

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic Rose Hill Mansion

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number Route 96A (P.O. Box 464)

not for publication

city, town East of Geneva

vicinity of

state New York 14456

code

county Seneca

code

**3. Classification**

**Category**

- district
- building(s)
- structure
- site
- object

**Ownership**

- public
- private
- both
- Public Acquisition**
- in process
- being considered

**Status**

- occupied
- unoccupied
- work in progress
- Accessible**
- yes: restricted
- yes: unrestricted
- no

**Present Use**

- agriculture
- commercial
- educational
- entertainment
- government
- industrial
- military

- museum
- park
- private residence
- religious
- scientific
- transportation
- other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Geneva Historical Society

street & number 543 South Main Street

city, town Geneva

vicinity of

state

New York

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Seneca County Court House

street & number

city, town Waterloo

state

New York

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Historic American Buildings Survey

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1962

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Library of Congress

city, town Washington

state

DC

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site	1839
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

## 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, particularly in his The Beauties of Modern Architecture (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 . . . . The Regency railing design is also frequently seen in the south. <sup>1</sup>

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. <sup>2</sup>

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 outstanding examples of this decorative art form, with nearly every motif being found on the books



# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 23 acres

Quadrangle name Geneva South Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A	<u>18</u>	<u>341880</u>	<u>4747120</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<u>18</u>	<u>341880</u>	<u>4746810</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<u>18</u>	<u>341440</u>	<u>4746765</u>
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D	<u>18</u>	<u>341440</u>	<u>4747110</u>
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E			
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F			
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G			
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H			
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### Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carolyn Pitts

organization National Park Service/History Division date \_\_\_\_\_

street & number 1100 "L" Street NW telephone (202) 343-8172

city or town Washington state DC

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature \_\_\_\_\_

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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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.<sup>3</sup>

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.

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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. <sup>4</sup>

Rose Hill is open to visitors from May through October.

- <sup>1</sup> Huntoon, Joan. "A Beautiful Rose Blooms Anew in Upstate New York." Post Library Association Bulletin: C.W. Post Center, Long Island, New York, Vol. 9., 1983. p.4.
- <sup>2</sup> Lanman, Lorraine Welling. Rose Hill, Greek Revival Country Seat: A Study of the Forces that Shaped it. University of Delaware, Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, June, 1969. pp. 180-181.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 181.
- <sup>4</sup> Huntoon, pp. 3-4.

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Starting at the NW corner of lands owned by Theodore 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



ROSE HILL  
PARTIAL SITE PLAN.

