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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

William Trent House

AND/OR COMMON

William Trent House

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

539 Warren Street

CITY, TOWN

Trenton

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_ VICINITY OF

4

STATE

New Jersey

CODE

34

COUNTY

Mercer

CODE

21

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

### CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

### OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

### STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

### PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

City of Trenton, City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

E. State Street

CITY, TOWN

Trenton

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

New Jersey

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Mercer County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Market Street

CITY, TOWN

Trenton

STATE

New Jersey

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1935, 1936-1937

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress, Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The William Trent House (1719), was built by William Trent as his summer house at the Falls of the Delaware. The settlement of Trent Town or Trenton, which now encompasses the Trent House dates from Trent's permanent residency which commenced in 1721. Thus the property has undergone the transformation from a country seat, with "a court yard on each front of the house, one fronting down the River Delaware to the ferry, through a large handsome avenue of English cherry trees, the other fronting up the river to Trenton,"<sup>1</sup> to an urban tract which is now surrounded by a high rise complex and expressways. The historically integral property has shrunken to include only the grounds contained within the brick walls which enclose the plot.

This fine example of Early Georgian Colonial architecture is contained on approximately two acres of garden, within a brick and wrought-iron fence. Of red brick with white trim, the house is two stories tall, measures 40' by 48' and is covered by a low-pitched hip roof with a dentil cornice and is crowned by a hexagonal, copper-roofed cupola with a weather vane. The front and rear facades of the house are divided by five bays, and the simplicity of the exterior is created through the straight lines and lack of ornamentation. The arched windows are bare, as the shutters are inside the house: and the doorways lack any portico although they are topped by arched transoms which echo the arched windows. There is a belt course which runs the perimeter of the house at the second story. There are two interior brick chimneys, one at either end of the house.

The building has a central floor plan, with a large handsome entry and staircase, and four rooms on each floor. The interior is little altered and retains the original stairway, floorboards and interior shutters. The nine fireplaces and the cellar kitchen fireplace are all in good condition, especially the fireplace in Madame Trent's room which still has its original Delft tiles. Two upstairs rooms have the original plaster on their walls and the hallways retain their original cornices. The main parlour downstairs is still panelled with the original covering.

The floors in the basement, which runs under the whole building, are not original. The kitchen floor has been laid with ballast brick from North Carolina, and the adjoining cellar floor, which was originally packed earth, is now covered with flagstone. Leading from the cellar down to the river bank, there was a subterranean tunnel. This tunnel now exists only as far as the carriage house, in the southwest corner of the lot.

The interior of the house has been completely furnished, with William and Mary, and Queen Anne furniture of a 1640-1750 time span. Refurbishing has been based almost exclusively on an inventory of the Trent estate in 1726, two years after William Trent's death.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Lettis Hooper, quoted in William Trent House, Built 1719, A Tercentenary Edition, edited by the Board of the Trent House Association (Trenton, n.d.) p.3.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1719

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The William Trent House is a distinguished example of an early Georgian house designed in the William and Mary or Queen Anne style. Of red brick with white trim, the house has a handsome simplicity of straight lines, accentuated by bare arched windows (the shutters are inside) the bold cornice, and the absence of classically enriched doorways.

Built by William Trent, a Scottish merchant, in 1719, on the present site of Trenton, the house was carefully restored in 1936-1937. The fine garden, grounds, and house are all maintained in excellent condition by the City of Trenton.

## HISTORY

William Trent, the builder and namesake of the Trent House, was born in Scotland, but emigrated to Philadelphia as a young man around 1682. He established himself there as a successful merchant, and a shipowner in partnership with William Penn and James Logan. In 1714, Trent purchased 800 acres on the other side of Assunpink Creek at the Falls of the Delaware, a tract which he subsequently enlarged, from 1718 to 1721. In 1719 he built the Trent House here, on the bank of the Delaware, as a summer home. After living there two summers, he assumed permanent residence in 1721. At this time he had a township laid out there which he called Trent's Town, later Trenton. Trent became a leading figure in New Jersey in the following years, but died suddenly in 1724.

Several years after Trent's death, his eldest son, James, sold house to a wealthy West Indies merchant named William Morris. During the ensuing 200 years the house changed hands many times. Its tenants have included three governors of New Jersey, and during the Battle of Trenton, it was occupied by Dr. William Bryant, a Loyalist who administered to both the American and Hessian troops. In 1778, he sold the property to Colonel John Cox, Assistant Quartermaster General of the Army, who occupied it for fourteen years. During that time many Revolutionary War figures, including Generals Washington and Greene were entertained by the Coxes, who gave the name "Bloomsbury Court" to the property.

The last private owner of the Trent House was Edward Stokes who acquired it in 1887, and then in 1929 gave it to the City of Trenton with the

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Board of the Trent House Association, William Trent House, Built - 1719 (Trenton, n.d.).

Dorothy and Richard Pratt, A Guide to Early American Homes North (New York, 1956). Robert Lettis Hooper, quoted in William Trent House, Built 1719, A Tercentenary Edition, edited by the Board of the Trent House Association (Trenton, n.d.) p.3

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 5.2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 8	5 1 9 9 1 0	4, 4 5, 1 1 8 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the Southwest corner of the intersection of Market Street, and South Warren Street, proceed south along the Trent House boundary fence, thence west, thence north, thence east to the point of origin, always following the fence. These boundaries enclose the historically intact features of the Trent House.

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 Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION	DATE
<u>Historic Sites Survey</u>	<u>6/3/75</u>
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
<u>1100 L. Street, NW.</u>	<u>202-523/5464</u>
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
<u>Washington</u>	<u>D.C.</u>

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

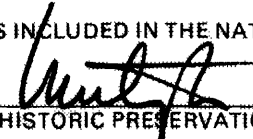
THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

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 National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
	DATE <u>1/3/79</u>
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE <u>1/3/79</u>
ATTEST: <u>Bill Lebovich</u>	
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Outside the house, the grounds include: the post-historic, brick carriage house, now inhabited by the caretaker, the original well which has a reconstructed wellhead and a shingled hip roof, the original root cellar, as well as a boxwood circle north of the house, a circular brick walk on the south, and an herb garden to the west. The garden layout and walkways have been derived from a 1789 map of the house and surroundings.

The restoration of the Trent House was accomplished in 1936-37, under the aegis of the City of Trenton, and is presently maintained by the Trent House Commission.

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stipulation that it be restored to its original state and preserved as a suitable public gallery or museum. The house was restored from 1934 to 1939, and is presently open to the public, and furnished with pieces in the period of 1675-1750.