

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Welsh, John House
other names/site number Rauhala

2. Location

street & number 8765 Stenton Avenue
city, town Wyndmoor, (Springfield Township) N/A not for publication
state Pennsylvania code PA county Montgomery N/A vicinity
code 091 zip code 19150

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official [Signature] Date 2/31/90

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. 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.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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other names/site number Rauhala

2. Location

street & number 8765 Stenton Avenue

city, town Wyndmoor Springfield Township

state Pennsylvania code PA county Montgomery code 091 zip code 19150

not for publication
 vicinity

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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Signature of certifying official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. 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.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - Single Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - Multiple Dwelling**7. Description**Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)Late VictorianGothic/Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stonewalls Stoneroof Slate

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The John Welsh House stands near the crest of a rise, looking out over a sloping hillside while presenting its principal facade towards Stenton Avenue, which forms the boundary between Montgomery County and Philadelphia. In plan and detail it is a superbly developed summer house designed for ventilation and view rather than for high style ostentation. Unlike most country houses of the region, this is constructed of carefully cut, coursed and squared Wissahickon schist, in the manner of a contemporary group of distinguished houses on Summit Avenue in Chestnut Hill by James C. Sidney and Frederick Merry. In contrast with the relative simplicity of those houses, the Welsh House merges two types, the asymmetrical gable-roofed gothic cottage, in front of a cubic Italianate type of cottage at the rear. Indeed, were it not for a continuity of material and detail, one might be led to speculate that the building was constructed in two phases with the front block added onto a modest house.(Fig. 1)

That this only appears to be the case is evident when it is realized that the building is composed of four separately roofed wings, radiating from a central spiral stair that rises to a belvedere, with each wing facing a different cardinal direction. The clarity of that plan was somewhat diminished at the end of the nineteenth century when the northwest quadrant was infilled with an additional volume, crowned by a hipped roof. The three wings on the Stenton Avenue side each contain major public rooms, the hall and a parlor on the east, a drawing room on the south, and a dining room on the west. One story bays at the end of these wings confirm the importance of their rooms, while the northeast quadrant contained the kitchen and servant quarters.(Fig. 2)

Round-headed 4 over 4 windows with carefully cut voussoirs are typical with the exception of the basement rooms of the service wing, where square-headed windows provide the maximum light area, and in the attic of the wing, where round oculi flank a central window that rises into a broad wall gable. Square headed windows differentiate the 1890's wing as well. Capping the exterior is a simple gabled slate roof, with only the most rudimentary millwork to enclose its rafters. That this is original is evident from the proximity of the voussoirs of the gable windows to the roof surface which would have been covered had frieze boards crowned the wall surfaces. Large, elaborately shaped chimneys with terra cotta chimney pots break up into the roof, creating the picturesque silhouette typical of the suburban cottage.

 See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

~~Other - Civic Leadership~~ Social History
~~Centennial~~
Architecture

Period of Significance

1867-1900 1892

Significant Dates

1867
1876
1892

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

John Welsh, Jr.

Architect/Builder

J.C. Sidney (Attributed)
Louis C. Hickman (1892)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

In 1889 Samuel Hotchkin, in Ancient and Modern Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill, mentioned the by then out-of-date home of Albert Kelsey for the beauty of its site, and because it had been the home of one of Philadelphia's most beloved and celebrated citizens, John Welsh (1805-1886).¹ Though the house is now appreciated for its early gothic character, and is of significance as one of the steps between the great country houses of the 18th century and the wonderful country houses of the Philadelphia school in the early twentieth century, its chief merit was as the summer home and principal residence of John Welsh from the early 1860's until his term as United States ambassador to the Court of St. James. From that residence, Welsh, as the director of the Finance Committee, helped organize the Centennial Exhibition, resolved its financial difficulties brought on by the Panic of 1873, and saw it through to its successful conclusion in 1876. Turning looming disaster into brilliant triumph, Welsh was viewed as being single-handedly responsible for Philadelphia's greatest success since the Federal Government left the city in the 1790s.² When the Exhibition closed Welsh could proudly report, "The predictions of evil... have not been realized. The Nation has not been dishonored."³

Welsh's Centennial Exhibition leadership was acknowledged by the grateful citizens of Philadelphia with an unprecedented award of \$50,000.00 (the modern equivalent of \$1,000,000.00) for his four years work. Welsh, civic-minded to the end, in turn bestowed the gift on the University of Pennsylvania, where he was a trustee, establishing the Welsh Chair of History and English which remains one of the most important of the University's endowed positions. Welsh's philanthropic and civic role, however, reached back a generation earlier into the 1850's. Born into a Philadelphia mercantile family, Welsh took an active role in shifting the family business towards the importation and refining of sugar and the West Indies trade.⁴ A vestryman of St. Peter's Church at 3rd and Pine from the 1830's, from the last years of Bishop White's tenure until his own death. Welsh was also actively involved as early as 1851 as one of the founders and principal donor of Philadelphia's Episcopal

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Blue Book of the City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, 1884-1901.

Edmunds, Franklin. The Public School Buildings of Philadelphia, vols. 3 and 4, Philadelphia, 1917, 1925.

Gopsills Philadelphia City Directories, Philadelphia, various dates.

Hopkins, G.M. Atlas of Montgomery County, Philadelphia, 1871.

Hotchkin, Samuel, F. Ancient and Modern Germantown, Mt. Airy, and Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, 1889.

RFN [Roy F. Nichols], "John Welsh," Dictionary of American Biography, vol. 19, New York, 1936, p. 647.

[X] See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- [] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
[] previously listed in the National Register
[] previously determined eligible by the National Register
[] designated a National Historic Landmark
[] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
[] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- [X] State historic preservation office
[] Other State agency
[] Federal agency
[] Local government
[] University
[] Other

Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data 3

Acraege of property 2.268 Acres

UTM References

A [1,8] [4,8,2,4,9,0] [4,4,3,6,8,8,0]
Zone Easting Northing

B [] [] []
Zone Easting Northing

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point of intersection of the line dividing Montgomery County from Philadelphia County and in the bed of Stenton Avenue (51.5 feet wide) with the Southeastwardly line of Birch Lane (30 feet wide) produced; thence extending along the said County line in the bed of Stenton Avenue and parallel with the Northeastwardly line of Stenton Avenue and 16.5 feet Southwestwardly

[X] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This comprises the immediate grounds of the original Welsh Estate.

[] See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title George E. Thomas, Ph.D.
organization Clio Group, Inc. date 9-28-89
street & number 3512 Lancaster Avenue telephone (215) 386-6276
city or town Philadelphia state Pennsylvania zip code 19104

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Facing Stenton Avenue, a projecting cut stone entrance opens on the side into a wood porch that screens the parlor, and straight ahead into a vestibule. That vestibule is broad, and opens through large doorways on either side into the parlor and drawing room. The parlor and the drawing room are similarly detailed, with large plaster cornices and deeply profiled millwork; the parlor retains its original mantle.(Fig. 3) These rooms are arranged so that the bay of the parlor is on axis with the fireplace of the drawing room, creating a surprisingly formal composition. At the end of the hall an archway carried on plaster brackets frames a view of the spiral stair which rises the full three stories of the center of the house.(Fig. 4) The stair leads to the belvedere, which offered panoramic views of the city while insuring a cooling flow of air through the building. The stair is striking in the mass and depth of turning of its newel and balusters. Across from the base of the stair another door opens into the dining room. That room, like each of the other formal spaces, is terminated by a large bay lighted by three windows, here on axis with the fireplace.(Fig. 5)

The last major spaces of the first floor are the rooms added on the north side, in the 1890's, to take advantage of the view of the rear of the property. They are separated from the dining room by a narrow service corridor added as a part of the 1892 campaign. That corridor connects to a colonial revival service stair that provided access between the kitchen and the dining room. Like the other public spaces, the newer living room is accented by a bay, here made almost the width of the room, and lighted by immense casement windows below leaded glass transoms.(Fig. 6) Brilliantly lighted and comfortably ventilated, it enhanced the house's role as a retreat from Philadelphia's summer heat, recalling the tradition of great summer houses reaching back to Cliveden a century earlier. A broad fireplace of pompeian brick departs from the earlier marble renaissance fireplaces of the older portion, and narrow oak flooring replaces the usual pine boards. It presumably served as a living room for the late nineteenth century residents.

Beyond the new living room, a door opens into a semicircular room that takes its shape from a cylindrical bay that projects to the west.(Fig. 7) Its subsidiary placement off the living room suggests that it was a smoking room, or perhaps a library. Its form is repeated in the second floor where a suite of rooms, presumably the owner's quarters, looked out over the valley.

On the front, the second floor continues the plan of the first floor, though the millwork and trim are less elaborate.(Fig. 8) The original bedchambers and a small cross corridor open off the stair. Each space below was echoed in a generous bedroom above. Since these rooms were less public, however, the mantles were given the simplified form derived from the old Greek Revival.

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Though the house had been converted into a number of apartments, the major features and details survive with a remarkable degree of integrity. Partitions were scribed around the plaster cornices and deep wood baseboards. Mantles remained in place; even the spiral stair survived despite the difficulties it presented to an era when furniture was no longer readily dismantled.

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Hospital. In the mid-1850's, he served as a member of Philadelphia's Select Council, and followed that by a decade as the chairman of the Sinking Fund commission. That in turn led, in 1864, to his role as chairman of the great Central Fair of the United States Sanitary Commission, which was held during June of 1864 in Logan Square, and was intended to raise money from the sale of donated items for the care of the injured during the climactic battles of the Civil War. No doubt it was that experience which led Philadelphians to Welsh when the Centennial Exhibition appeared on the brink of foundering after overly ambitious plans were crushed by the financial collapse of 1873.

Welsh had additional interests that shaped other aspects of his city. From 1867 he was a member of the Fairmount Park Commission, viewing the park as a primary device by which handsome and successful neighborhoods would be maintained. During his tenure on the Park Commission, Welsh made numerous trips overseas at his own expense. Interested in city planning, he toured Britain and the Continent, where he was struck by the pleasing visual character of the new districts of London and Vienna, shaped by broad avenues and small parks. These convinced him of the merits of urban planning, and led him via letters to the Public Ledger (19 June 1871) to urge that the city engineer be sent to London, so that similar solutions might be developed for Philadelphia's new neighborhoods.⁵

On Welsh's death on April 10, 1886, the Philadelphia Inquirer devoted two columns on its editorial page to his life and character, noting the Centennial, his work as ambassador, and other equally important projects. The unequivocal statement that "through his efforts, the University [of Pennsylvania] buildings were erected and paid for," suggests his contributions to that institution.⁶

The association of Welsh with the Stenton Avenue house was paralleled by his winter residence at 1034 Spruce Street. But, unlike his "estate house," Welsh, like so many Philadelphia gentry, merely rented his city house, devoting his resources to the country, which remained the center of family and interest. When, in 1880, Welsh's children required country residences, John Welsh hired Frank Furness to design houses in nearby Montgomery County.⁷

Though the Stenton Avenue house is most significant as Welsh's House, it has considerable interest as architecture as well. After the era of the great 18th century estates, Philadelphia country seats had gradually diminished in importance, with great mansions such as T.U. Walter's Andalusia (the Biddle residence on the Delaware) and Phil Ellena (the Carpenter residence in Germantown) among the few stand outs. The mid-century saw a shift towards the artistic cottage, championed in print by A.J. Downing's Architecture of Country

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Houses and represented locally by Samuel Sloan's country house designs in such pattern books as The Model Architect. The pattern books argued for the representation of locale and social status by choice of style, and consistently favored choices that were exotic by reason of antiquity or distance. Gothic and Italianate styles of the late middle ages tended to predominate.

The Welsh House, though generally like the gothic cottage in appearance is unusual because it seems a conscious attempt to avoid the question of style. Roofs are mainly gabled, but the northeast wing is of a shallow pitch, with a shallow wall gable suggesting the Italianate styles. The principal zones where the style was typically established - the roof line, the entrance porch, and the windows are, in fact, curiously devoid of detail, relying on cut stone, especially the voussoirs around the windows and doors, for the principal aesthetic effect. The result is a building which anticipated the suburban houses that were praised as Philadelphia's chief architectural attainment in the early twentieth century.⁸

Because domestic architecture did not receive the attention accorded civic structures, few of the architects of mid-century houses are documented, leaving the question of authorship to attribution. By the time that the house was under construction, one likely candidate, John Notman, was dead. Others who would have social and professional contact with the Welsh family, notably Frank Furness, had yet to establish offices in Philadelphia. Perhaps most likely was James C. Sidney, an English born and trained architect, who had prepared the master-plan of Fairmount Park, and was the designer of a cluster of contemporary stone houses on Summit Avenue in Chestnut Hill. These show many of the same characteristics of carefully cut stone, simplified detail and style of the Welsh House.⁹ Sidney's designs for the School Board of Philadelphia are also similar enough to warrant comment.¹⁰

Louis C. Hickman (1863 - c.1917), is know to be the architect of the carefully handled northwest wing from documentation.¹¹ He had trained with T.P. Chandler, and in 1891 opened his own office. After the death of Welsh, the Stenton Avenue house became the year round residence of Albert Kelsey, who gave the house its name "Rauhala," and who updated the house in 1892. He hired Hickman to design the new wing. Interestingly, Kelsey's son, Albert, was at the time a student at the University of Pennsylvania and around that time shifted to architecture as his career. Perhaps because the house was of no distinctly recognizable style, the addition adhered to the conventions of its original design, using squared Wissahickon schist, carefully laid to follow the original coursing. It therefore enhances rather than conflicts with the house.

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Possessing a high degree of integrity, the John Welsh residence is associated with the life of a person significant in our past, and conveys the character and simplicity of the life style of the Philadelphia gentry. The house also conveys the distinctive characteristics of the Philadelphia country house in transition from 18th century sources to the early twentieth century type developed by Frank Furness and Wilson Eyre. As such it warrants being placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Footnotes:

1. Samuel F. Hotchkin, Ancient and Modern Germantown, Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, 1889, p. 439.
2. RFN [Roy F. Nichols], "John Welsh," Dictionary of American Biography, vol. 19; New York, 1936, p. 647.
3. John Welsh, "Closing Address of the Centennial Exhibition," in Edward L. Stokes, ed. Letters of John Welsh, Philadelphia, 1937, p. 29.
4. RFN, op cit.
5. "Letter", John Welsh, published in the Public Ledger, 19 June 1871, in Stokes, op cit., p. 11.
6. Philadelphia Inquirer, 12 April, 1886, p. 4, col. 3., "editorial," col. 4, "obituary."
7. George E. Thomas and Hyman Myers, "Checklist," The Architecture of Frank Furness, Philadelphia, 1973, p. 202. Furness and John Lowber Welsh, John Welsh's son, were in the same army unit together during the Civil War. (Jones Wister's Reminiscences, Philadelphia, 1920, p. 156).
8. George Edgell, The American Architecture of Today, New York, 1928, p. 114 ff.
9. Sidney's career is surveyed in Tatman and Moss, Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, Boston, 1985, pp. 717-719.
10. Sidney's Schools are illustrated in Franklin D. Edmunds, The Public School Buildings of the City of Philadelphia, vol. 3 (1917), and vol. 4 (1925).

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National Park Service

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John Welch House

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Footnotes: (continued)

11. The Kelsey addition is cited in Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide, VII:10 (9 March 1892). Hickman's career is treated in Tatman and Moss, op cit, p. 377-8.

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National Park Service

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John Welsh

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Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builder's Guide, VII:10 (9 March 1892).

Scott, J.D. Atlas of Montgomery County, Philadelphia, 1877.

Stokes, Edward Lowber. Letters of John Welsh, Philadelphia, 1937.

Tatman, Sandra, and Moss, Roger. Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, Boston, 1985.

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Continuation Sheet

John Walker
Section number 10 Page 2

at right angles therefrom; North 48 degrees, 20 minutes West, 323.86 feet to a point; thence North 43 degrees, 46 minutes, 30 seconds East, 178.90 feet to a point; thence North 82 degrees, 57 minutes, 30 seconds East, 51.55 feet to a point; thence North 42 degrees, 31 minutes, 30 seconds East, 88.39 feet to a point; thence South 51 degrees, 28 minutes, 15 seconds East, 287.86 feet to a point on the Southeastwardly side of Birch Lane (30 feet wide); thence along the said side of Birch Lane the two following courses and distances: (1) South 37 degrees, 53 minutes, 30 seconds West, 78.94 feet to a point; (2) South 44 degrees, 11 minutes West, 243.10 feet to the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

Welsh House
Montgomery County
Zone 18 - Germantown Area
E = 482490 N = 476580

