

ALEXANDER DOUGLASS HOUSE

on the
Move

The Alexander Douglass House, one of Trenton's most cherished historic sites, tells a curious tale of the American Revolution and local passion for preservation. The site of George Washington's Council of War before the Battle of Princeton, the Douglass House has been moved three times, radically remodeled and restored, and for more than century has occupied a special, if somewhat confused place in the city's civic memory. Even today, despite its antiquity, the age of the building is open to debate and it remains unclear if any part of it still survives from the time of the Revolution.



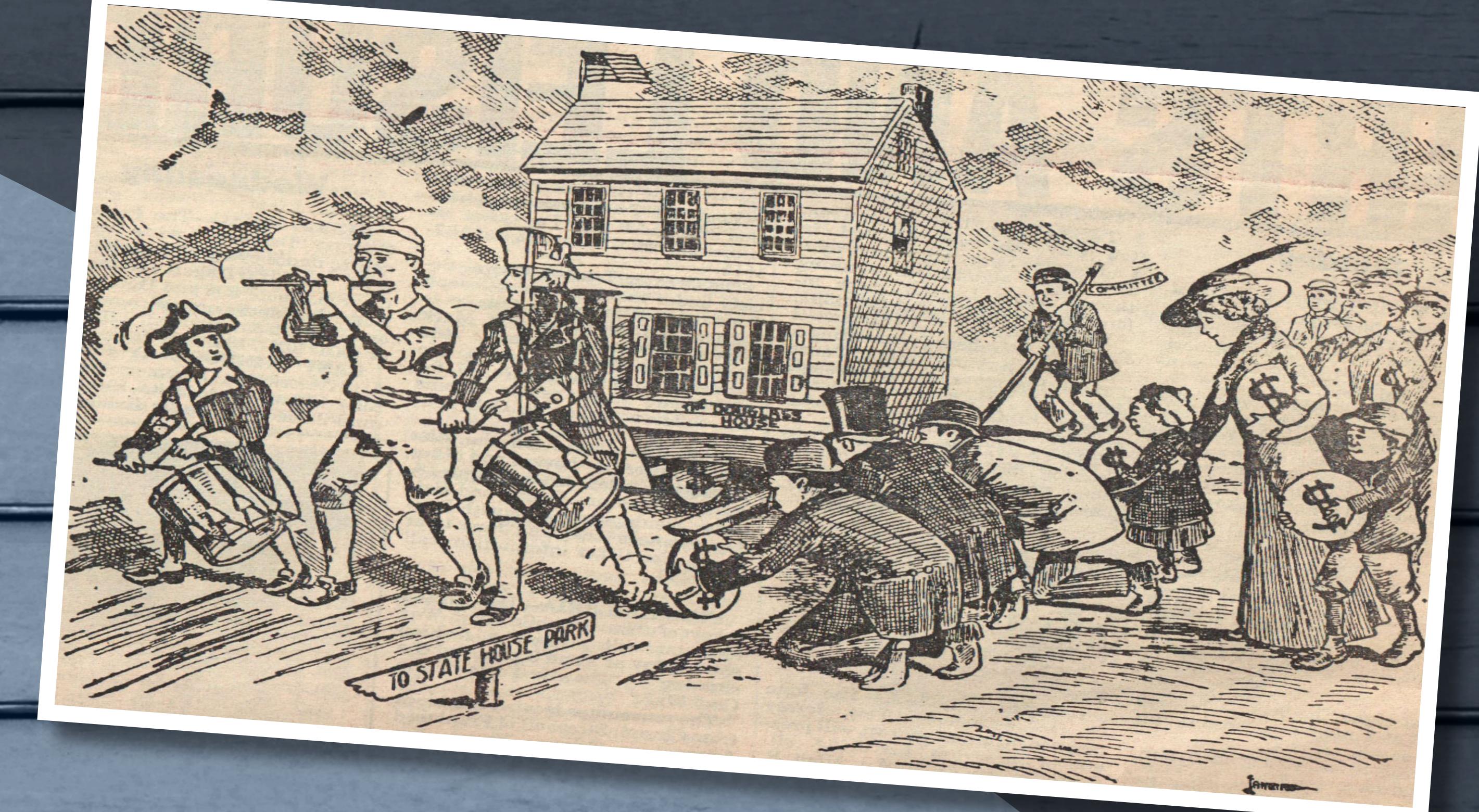
history

The Douglass House Council of War, January 2, 1777, by W. E. Pedrick.

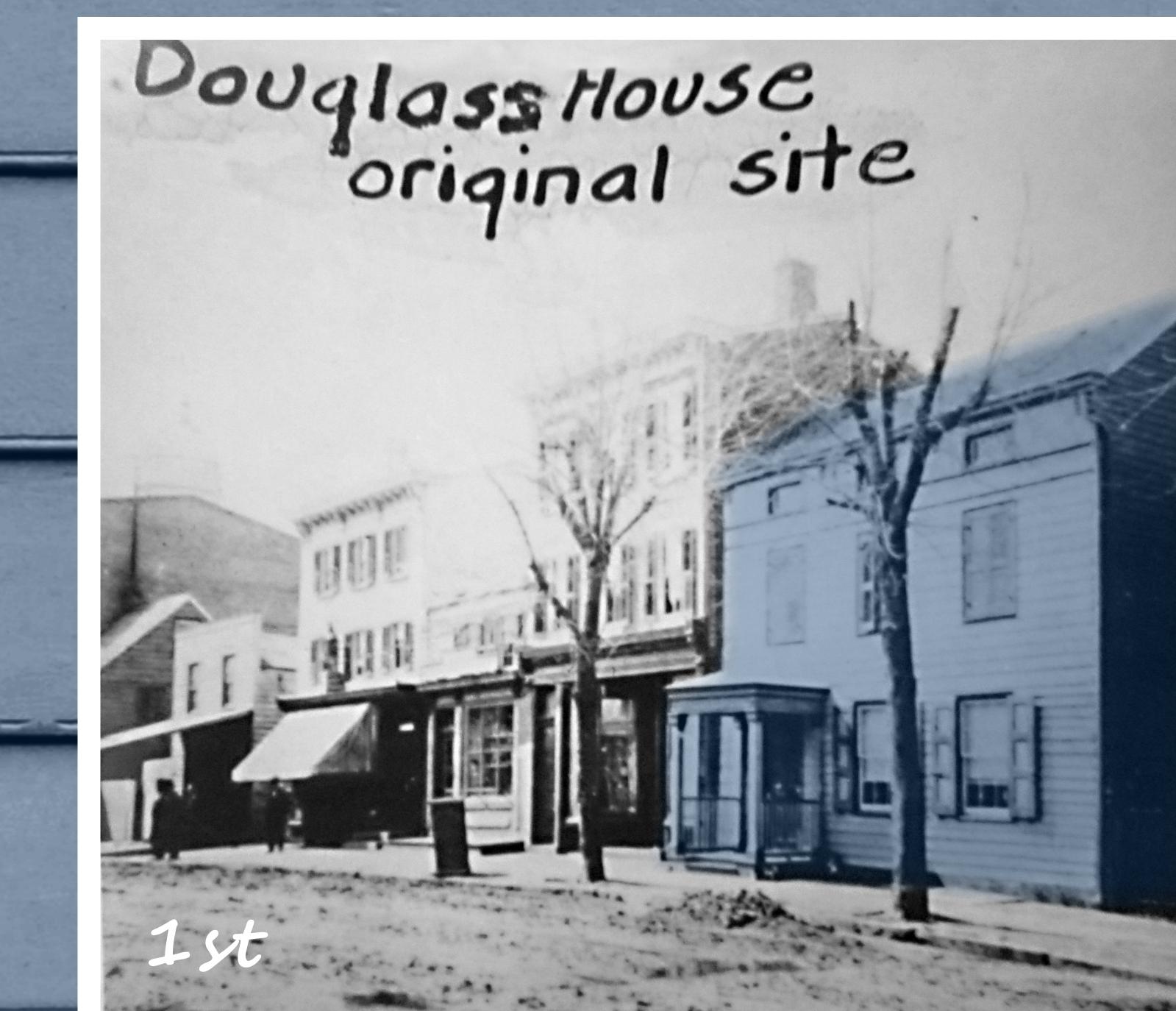
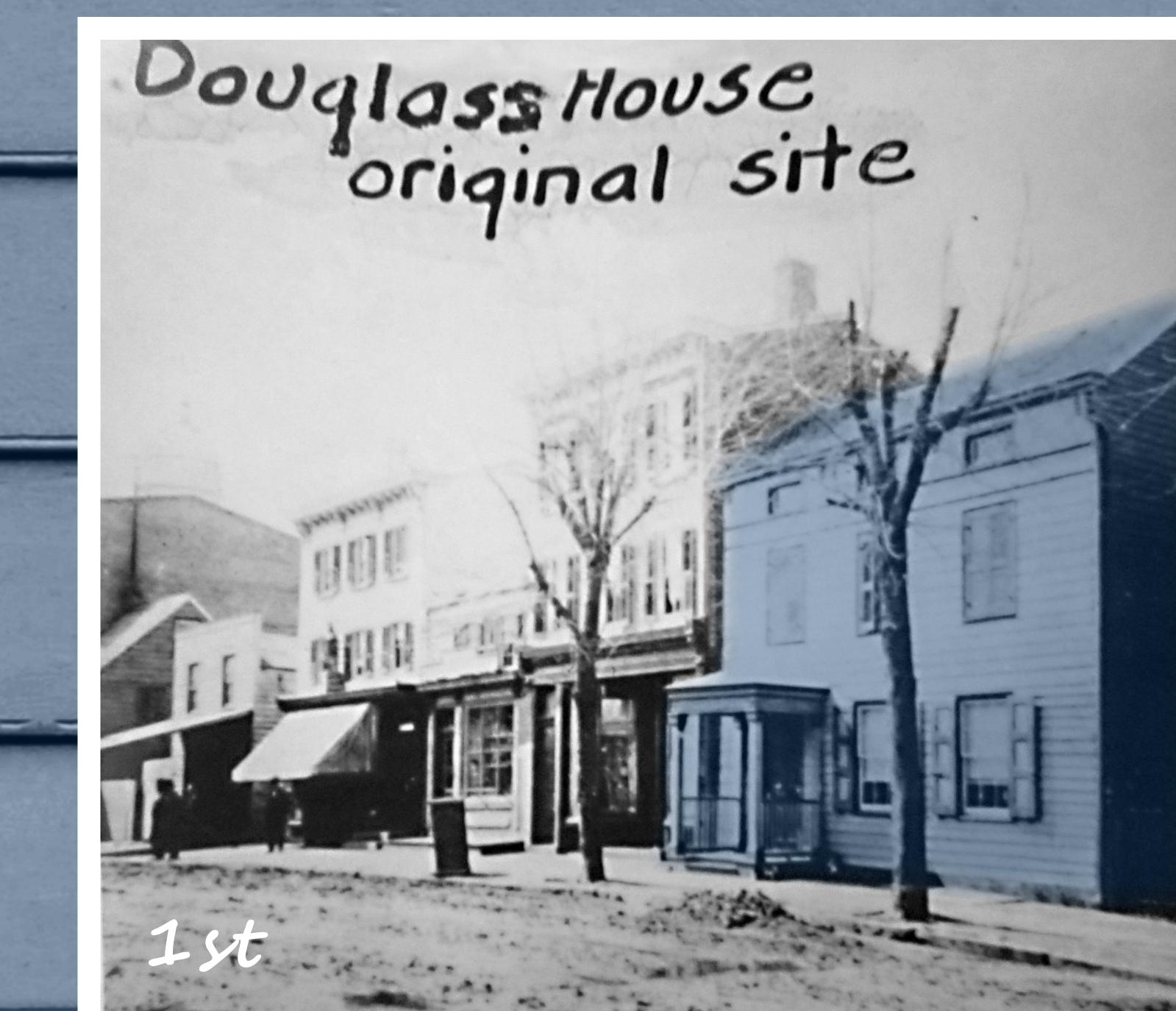
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In 1923, Sacred Heart Parish's Catholic Club purchased the Douglass House in order to save it from demolition. This cartoon, which appeared in the *Trenton Times* in 1924, depicts the patriotic spirit that led to the house being moved to a park behind the State House.



Around 1760, the original Douglass House was built by Jacob Bright, roughly a quarter mile from here on South Broad Street. It was purchased in 1769 by **Alexander Douglass**, later a quartermaster to the Continental Army, who lived there until his death in 1836. On the evening of January 2, 1777, after American forces had repulsed British and Hessian troops at the nearby crossing of the Assunpink, the Douglass home was the scene of a strategy session where **George Washington** and his top generals planned the overnight flanking maneuver that led to the American triumph at Princeton the following morning.

The historical importance of the Douglass House went unrecognized for many years after the Revolution. The house was acquired by its neighbor, the German Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Church, in 1857. It served as a rectory until the construction of a new, larger church forced its sale and removal to Centre Street in 1876. While the front section of the house, believed to have been erected by Douglass around 1800, was relocated in one piece, most of the rest, and possibly any part of it that Washington would have recognized, was dismantled and only partially reassembled.

Early in the 20th century the Douglass House was rescued from obscurity as Trentonians sought to highlight the city's contributions to American independence. In 1923-24 a fund raising effort spearheaded by the Trenton High School and the Trenton Catholic Club enabled the building to be moved again and refurbished at a new site in Mahlon Stacy Park near the State House. School children were encouraged to donate their coins in a demonstration of youthful patriotism. In 1976, the house was moved again to its present location as part of the bicentennial effort that led to the creation of Mill Hill Park.