tunnel under Greenmanville Avenue. Initially the water for the mill, a large quantity of which was required for the dyeing operation, was supplied by a water tower (no longer extant) on the hill behind the mill. A later tank was located adjacent to the mill. The mill is currently used for storage and exhibition space by Mystic Seaport. Although the mill has undergone some alterations due to its changing use, it is still largely intact.

The period between the 1897 establishment of the mill and 1950 saw the construction of the bulk of the residences in the neighborhood. The housing stock includes the relatively small and simple late Victorian vernacular house whose most distinguishing feature is the millwork on the front porch (see, for example, #130 and #142 Greenmanville Avenue; Photographs #2, #9, #1, and #10). The Colonial Revival is the best represented of all the different styles of residential architecture. Fine examples of large and small frame houses built between 1900 and 1925 abound in the neighborhood. One house, at #4 Rossie Street, according to neighborhood tradition, was manufactured by Sears and Roebuck. This type of house, ordered by mail, and assembled on the spot by local labor, was an early twentieth century innovation, and such



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houses can be found in many contemporary neighborhoods. Although for the most part the designers and builders of these houses are not known, they are typical of the kind of residences that were popular throughout the nation during the period. The preservation of numerous documented examples of houses and structures built by or for immigrant craftsman, most notably those of Zoldan or German origin, is an usual feature of this neighborhood which stands in contrast to other areas of Mystic built and occupied by longtime Connecticut natives.

Few buildings constructed after 1950 have been added to the neighborhood, with the exception of some infill housing. The single major change to the neighborhood was the establishment of a museum complex on the east bank of the Mystic River, and the creation of parking lots on the east side of Greenmanville Avenue to serve the museum complex.

Even with the insertion of a major museum complex within the district, the scale has been little changed. The character of the neighborhood has been preserved, even though the mill no longer serves its original purpose and the activity of visitors has replaced the shift changes of mill hands. The mill building's historic exterior features are essentially intact.

Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Virginia B. Anderson, *Maritime Mystic* (Mystic, Conn.: Mystic Historical Association, 1962), pp. 26-7; Rudy J. Favretti, "The Twilight of Rural Life: the Dissolution of Mystic's Stanton Williams Farm," *Historical Footnotes: Bulletin of the Stonington Historical Society*, **xliii** (2005): 1, 6-8. The Joseph Stanton Williams Farms totaled approximately 280 acres; some inherited from his maternal relatives, the Stantons, and the rest was acquired through purchase.

<sup>2</sup> William N. Peterson and Peter M. Coope, *Historic Buildings at Mystic Seaport Museum* (Mystic, Conn.: Mystic Seaport Museum, Inc., 1985), pp. 52-5; *New York Times*, Nov. 10, 1937.

<sup>3</sup> Carole W. Kimball, "Old Mystic's Great Day," *Historical Footnotes: Bulletin of the Stonington Historical Society*, **ix** (1972): 1-2; Helen May Clarke, *An Account of My Life, 1915-1926: the Journal of Helen May Clarke*, Marilyn J. Comrie, ed. (Mystic, Conn., Mystic River Historical Society, 1997), pp. 24, 133.

<sup>4</sup> Peterson and Coope, *Historic Buildings at Mystic Seaport*, pp. 54-5. In 1901 160 strikers, including the most highly skilled workers went out on strike, and in 1912 a strike was narrowly avoided when the management agreed to higher wages: *Mystic Mirror*, Jan. 29, 1901; Oct. 24, 1912.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Inderfurth, *Back When: The Story of a Youth Who Lived Through a Very Exciting Era in America* (Mystic, Conn.: Mystic Publications, 1995), pp. 3-4; *New York Times*, March 6, 1919.

<sup>6</sup> *Mystic Mirror*, Nov. 12, 1937; *New York Times*, Nov. 10, 1937; *New London Day*, Sept. 30, 1933, Feb. 2, March 7, 24, 1936, Aug. 23, Oct. 9, 15, Nov. 9, Dec. 18, 1937, May 20, July 6, Aug. 19, 1938, Feb. 24, 1939; Peterson and Coope, *Historic Buildings at Mystic Seaport*, p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> *Mystic Mirror*, April 5, 1940; "New Features in TV Sets," *Radio-Electronics*, March 1949.

<sup>8</sup> Rudy J. Favretti, *Jumping the Puddle: Zoldani in America* (Dexter, Michigan: for the author, 2002). See especially pp. 86-109, 121-131.

<sup>9</sup> Peterson and Coope, *Historic Buildings at Mystic Seaport*, pp. 52-4; *Who's Who in America* for 1922-23, 1932-33, and 1953; Edward K. Spann, *Designing Modern America: The Regional Planning Association of America and Its Members* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1996), pp. 13-16, 144-8.

<sup>10</sup> *Mystic Mirror*, Dec. 3, 1897; Peterson and Coope, *Historic Buildings at Mystic Seaport*, p. 53.

<sup>11</sup> *Mystic Mirror*, Nov. 21, 1905; Peterson and Coope, *Historic Buildings at Mystic Seaport*, p. 54.

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property approximately 120 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

X See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kate M. Ohno

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date July, 2006

street & number 81 Pond Hill Rd. telephone (203) 234-2848

city or town North Haven state CT zip code 06473

Additional Documentation

Property Owner: multiple

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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UTMs

Approximately 120 acres in the Mystic quadrangle

	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
A	18	252180	4583440
B	18	252300	4583440
C	18	252320	4583260
D	18	252560	4582880
E	18	252020	4582720
F	18	252020	4582600

Boundary Description

The boundaries encompass the land historically associated with the neighborhood immediately surrounding the Rossie Velvet Mill on Greenmanville Avenue, once part of one of the Joseph Stanton Williams Farms, and inherited by Elias Williams in 1889 (also called Elm Tree Farm). The spine of the district is Greenmanville Avenue, and the district also includes short sections of the streets that run east from Greenmanville Avenue to the eastern limits of the northernmost section of Elm Tree Farm. The district boundaries reflect the part of Elm Tree Farm that was sold off between 1897 and 1950 by the Williams heirs. Part of the western boundary is formed by the east bank of the Mystic River.

Boundary Justification

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The district is bounded on the north in part by the Morgan Coogan Farm, once the northernmost section of Elm Tree Farm that Elias Williams inherited from Joseph Stanton Williams. Elm Grove Cemetery also forms part of the northern boundary. On the west the district is bounded by the Mystic River, some mid-twentieth-century commercial buildings, and the part of the Mystic Bridge Historic District which contains the campus of the Mystic Seaport Museum's property on the west side of Greenmanville Avenue. On the east it is bounded on mid-twentieth-century residential construction, and on the south it is bounded by the Mystic Bridge Historic District.

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- Photograph # 1      144, 142, 140 Greenmanville Avenue, view southeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 1/03
- Photograph # 2      136, 134, 132, 130 Greenmanville Avenue and Rossie Mill, view southeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 1/03
- Photograph # 3      Thomas Weir House, 5 Bruggeman Place, view north  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 1/03
- Photograph # 4      Henry Fain House, 19 Bruggeman Place, view northeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 1/03
- Photograph # 5      58 Greenmanville Avenue, view northeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 1/03
- Photograph # 6      Ralph Hughes House, 130 Greenmanville Avenue, view east  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 1/03
- Photograph # 7      142 Greenmanville Avenue, view east  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 1/03
- Photograph # 8      3 Rossie Street, view southwest  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 1/03
- Photograph # 9      John Spicks House, 20 Rossie Street, view southeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 1/03
- Photograph # 10     3 Pleasant Street, view northeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 1/03
- Photograph # 11     Jacob Eidesheim House, 136 Greenmanville Avenue, view northeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 1/03
- Photograph # 12     Ernest Rossie House, 72 Greenmanville Avenue, view east  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05
- Photograph # 13     Frensch/Marseilles House, 7 Bruggeman Court, view southeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05
- Photograph # 14     Social Society Frohsinn, 54 Greenmanville Avenue, view northeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05
- Photograph # 15     Rossie Mill, 112 Greenmanville Avenue, view northeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05

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- Photograph # 16      Bruggeman-Rossie-Blanchette House, 3 Bruggeman Place, view north  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05
- Photograph #17      Fortunato Panciera House, 14 Bruggeman Place, view east  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05
- Photograph #18      Fortunato Panciera barn, 14 Bruggeman Place, view southeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05
- Photograph #19      Elsie Edelhoff House, 28 Bruggeman Place, view southwest  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05
- Photograph #20      Santin Garage, 90 Greenmanville Avenue, view northeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05
- Photograph #21      Edward Pinkman House, 41 Bruggeman Place, view northeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05
- Photograph # 22      Emily Frensch Marseilles House, 36 Bruggeman Place, view southeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05
- Photograph #23      32, 36, and 41 Bruggeman Place, view east  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05
- Photograph #24      James Barden House, 40 Bruggeman Place, view southeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05
- Photograph #25      John Cremers House, 29 Bruggeman Place, view north  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05
- Photograph #26      Alexander Nasiatka House, 32 Bruggeman Place, view southeast  
Ted Hendrickson photograph 3/05
- Photograph #27      "Queen of the Fabrics" Rossie Velvet Co. Float in an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Mystic Parade  
Historic view, Collection of Eleanor Jameson
- Photograph #28      Historic view c. 1900 from the east bank of the Mystic River looking north; Rossie Mill  
neighborhood along Greenmanville Avenue. From left to right: 144 Greenmanville Avenue,  
142 Greenmanville Avenue, 134 Greenmanville Avenue, 132 Greenmanville Avenue, 130  
Greenmanville Avenue, Rossie Mill, 123 Greenmanville Avenue  
Collection of Eleanor Jameson
- Photograph #29      Historic view: Almeda Tatro in front of Rossie Mill, early 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Collection of Eleanor Jameson

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- Photograph #30      Historic view: interior of Rossie Mill, early 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Collection of Eleanor Jameson
- Photograph #31      Historic view: Postcard of two scenes along the Mystic River  
"Velvet Mills" shows, from left to right: 132 Greenmanville Avenue, 3 Velvet Street, 130  
Greenmanville Avenue, Rossie Mill, 123 Greenmanville Avenue  
Mystic Seaport Collection #1993.17.33
- Photograph #32      Historic view by Everett A. Scholfield: Panoramic view of the Mystic River looking east c. 1900  
Rossie Mill neighborhood is visible at left  
Mystic Seaport Collection #77.160.2118