

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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**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

historic JOSEPH SINNOTT MANSION

and/or common

USE THIS COPY
FOR DUPLICATING

2. Location

street & number Montgomery and Lendover Avenue not for publication

city, town Lower Merion vicinity of congressional district 13

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Montgomery code 091

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Board of Trustees of Rosemont College

street & number Montgomery Avenue

city, town Rosemont vicinity of state Pennsylvania 19010

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Courthouse

street & number Airy and Swede Streets

city, town Norristown state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pennsylvania Inventory
of Historic Places

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date May, 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

7: Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Rathalla, the Main Building of Rosemont College, was built in 1889-1891 as a summer residence of Joseph Francis Sinnott. Containing the owner's house and stables, the original plot of land was 37 acres. This wealthy business man had constructed a French Chateau style mansion. He called upon the important Philadelphia architectural firm of Hazlehurst and Huckel to design his new home. The plans for a building in the aforementioned style dated 1889 bear the name of Samuel Huckel, Jr. The structure itself is 2½ stories high and built of stone, although it does have brick foundations.

The high, steep-sided, hip roof is slate with copper flashings and gutters. It is topped by openwork metal cresting. Six decorated chimneys break its surface, along with numerous dormer windows, turrets, and carvings of many types. Gargoyles are found guarding the front entrance.

The walls of the mansion are decorated with numerous stone carvings. There are three balconies, one on the second floor and two on the third. A porch is located on one side of the building. There are approximately 100 double-hung sash windows; a few of the windows have stained glass trim.

The floor plan of the building has remained basically unchanged since the original construction. Since the mansion was purchased in 1927 for \$1.00 by Rosemont College from the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus, one set of back stairs has been removed, the laundry room was moved to the basement in order to enlarge the Sisters' dining room, and the billiard room was changed to a small chapel. During the 1960's the wine cellar was converted to house the telephone equipment room, and in 1875 the kitchen was partially remodeled. At present, nine Sisters of the College are housed there. Three rooms are retained for guests. Other rooms include three reception rooms, two dining rooms, the small chapel, and the kitchen.

The stairways and wood trim are hand carved and are of various types of woods including oak, mahogany, walnut, and cherry. Walls and ceilings are plaster over wood laths. At one time there were six carved ceilings on the first floor; now just two remain. In the front hall and in first floor rooms, there is some fine stone carving like that on the exterior. Floors in the front of the house are of hard wood; in the basement they are concrete. There are 17 fireplaces, all now either blocked or covered.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates

Builder/Architect Edward Hazelhurst & Samuel Huckel

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Joseph Sinnott Mansion meets the criteria for National Register significance by possessing an integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and feeling. Located on the summit of a small hill, the large stone structure is a lovely example of the Chateausque style. Used as a summer residence by the original wealthy owner, the mansion was built away from his busy Philadelphia home and business. Beautiful details and carvings decorate the exterior and interior. The building has an air of stateliness to it that qualifies it as a structure worthy of recognition.

The Joseph Sinnott Mansion is a fine example of Chateausque style architecture. Built in 1889-1891 as a summer home for a prominent Philadelphia businessman, it features exquisite decoration both outside and inside. Its castle-like air provides the house with a sense of security and dignity. The structure continues to be used as the Main Building of Rosemont College.

Characteristic of the Chateausque style, the mansion is constructed of stone and has a steeply pitched hip roof topped by metal cresting. Round turrets and decorated chimneys also top the structure. Detail on the building, mainly the stone carving, is a combination of Gothic and Renaissance.

Joseph Francis Sinnott emigrated from Ireland to America at age 17 in 1854. He decided to stay in Philadelphia, and began working under a customs house broker. After two years he moved to a distillery firm, John Gibson's Son and Company. He was an assistant bookkeeper with the firm. By the time he purchased the land on which to build his home - Rathalla - he was the sole proprietor of the distilling business. An agency was even established in Roxbury, Massachusetts, where Sinnott spent the first years of his married life. The Sinnotts returned to Philadelphia in 1866. When Joseph began building the house in 1889 he was a veteran of the Civil War, a patron of the arts and sciences, and held many memberships in learned societies.

In 1921 the mansion was put up for sale by the heirs of Joseph Sinnott. The house was badly in need of repair when the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus bought it late in that year. They worked on restoring it, and eventually the property was sold in 1927 for \$1.00 to Rosemont College.

Rosemont College was founded in 1921 and set up as a Catholic School for women. Sanctioned by his Eminence Dennis Cardinal Dougherty, Arch Bishop of Philadelphia, the college was incorporated in 1922.

Rosemont continues in operation today, and the mansion is used as the Main Building, housing some of the Sisters and their guests.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .8

Quadrangle name Norristown, Pa.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Only the mansion itself is being nominated. The building measures 27,712 sq. ft.

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sister Maria Stella Kelly / Brenda Reigle

organization Rosemont College / PHMC date

street & number Montgomery Ave. / Box 1026 telephone 215-527-0200/717-787-4363

city or town Rosemont / Harrisburg state Pennsylvania 19010/17120

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Ed Weintraub, Director
title Office of Historic Preservation date

For HCRS 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	

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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JOSEPH SINNOTT MANSION, Montgomery County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

"Another Rosemont Mansion," The Philadelphia Inquirer, (Thursday morning, June 27, 1889), p. 5 column 2.

Doebley, Carl E. Lower Merion - A Portrait From the Welsh Tract to the Present. Montgomery County, Pa.: Lower Merion Historical Society, 1976.

Hotchkiss, Rev. S. P. Rural Pennsylvania: In the Vicinity of Philadelphia, Philadelphia: George W. Jacobus and Co., 1897.

King, Moses. Philadelphia and Notable Philadelphians. New York: Blanchard Press, c. 1903.

Leonard, John W., ed. Who's Who in Pennsylvania. L.R. Hammersly, 1908.

Sinnott, Mary Elizabeth. Annals of the Sinnott, Rogers, Coffin, Corlies, Reeves, Bodine, and Allied Families. Edited by Josiah Granville Leach. Printed for private circulation. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1905.

Smith, Sister Mary Elfreda. "Rathalla Revisited," Outlook. Rosemont College, Rosemont, PA: Public Relations Office, summer 1978.