



not for publication

code

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

1. Name

Rose Hill Mansion historic

and or common

Location 2 Route 96A (P.O. Box 464) street & number East of Geneva city, town

state

3

New York

14456

code Classification

vicinity of

county

Seneca

Owner of Property 4.

Geneva Historical Society name

543 South Main Street street & number

city, t	own	Geneva		vicinity of			state	Ne	ew York	
5.	Loca	tion of	Legal	Descripti	on					
court	house, regis	stry of deeds, etc.	Sen	eca County Court	: Hous	e				
street	t & number									
city, t	lown	Waterloo					state	New	York	
6.	Repr	resentat	ion ir	Existing	Sur	veys				
title		c American gs Survey		has this pr	operty I	been deteri	mined eli	gible?	<u> </u>	no
date	1962				<u>x</u>	_ federal	stat	e	county	local
depos	sitory for su	rvey records	Libra	ry of Congress						
city, t	lown	Washington					state	DC		

For NPS use only

received

date entered

7. Description

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

"Rose Hill" is one of the most beautifully preserved Greek Revival houses in America. The present house was built in 1839 by William Kerley Strong, a rich New York city wool merchant. The house has variously been attributed to Minard Lafever and Alexander J. Davis. It is more likely that a very skilled local carpenter followed designs by both men. The lumber mills of the region maintained libraries filled with pattern books which provided templates or the designs and ornament used in Greek Revival houses. Minard Lafever, particulary in his <u>The Beauties of Modern Architecture</u> (1833), had an enormous effect on 19th century architecture and interior design. In the Geneva Courier of March 19, 1839 a local mill advertised handcarved building materials, "capitals, rosettes, tablets and most kinds of carving, such as is done in the cities, on short notice and reasonable prices." There are a number of high style Greek Revival houses and public buildings in Geneva, New York built in the 1820's and 1830's. The local carpenters must have known a great deal about the style.

Rose Hill has been described as exceptional, both exterior and interior. "The building is in the style of a two-story Ionic temple with colonnaded one-story Ionic wings. Six giant pillars dominate the front facade and in the rear a large courtyard lies between the two wings. The covered veranda or piazza across the back of the main wing may show the influence of southern architecture \ldots . The Regency railing design is also frequently seen in the south. l

The large house is dominated by its west portico with the large Ionic columns and surrounded by formal gardens as well as vegetable and herb gardens.

Lorraine Welling Lanman has thoroughly researched and documented "Rose Hill." She states:

The two-story temple type house with attached wings is derived from the Palladian design, but the ultimate source for the interior floor plan comes from American Georgian architecture, especially the placement of the unsupported staircase, and elliptical spiral off one side of the majestic central hall of the building with a skylight at the top. In its proportions the building is mathematically precise in the Classical tradition, but the details -- steps, shutters, flutes and cornices -- catch the light as the day waxes and wanes, altering its appearance as first one and then another set of details achieves prominence. 2

The beautiful interior is a central hall plan with 2 rooms on each side. A handsome spiral stair is situated on the north side of the central hall.

The most intricate and outstanding interior decorative work appears in the parlor screen, the woodwork and the plasterwork. The parlor screen, is a wide archway dividing the two parlors of Rose Hill with Ionic columns and an entablature in bead and reel and leaf tongue patterns that continue all around the parlor walls. The soffit of the parlor screen has an elaborate composition grape and leaf motif. Anthemion and palmette motifs dominate the tablets and corner blocks made for the house. The door and window casings are similarly decorated. The plaster cornices and ceiling ornaments are oustanding examples of this decorative art form, with nearly every motif being found on the books

8. Significance

1400-1499 1500-1599 1600-1699 1700-1799 1800-1899 1900- Specific dates	archeology-historic agriculture architecture art commerce communications 1839	economics education engineering exploration/settlement	Iiterature military music philosophy politics/government	Science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Period prehistoric	National Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric	_ community planning	Iandscape architecture	•

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

A great house-plantation in upper New York state, Rose Hill is one of the finest examples of the Greek Revival Style in America. Built on a monumental scale, the house and grounds are typical of the first half of 19th century America . . . idealistic, exuberant, and vital. The architecture reflects that era; it had enormous confidence in spite of a great variety of regional styles. Western New York flourished because of the Erie Canal: wealth and, with it, fine houses appeared in large numbers. They were strong and polished examples of Greek Revival. Geneva, unlike Utica and Rochester, was not on the Erie Canal and, although it prospered, it remained a quiet and refined town compared to Rochester and Syracuse. Today it is a lovely village on the shore of Seneca Lake. Nearby, on the crest of a hill, is the majestic Rose Hill restored to its pristine beauty much as it was when built.

The history of the house is detailed by Ms. Lanman:

The present house was built in 1839 by William K. Strong, a rich New York City wool merchant, who purchased the farm from Robert S. Rose, a Virginian who emigrated to New York State in 1802. The much simpler frame house that Rose built now serves as the reception center of the restoration, owned by the Geneva Historical Society. Strong was not a farmer, but turned to banking once established in his new home, and it is to him that we owe the elegance of the building that stands on the site today. A number of Greek Revival houses had already been built by citizens of Geneva, and the design must have seemed a fitting and prestigious one to the wealthy banker, who played host in his new home to his fellow New Yorker, President Martin Van Buren . . .

In 1848 Robert J. Swan arrived in Geneva, having left a successful mercantile business in New York City because of ill health. He settled down with the family of John Johnston to learn farming techniques. The move was a success both personally and professionally. In 1850 he married Johnston's daughter Margaret and moved to Rose Hill, which his father, Benjamin L. Swan, one of the richest men in New York City, purchased for them as a wedding gift. He proceeded to make the farm a model of tile drainage, a technique his father-inlaw Johnston had brought from Scotland when he emigrated in 1821, and by 1858 had laid almost sixty-one miles of tile and had quadrupled the wheat production of the land. In 1853 and again in 1858 he was awarded silver cups by the New York State Agricultural Society for his skilled performance. In 1875 the <u>Geneva Gazette</u> extolled both the land and the house:

Rose Hill Farm has but few rivals in the state. Those who would enjoy a great treat, and see American farm life on a grand and scientific scale, and in its highest degree of refined development, should remember 'Rose Hill,' on the east shore of Lake Seneca . . . The residence and all of its appointments constitute the very ideal of a pleasant, beautiful and luxurious country seat home, where nothing that the heart can rationally desire, or money procure, seems wanting.

Swan died in 1890 and the great days of the farm ended. The remarkable house was sold and went into a decline, even serving as a nursing home \ldots In 1965, Rose Hill was in a dismal state of decay and was sold with 2 1/2 acres of land for \$15, 000. It was then given to the Geneva Historical Society to restore and refurbish \ldots

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical	Data			<u></u>
Acreage of nominated property23_ac Quadrangle nameGeneva_South_Qua UTM References			Quadrang	le scale 1:24,000
A 1 8 3 4 1 8 8 0 4 7 4 7 Zone Easting Northing	120	B <u>1 8</u> Zone	3 4 1 8 8 0 Easting	41741681010 Northing
	765	D <u>1</u> 8 F <u>1</u>		
G L L L L L L L L L L L L L L L L L L L	Lification	H []		
SEE CONTINUATION SHEET				
List all states and counties for prope	rties overlapp	ing state or co	ounty boundaries	
state	code	county		code
state	code	county		code
11. Form Prepared	l By			
name/title Carolyn Pitts				
organization National Park Servic	e/History Di	vision da	ate	
street & number 1100 "L" Street N	W	te	lephone (202)	343-8172
sity or town Washington		st	ate DC	
12. State Historic	Preserv	vation	Officer C	ertification
The evaluated significance of this property	within the state	is:		
national st	tate	local		
As the designated State Historic Preservat 665), I hereby nominate this property for in according to the criteria and procedures se State Historic Preservation Officer signatu	clusion in the Na et forth by the Na	ational Register	and certify that it ha	
itle			date	
For NPS use only				
I hereby certify that this property is in	ncluded in the Na	ational Register		
Keeper of the National Register			date	····
Attest:			date	
Chief of Registration				



Continuation sheet



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OMB No. 1024-0018 Expires 10-31-87

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of Charles F. Bielefeld and Haselden. Most of these fine plaster ornaments were cast on the premises using Minard Lafever's The Modern Builder's Guide of 1833 for instruction. They were applied to the wood with glue and have proved to be durable as well as beautiful. Many are in a remarkable state of preservation today. The fireplace fronts are decorated with small pilasters -- Ionic, Tuscan and, in the dining room, imitations of the Tower of the Winds in Athens.³

Item number

7

The gardens were laid out with curving walks and round flower beds to play against the severe regularity of the house itself.

The restoration of Rose Hill has been meticulously carried out, (one of the large front columns contained two hundred pounds of honey in it from nesting bees), the cupola replaced and first rate pieces of furniture installed in the period rooms.



An extensive restoration of the building was undertaken by Waldo Hutchins, Jr., Swan's grandson, that not only made it structurally sound, but returned it to its greatest period of Greek Revival glory, removing all the later renovations and alterations. In addition Hutchins purchased fifteen acres in front of the house, assuring it everlasting access to the lake shore, and five more acres behind, bringing the total land parcel to twenty-three acres. To date he has given more than \$1,000,000 to the restoration and has provided an endowment that now equals \$700,000 to insure the future of what is surely one of the outstanding examples of Greek Revival architecture in the United States. ⁴

Rose Hill is open to visitors from May through October.

- ¹ Huntoon, Joan. "A Beautiful Rose Blooms Anew in Upstate New York." <u>Post Library</u> <u>Association Bulletin:</u> C.W. Post Center, Long Island, New York, Vol. 9., 1983. p.4.
- ² Lanman, Lorraine Welling. <u>Rose Hill, Greek Revival Country Seat: A Study of the Forces</u> <u>that Shaped it</u>. University of Delaware, Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, June, 1969. pp. 180-181.

³ <u>Ibid</u>., p. 181.

⁴ Huntoon, pp. 3-4.





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OMB No. 1024-0018

Expires 10-31-87

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Andrews, Wayne. <u>Architecture in New York: A Photographic History</u>. New York: Atheneum, 1969, p. 55.

Gowans, Alan. Images of American Living. New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1964, p. 281.

- Grills, Susan. "Rose Hill." Typewritten report dated January 13, 1972 on file with New York State Historic Trust.
- Hamlin, Talbot. <u>Greek Revival Architecture in America.</u> Reprint of 1944 ed. New York: Dover, 1964, pp. 268-269
- Landy, Jacob. <u>The Architecture of Minard Lafever</u>. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970, p. 288 n10.
- Lanman, Lorraine Welling. Rose Hill, Greek Revival County Seat: A Study of the Forces that Shaped It. University of Delaware. Unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, June, 1969
- Milliken, Charles F. History of Ontario County, 1883.
- New York State Agricultural Society, Transactions 1857, 1858.
- "Reception of the President at Geneva." Geneva Gazette. September 13, 1839.
- Walton, Henry. "Elegant County Seat for Sale." Broadside, 1847.
- Weaver, Marion M. <u>History of Tile Drainage in America Prior to 1900.</u> Waterloo, New York. M. M. Weaver, 1964.
- Works Projects Administration. <u>New York: A Guide to the Empire State</u>. New York: Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 430.



Starting at the NW corner of lands owned by Theordore Bogart, running Easterly 785.21 feet to highway marker at route 96A, thence Northerly 861.72 feet to state highway marker, thence Westerly 79.84 feet to an iron post, thence Northerly 675.00 feet to an iron post on the NW corner of lands owned by R. E. Johnson, thence Westerly 211.25 feet to Lehigh Valley R. R. property, thence Southerly 1382.65 feet to beginning. Across the railroad property, the shore line running parallel with the 1382. 65 feet is the property of Rose Hill Mansion with a length of 1382.65 feet and of varying depth.

Easterly across the highway, the property surrounding the Mansion starts at NYS highway marker on the NW corner of land owned by Harold Sniffen, running Easterly 375.38 feet to an iron post, thence Northerly 687.37 feet to an iron post, thence Westerly 230.00 feet to an iron post, thence Southerly 157.73 feet to an iron marker, thence Westerly 200.00 feet to NYS highway 96A, thence Southerly 540.70 feet to point of beginning.

Item number 4:

Owners of Rose Hill

1837 - 1843	William K. Strong
1842 - 1846	Thomas Van Gieson
1846 - 1850	Henry Van Gieson
1850	Morrell Van Gieson
1850 - 1890	Benjamin L. Swan
1850 - 1890	Robert J. Swan
1890	Margaret A. and Agnes J. Swan
1890 - 1893	E. H. Plummer
1893 - 1913	Martin H. Smith
1913 - 1932	Edgar Boody
1932 - 1949	Guy B. and Frederika Muchmore
1949 - 1951	Adelbert Welch
1951	Joseph Freedman
1951 - 1952	A.C. Sloane
1952	Joseph and Norine Freedman
1952 - 1954	Gladys Christianson and Lynette B. Coleman
1954 - 1958	Returned to Freedman by court action
1958 - 1960	Adelbert Welch
1960 - 1965	Joseph N. and J. E. Strong
1965-	Geneva Historical Society

