

If you were here in the 1930s

A Colonial Revival



Trent House before restoration, 1934

On the eve of America's Great Depression, the Stokes family donated the Trent House to the City of Trenton. The generous gift came with a condition that the house be restored and used as a public institution such as a museum. In October 1936, Edward A. Stokes officially handed the house's front door key to Mayor John J. Cleary.

The property had fallen into an advanced state of decline. Howard Hughes, the City Librarian, conducted historical research and advocated for careful restoration. J. Osborne Hunt, a Trenton architect best known for the New Jersey State House Annex (1931), turned out to be a skilled preservation architect. After Hunt's death in 1935, architect Samuel Mountford completed the project.

With funding injected by the federal New Deal, the Trent House bustled with craftsmen during the mid-1930s. They focused on returning the house to its original Georgian appearance. This meant ripping away the entire eastern wing, removing the ornate Victorian touches that had been added by later owners, and adding back colonial wood trim and details like a cupola.



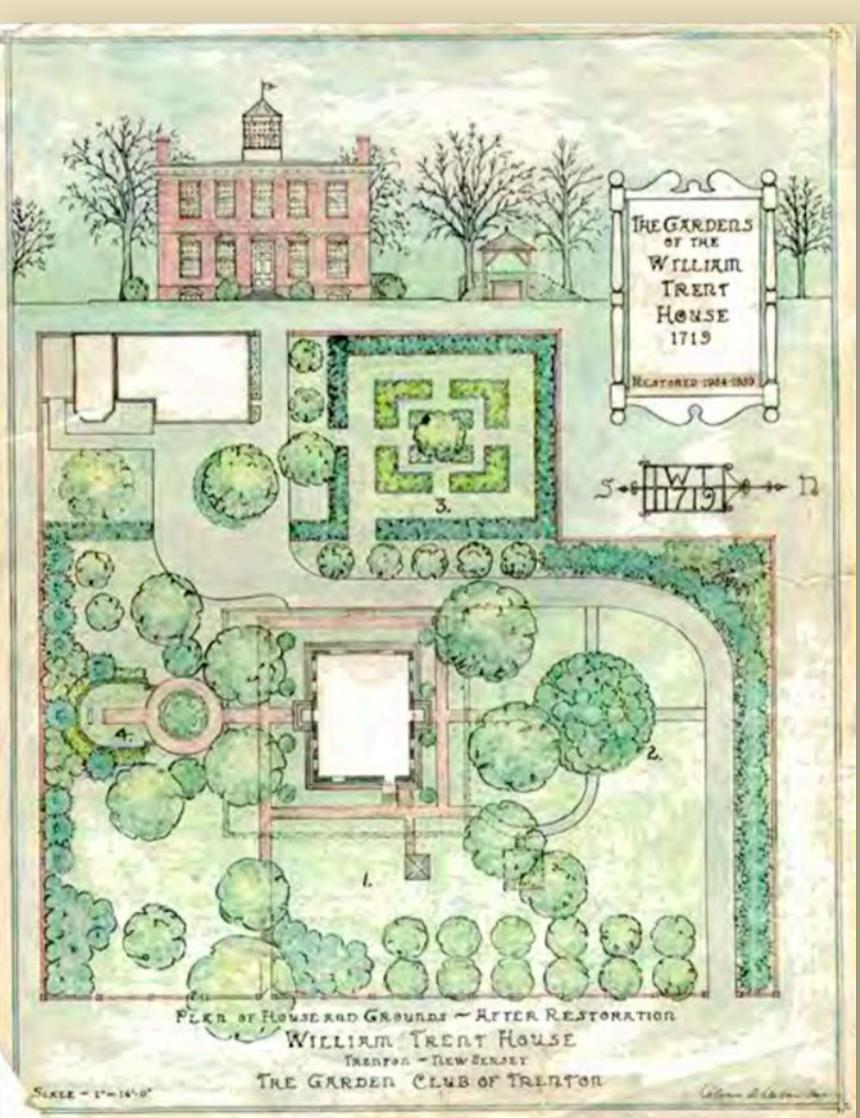
Restoration in progress, 1934



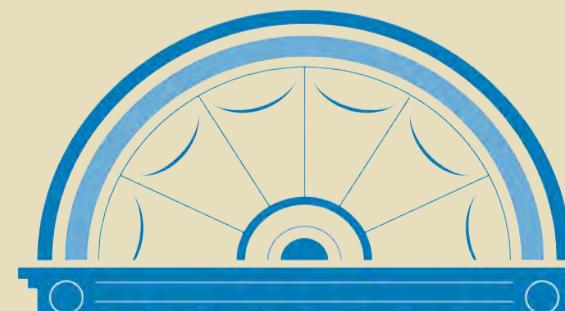
Restoration nearing completion, 1937



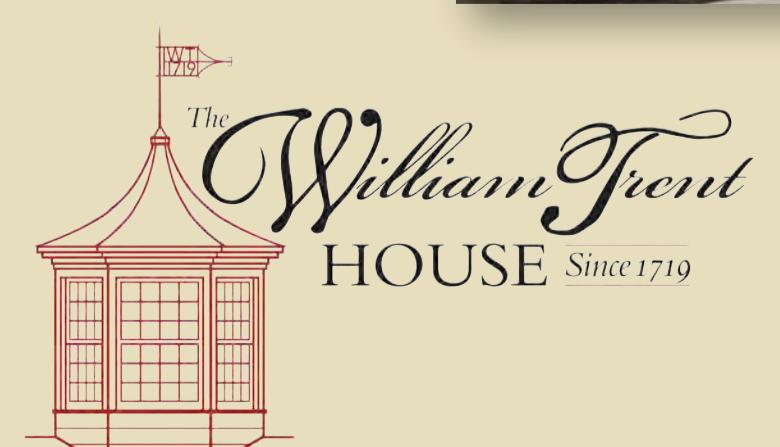
Dedication ceremony, 1936



The Garden Club of Trenton, a women's volunteer group, took on the task of reviving the colonial landscape. In 1938, the club commissioned Isabella Pendleton, a pioneering woman in the field of professional landscape architecture. Pendleton's plan included brick paths, an herb garden, a small pear orchard, parterre boxwood garden, and scores of yews. In 1939, the Trent House museum opened to the public receiving praise for its faithful restoration.



NEW JERSEY
HISTORIC
TRUST



Funding for this sign made possible by a grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust.
Content development by Hunter Research, Inc. Graphic design by Douglas Scott.

The 1719 William Trent House Museum respectfully acknowledges its location within the ancestral homeland of the Lenape, or Delaware as they are now commonly known, and their forebears.