

TREWENDT HOUSE (Collins House)
200 Forest Street
Conshohocken
Montgomery County
Pennsylvania

HABS NO. PA-6022

HABS
PA
46-CONSH,
5-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TREWENDT HOUSE
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Location: 200 Forrest Street, Conshohocken, Montgomery Co., Pennsylvania

Significance: The Trewendt House, currently known as the Collins House, is an Italianate dwelling which, along with the John Wood estate, represents the 1850-75 industrial prosperity west of Fayette Street. These estates originally had large landholdings which contrasted to the more densely developed upper-class neighborhood east of Fayette Street.

Description: The Trewendt House is a two-story, three-bay, single-family Italianate dwelling constructed of stone covered with stucco. The main block is rectangular with a projecting entry bay. The symmetrical front facade faces east, parallel to Forrest Street, with pilasters located at the corners. The shallow hipped roof is intersected by a gable pediment above the central entry bay. Overhanging eaves with large curvilinear brackets dominate the cornice and extend the perimeter of the main block. All of the windows are paired; those on the first floor have flat lintels while those on the second floor have Italianate tangential semi-circular arched openings. The side facades have full-story double doors with transoms, and an early site plan indicates that side porches originally existed in conjunction with these doors. The windows on the first-floor front facade have bracketed window hoods and the entrance has double doors with an ornate semi-circular transom and bracketed architrave. A long rectangular two-story wing extends from the center of the rear elevation.

The original portion of the house contained seven rooms. One enters into a two-story foyer with a staircase to the rear. Flanking the foyer to the south is a library which leads into a dining room. Flanking the foyer to the north is a full-length parlor. These rooms all have ornate plaster scroll moldings at the cornice and decorative plaster ceiling medallions. The original portion of the second floor has four bedrooms entered from a hall with fancy plaster moldings. Shortly after the house was built, the rear kitchen was added. Later in the century, after the Collins' bought the property, a large seven room addition was built to the rear.

History: The Trewendt House was built ca. 1857 for Theodore Trewendt, second owner of the nearby Plymouth Iron Works, founded by Stephen Colwell. The house was built by William Hallowell, the fifth Burgess of Conshohocken and one of Conshohocken's most prominent builders. The house was designed as a hilltop estate overlooking a circular entry drive from Fayette Street. Today it fronts Forrest Street. In 1852, Trewendt donated the southwest

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corner of his property at Second Avenue and Fayette Street for a public school. With the decline of the smelting industry in 1862, he sold all his interest in Conshohocken iron, subdivided his land and left Conshohocken. In 1889, the house was bought by the Francis Collins, and has remained in the Collins family since that time. Francis E. Collins and his brother Henry patterned a coal-fired boiler control called the Collins Regulator. Francis's son William moved into the Trewendt House in the 1940s. He continued to sell the Collins Regulator until it became obsolete in the 1950s, as oil replaced coal. William was also a newspaper correspondent for the Philadelphia Inquirer, and for nearly twenty-five years he wrote a popular local column entitled "Heard Under the Spreading Maple Tree," for the Norristown Times Herald. William's son Joseph moved into the house with his family in the mid 1980s, and currently serves as a Councilman on the Conshohocken Borough Council.

Sources:

Conshohocken Historical Society files.

Joseph Collins, Interview, June 1994.

Trumbull Wiesenthal Consultants. Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form: Collins House. July 1989. This survey form provided the date of construction and much of the history.

Historian: Janet G. Blutstein, HABS Historian, 1994.