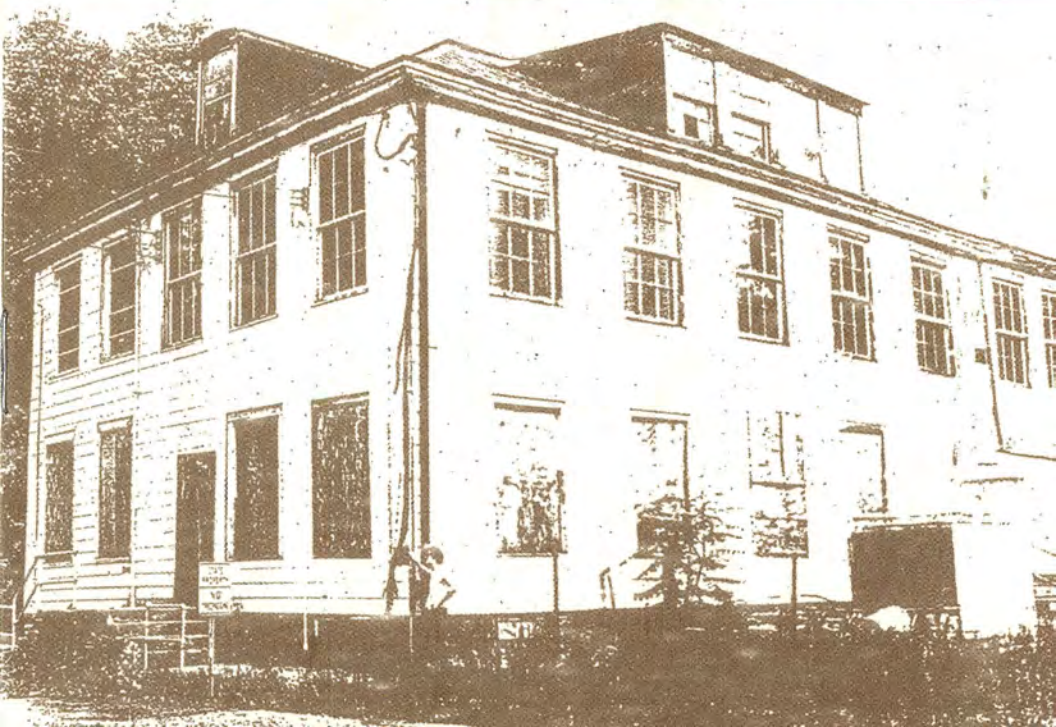
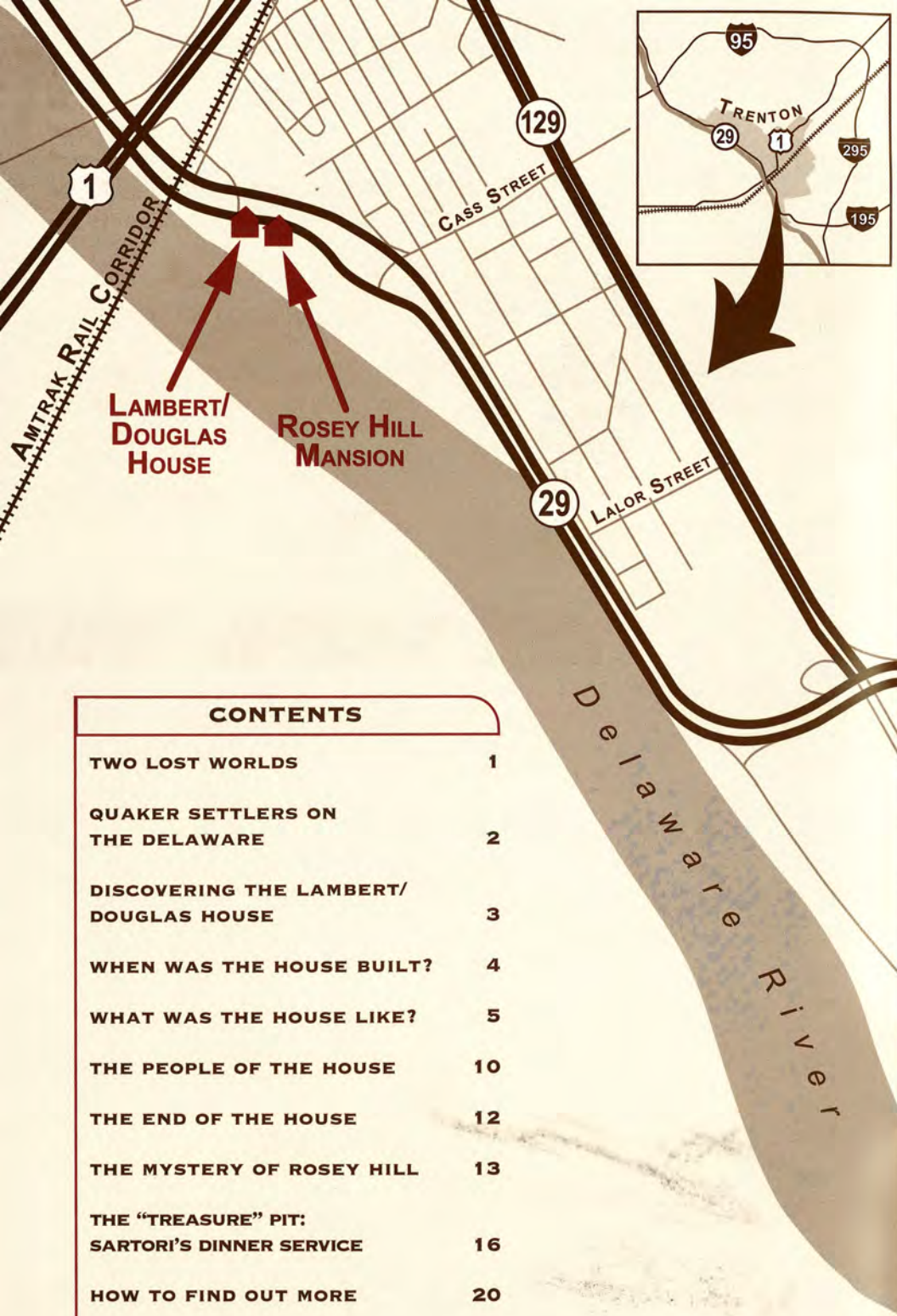


History traced by **Route 29**

A Tale of Two Houses

**THE LAMBERT/DOUGLAS HOUSE AND
THE ROSEY HILL MANSION, 1700-1850**





1765

New Jersey is a Royal Colony of Great Britain. The Delaware River just south of Trenton is busy. Small, sturdy sailboats called shallops are leaving from wharves along the bank, loaded with cargo and heading downriver to Philadelphia. A stagecoach stands next to the Ferry House Tavern while the ferryboat comes slowly across the river from Pennsylvania. A short distance downstream from the ferry is a neat farm surrounded by orchards, meadows, and woodland. A simple, old, but comfortable farmhouse with a shingle roof, clapboard siding, and old-fashioned leaded casement windows faces down the river. Workmen are making alterations to the basement, and the sound of hammering wafts up the bulkhead steps by the front door. Lumber, stone, and wooden casks and barrels sit in the yard.

1832

A man with a kindly face gazes sadly one last time at his pretty mansion house. He has raised a large family here for almost 30 years, but now his beloved wife has died and it is time to go home to his native Italy. He says something to the servants standing nearby, and then turns away. Inside the shuttered house, sets of fashionable dishes, bottles, wineglasses, and cutlery, too bulky and expensive to take back to Italy, sit silently on the shadowy shelves, collecting dust.



Two moments in time along what is now New Jersey Route 29 in south Trenton. Nearby is the Mercer County Waterfront Park and a modern office complex. There is nothing in the present view to remind us of these past events. We can reconstruct them through the study of old documents, historic maps, broken artifacts, stone foundations, and stains in the soil. All this evidence was uncovered and studied as part of the reconstruction of Route 29 along the riverbank in 1999–2002.

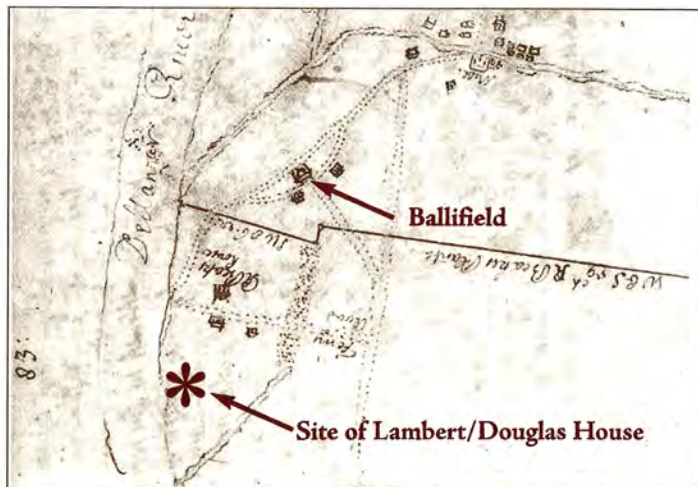
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In the late 1670s a group of English Protestants—the Society of Friends, more commonly known as Quakers—colonized the Lower Delaware Valley. Quakers believed in simplicity, hard work, and in the equality of all people before God. In their plain church meetinghouses they had no ministers and sang no hymns. They called everyone “friend,” no matter what their position in society. These were radical ideas, and the Friends were often persecuted because of them.

The Trenton area, then called the Falls of the Delaware, was settled by Friends mostly from Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire in the north of England. The Lenape Indians and their ancestors had been here for thousands of years. The Quakers therefore negotiated with Indian leaders or “sachems” to obtain title to the land. For a number of years the Indians and the new settlers lived as neighbors, but diseases such as smallpox eventually took the lives of many Native Americans.

Several Quakers, among them Mahlon Stacy and John and Thomas Lambert, jointly acquired a large area of land at the Falls. Two of Thomas’ sons, Thomas and John, inherited his estate, and in about 1701 it seems that a new house was built for John close to the riverbank, about 600 yards south of where the William Trent House now stands.



Part of a survey of Mahlon Stacy's property in 1714. Stacy's house, known as Ballifield, is shown bigger than the other houses on the map and occupies roughly the same site as the later William Trent House. Even though the Lambert/Douglas House is believed to have existed at this time, it is not shown on this map because it was not situated on Stacy property. [Courtesy of the New Jersey State Archives]

The discovery of the remains of John Lambert's early colonial house was a surprise. Rosey Hill, a house perhaps dating to the late 1700s, was known to have stood a short distance to the south, and so nobody expected to find a second house here. Archaeological excavations at the time were actually focused on recovering evidence of Native American occupation (*see* the companion booklet *Ancient Ways*).

Surviving historical records from this early period of Trenton's history are mostly legal documents relating to land sales and transfers, wills and, of course, taxes. Many transactions, particularly those between family members, were not officially recorded. The history of this piece of property is very complicated. There are no detailed maps. For these and probably other reasons this house does not appear in the records. After archaeologists found the physical remains, historical researchers looked at the documents with new questions in mind and the early history of the site became clearer. This process is common in historical archaeology, where the documents and the archaeological data work together.

Archaeology was the main research tool for understanding what the building had actually looked like. About 100 cubic yards of dirt was carefully excavated by hand from the basement and screened through wire mesh to recover artifacts and other samples. Each layer of soil was carefully documented, and gradually the site told its story.



View of the basement of the Lambert/Douglas House during excavations conducted in 1998 (scales in feet). [Hunter Research, Inc.]

What the archaeologists found was a 4- to 5-foot deep rectangular cellar pit about 22 feet east–west by 25 feet north–south, with a flat bottom and vertical sides. It was invisible before digging began because it was completely filled up with soil. More than 25,000 artifacts ranging in date from about 1700 to about 1790 were found.

The remains certainly didn't look much like a house. The stone from the basement walls had almost all been removed when the house was torn down, leaving only a few foundations here and there. The floor, of thin layers of beaten earth and cobbles, had been patched and replaced several times. The challenge was to study these fragmentary remains to discover the history and appearance of the house.

WHEN WAS THE HOUSE BUILT?

To work out the date of construction of a house like this, archaeologists usually rely on finding artifacts that can be easily dated (such as coins) in key places in the ground (such as underneath the foundations).

Here, several crumpled strips of lead from the early floor levels provided the answer. These strips were used to hold diamond-shaped panes of glass in window frames. Inside the strips were stamped with the letters and numbers "EW·1701·TD." The letters are the initials of the manufacturer (whose name remains unknown); 1701 is the year the strip was made. This means that the windows for the house were assembled in, or soon after, 1701. This is the oldest datable physical evidence so far found for a house in the Trenton area, placing the erection of the Lambert/Douglas House within a generation of the arrival of the Quakers at the Falls.



One of several window leads found in the basement of the Lambert/Douglas House. The inset shows the date 1701 stamped on the strip. The window lead fragment is approximately 2.25 inches long.

[Hunter Research, Inc.]

WHAT WAS THE HOUSE LIKE?

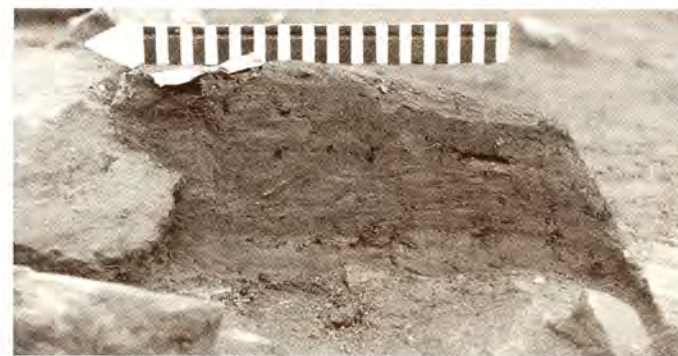
The basement space was divided by an east–west wall into a smaller northern section and a larger southern part. This suggests the house enjoyed a southern exposure with a view facing down the Delaware River. Two sets of stairs gave access to the southern section—one on the southern wall from the outside and the other on the west wall, perhaps giving access from the interior of an adjoining wing to the west (see below). Two short sections of wall extending into the southern section of the basement from the east wall were supports for the fireplace on the first floor above.



Large stones in the northern part of the basement of the Lambert/Douglas House (scales in feet).

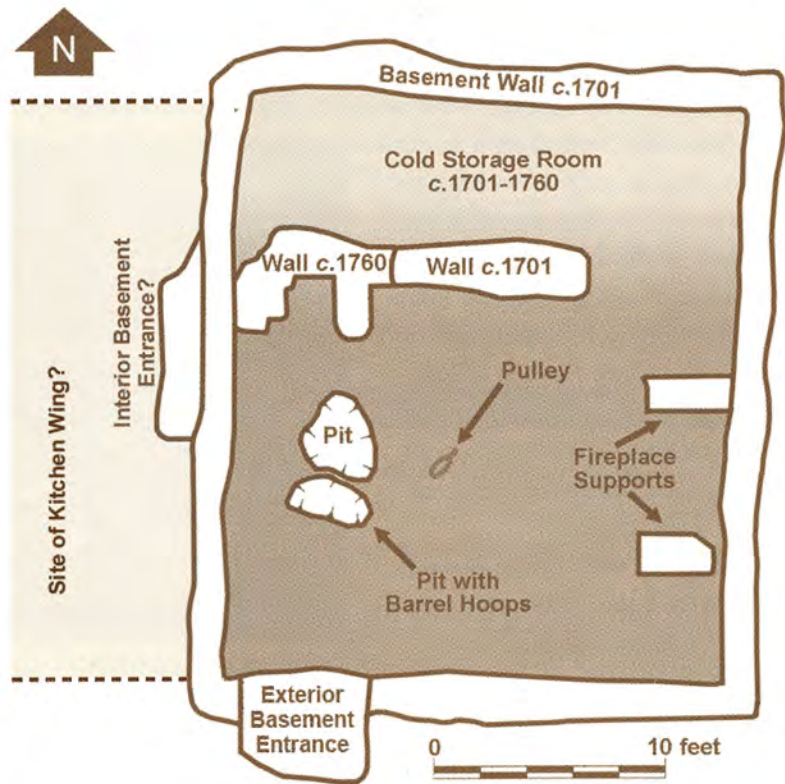
[Hunter Research, Inc.]

Forming the floor of the narrow section were large stones partly covered by very sandy soils. This was puzzling, until research showed that the basements of early colonial houses were often used for making and storing butter, cream, and cheese. The rocks were probably used to support a rough floor of planks, on which these products would be placed, surrounded by blocks of ice. The sand likely came from the melting ice blocks, which would have been brought in from the riverbank, about 100 feet away.

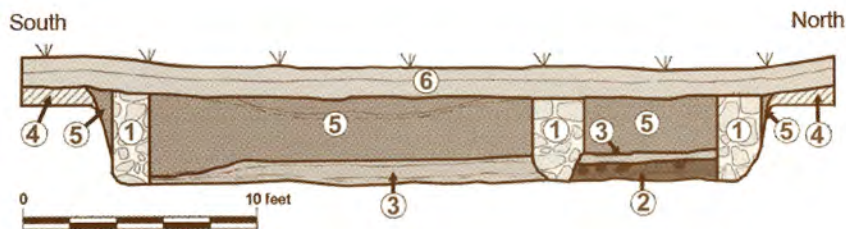


Bands of sandy silt within the cold storage room in the basement of the Lambert/Douglas House (scale in centimeters). These silts were probably formed from melting blocks of ice lying on the floor.

[Hunter Research, Inc.]



Overall plan of the foundations of the Lambert/Douglas House showing the main features found in the excavations. [Hunter Research, Inc.]



A cross section through the filled-in basement of the Lambert/Douglas House, showing floor levels and the position of the walls: (1) Basement walls, (2) Floor of the cold storage room, (3) Other floor levels, (4) The 18th-century ground surface around the house, (5) Soil placed in the basement in about 1790 when the house was torn down, (6) 19th- and 20th-century soils covering the site. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

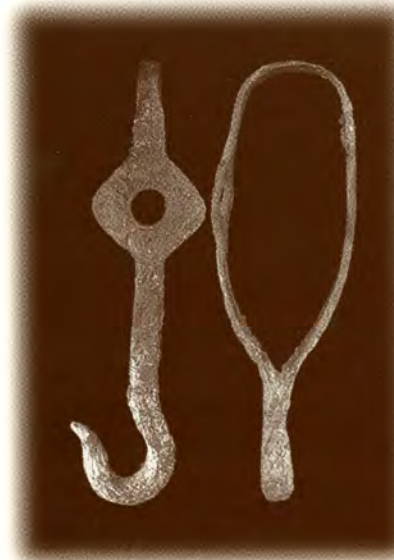


Alterations to the interior basement wall of the Lambert/Douglas House, probably made in the 1760s (scale in feet). These walls are thought to have supported shelves. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

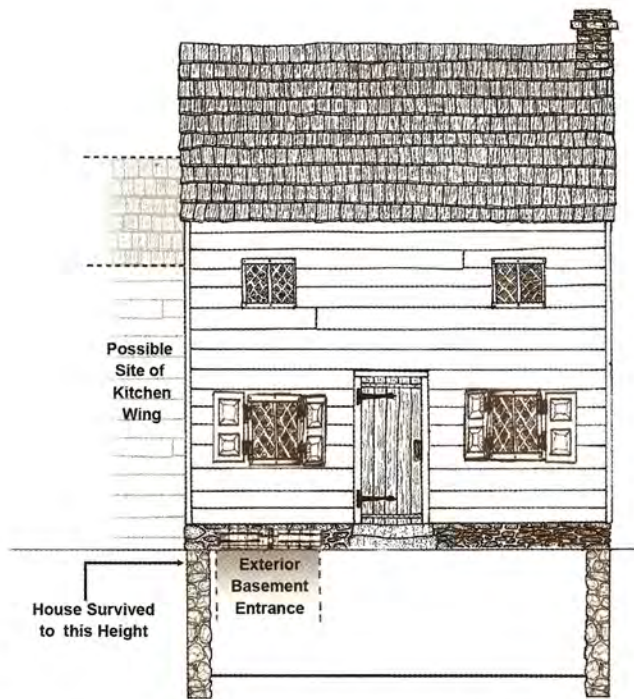
Sometime in the late 1760s the basement was changed. New types of artifacts and alterations to the structure suggest it was being used in a different way. The basement entrance on the west wall was blocked up, and a gap in the cross wall was infilled with masonry, probably to support heavy wooden shelves. A new floor was laid, at least partly in brick. The northern room was no longer used for cold storage.

Almost 2,000 artifacts were found in this floor: many more than from the earlier levels. These included barrel hoops, an iron pulley housing, and thousands of fish scales, mostly from shad. It looks as if the basement was now being used for the processing and storage of fish

products and other heavy items. It resembles a warehouse more than a farmhouse basement. The property was sold twice at this time, in 1768 and 1770. The second purchaser was a wealthy landowner, Daniel Coxe V, who may have made these changes.



Side and front views of an iron pulley frame, a clue to changing functions for the Lambert/Douglas House in the late 1760s. A wooden pulley wheel would have been set within the loop. The frame is 13 inches tall. [Hunter Research, Inc.]



A reconstruction drawing of the southern (front) façade of the Lambert/Douglas House as it may have looked when it was first built in about 1701. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

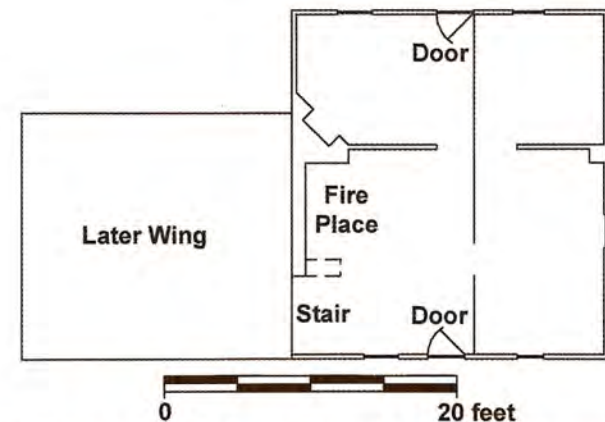
But what about the upper parts of the house? It is likely that the structure set atop the basement comprised a two-story, three-bay, timber-framed building with an east–west ridge line and a shingle roof. The front door was probably set in the center of the southern façade. It is thought that a smaller kitchen wing, without a basement, may have abutted the building on the west, but all archaeological traces of such a structure had been removed. A house with a main living section measuring 22 by 25 feet in plan does not seem very large today. Yet this one was an above-average dwelling for the early 18th century, and fits the identification of the first owner as John Lambert, one of the sons of a prosperous settler.

It is difficult to work out the layout and number of rooms in the Lambert/Douglas House and sadly there are few early 18th-century houses remaining in the surrounding area with which this building can be compared. A near survivor is the Isaac Watson House in neighboring Hamilton Township, but this is of stone construction and has a markedly different plan. The Rodman/Creely House, a slightly smaller



A recent view of the Isaac Watson House built in 1708 within a few years and a couple of miles of the Lambert/Douglas House. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

contemporary timber-framed house in Burlington, no longer standing, had four rooms on its first floor, and it seems likely that John Lambert's house had at least three. Inside, the walls were probably plaster or lined with wood paneling, and the fireplace was perhaps decorated with fashionable Delft tiles from Holland. Upholstered furniture, a four-poster bed with fine fabric curtains, large chests with locks, and books are all revealed by artifacts. This was a comfortable house by the time of the American Revolution.



The floor plan of the Rodman/Creely House near Burlington, built around 1700–10. The Lambert/Douglas House may have had a room arrangement similar to this. [based on Historic American Buildings Survey]

Archaeological and historical evidence tells us something of the people who lived in or visited the house. A wine bottle owned by wealthy Philadelphia merchant George McCall in 1745 found its way to the house and got broken. Rebecca Hart, probably one of the three by that name born in the Hopewell area in the 1740s, scratched her name elegantly on a windowpane. A pewter spoon belonging to Edmund Beakes, a neighbor until 1713, also found its way here.

Historical documents also tell us the names of the owners of the property: among them, the daughters of Thomas Lambert (from 1733 to 1744), and wealthy boatman John Douglas (1744 to about 1768). Because these two families owned it earliest and longest, researchers have named the property the Lambert/Douglas Plantation. The house was rented in its later years. John and Mary Mitchell were tenants here in the 1780s, at which time the house was the focus of a 120-acre property known as Spring Brook Farm.

Then there are the unnamed people: workers, servants, and possibly slaves. Quakers officially disapproved of slavery, but some had them. Two artifacts may have belonged to people of African descent. One is a bone pin, and the second is a money cowrie shell, most likely from the African shore of the Indian Ocean.



Sometime in the middle of the 18th century Rebecca Hart scratched her name on this windowpane found within the basement of the Lambert/Douglas House. The fragment is approximately 2.5 inches wide.
[Hunter Research, Inc.]



This bone pin, with its incised design, may have been worn by someone of African descent. The artifact is approximately 3.25 inches long. [Hunter Research, Inc.]



These fragments of utilitarian redware pots were locally made in a range of sizes and designs, and were commonly used to store, prepare, and serve food. The vessel at the top measures approximately 11 inches across. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

About half of all the artifacts found were broken pottery: locally made red earthenware used for everyday storage and cooking; and imported white “refined” wares from England, Europe, and China, used for dining and for serving tea and coffee. Research shows that the Lambert/Douglas House had more of the refined wares than was typically found at most other local domestic sites of the period. Of similar sites studied by archaeologists in the Delaware Valley, only the home of the Lutheran pastor in Wilmington, Delaware, had a higher percentage of porcelain.

A very wide range of other artifacts was found: buckles, buttons, and cufflinks from clothing; a watch key and pieces of a fan; toys such as marbles and a buzzer (a toy made from a pierced metal disk threaded with string); tools such as hammers and saws; cutlery, tobacco pipes, wineglasses, and bottles; horse shoes, bits, and stirrups; drawer handles from chests, locks, hinges, and window frames.



A small sample of the many 18th-century clothing buttons and shoe and belt buckles were found in the basement of the Lambert/Douglas House. The buckles are each approximately 2 inches wide.
[Hunter Research, Inc.]

THE END OF THE HOUSE

Just as no document tells about the building of the house, there is no written account of its destruction. Several Revolutionary War artifacts were found in the material filling up the basement pit: a Continental Army button, part of the firing mechanism of a French musket, a surgeon's knife or lancet, several musket balls and gun flints, and a cannon ball. Was the house a casualty of the Revolutionary War, when some of Daniel Cox's property just up the river at Ferry Street was certainly destroyed?

Another artifact, however, provides a stronger date for the destruction of the house. In the top level of dirt filling up the basement was a one-cent coin issued by the state of New Jersey in 1787. This find shows that the dirt cannot have been placed in the basement before 1787. Other artifacts, such as pottery fragments, are of the same general date, and so it is probable that the house was torn down around 1790. It certainly survived until 1785, when it was advertised for sale as "Spring Brook Farm, commonly called Douglass's Tract."

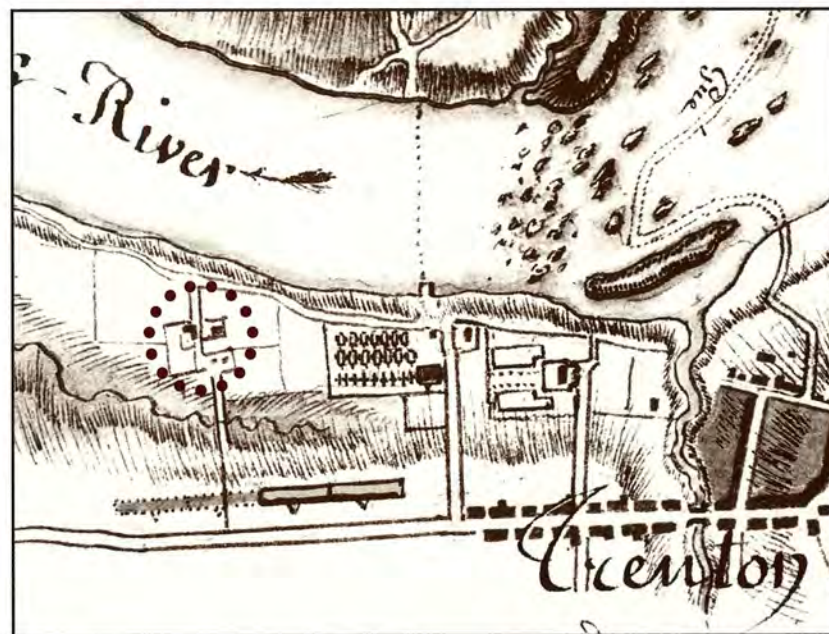


Front and back of a "Nova Caesarea" New Jersey cent of 1787 that provided a clue to the date when the house was torn down. The coin is approximately 1.1 inches wide. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

THE MYSTERY OF ROSEY HILL

Let us now turn our attention to Rosey Hill, the house foundation about 60 feet to the south of the Lambert/Douglas House. What are the origins of this house? When exactly was it built, by whom and for whom? These are just a few of the many unanswered questions about the Rosey Hill Mansion, whose genesis lies buried in the aftermath of the Revolutionary War, in the mists of the early Republic. A map made by the French army in 1781 shows two buildings in the area, but it is not possible to tell their function. One of these buildings, the more northerly of the two, is presumed to be the Lambert/Douglas House. What was the other? A farm outbuilding, or was this the forerunner of the Rosey Hill Mansion?

The location of the mansion was well known, since the building was still standing as recently as 1980. How the mansion looked in its later life was also reasonably well understood from maps, photographs, and personal memories. The derivation of the name "Rosey Hill" is uncertain, although it appears to date from at least the early 19th century.



A map of Trenton made by the French army in 1781 shows two buildings in the area of the Lambert/Douglas House and Rosey Hill (circled). Just upriver, the French artillery is parked across from the tavern at the foot of Ferry Street ready to cross the Delaware. The main French column is shown encamped along what is today's South Broad Street. [Princeton University Library]

I have the honor of presenting you a sample of Vermicelli pasta manufactured at Lambertown, New Jersey, by Italian Workmen brought up to that business, and have it in my power to inform you that they have succeeded in making it equal if not superior to that imported from Italy.

Nicholas Lewis Fresneye, Philadelphia, November 4, 1802

This letter from Nicholas Lewis Fresneye to Dr. Benjamin Rush fixes Fresneye's Lambertown property as the site of one of the earliest pasta manufacturing operations in North America. [The Library Company of Philadelphia]

Between 1792 and 1803 the old Lambert/Douglas property came into the hands of a succession of interesting and quite exotic people. These included Ignatius Polyart, Consul General of Portugal; Nicholas Fresneye, a Philadelphia merchant who brought Italian workmen to Lambertown to make pasta here; and finally Giovanni Battista Sartori, the first diplomatic representative of the Pope to the United States of America.

Giovanni Sartori, his wife Henriette, and their family lived at Rosey Hill until 1828 when Henriette died. They were part of a small community of Roman Catholics from the Caribbean and Europe of whom the most famous was Joseph Bonaparte, brother of the Emperor Napoleon (see the companion booklet *Quakers, Warriors, and Capitalists*). Mass was often held at Rosey Hill until the first Catholic chapel was built in Trenton by Sartori in 1814.

Sartori was an enterprising figure who continued Nicholas Fresneye's pasta business and also built a factory for making calico (light printed cotton cloth) on the riverbank next to the house.

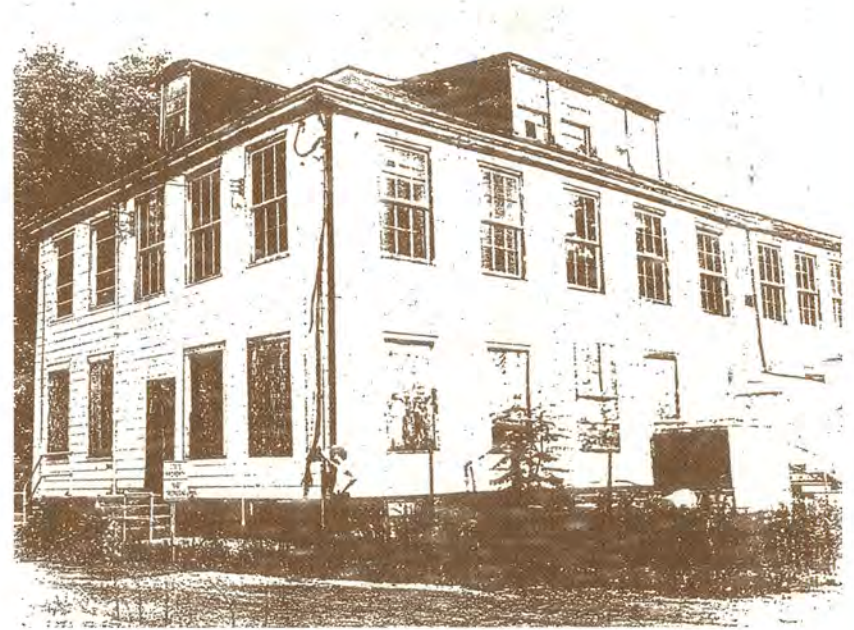
Archaeologists and architectural historians examined the Rosey Hill Mansion before it was torn down in 1980. The main façade of the house faced south and had a central doorway with

Early 19th-century portraits of Giovanni Battista Sartori and his wife Henriette Magdalena L'Officiale de Woofoin. [Joseph C. Shenrock, Upon This Rock: A New History of the Trenton Diocese, 1993]

two windows on either side, making this a five-bay structure of a kind commonly built in the United States in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It was about 50 feet long and 40 feet wide, a substantial house for the time. Study suggested that this handsome building incorporated an earlier, smaller house, possibly enlarged and changed more than once.

There are still many questions remaining about Rosey Hill. When was the earliest part of the house built? Artifacts from around the building suggest it might have been erected as early as 1770. The documentary evidence hints that about 1790 may be a closer date. How does this fit with the claim by one of Sartori's sons that Giovanni himself built the house in the 1800s?

Perhaps the greatest mystery concerns evidence of a fire found around the house foundation. Ranged around the outside of the stone walls were burnt posts, boards, and charcoal in a deep, narrow builders' trench. This appears to be evidence for an intense and long-burning fire, but no documentary reference to such a fire has been found. It remains a puzzle.



A photograph of the Rosey Hill Mansion taken in the 1970s, shortly before the building was torn down. [New Jersey Department of Transportation]

THE "TREASURE" PIT: SARTORI'S DINNER SERVICE

During the highway construction, archaeologists monitoring the work made a discovery that made the Sartori family's time at Rosey Hill come alive. A rectangular stone-lined pit, 6 feet by 9 feet and about 6 feet deep, was uncovered. It was probably built as an outhouse or privy pit, but it had been filled with soil containing an amazing collection of more than 11,000 early 19th-century artifacts, most of which had almost certainly belonged to the Sartori family.



The excavation of this stone-lined pit produced thousands of artifacts dating to the occupation of Rosey Hill by the Sartori family. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

Many of the ceramics were fine tablewares of Chinese porcelain, or of British white china with printed floral designs and scenes in blue or red. One piece is a commemorative plate recording the visit of the Marquis de Lafayette to New York in 1824. There were also many red earthenware plates and vessels.



Artifacts from the stone-lined pit at Rosey Hill include numerous decorative tablewares imported from England. On the left is a plate commemorating the triumphal visit to New York in 1824 of Revolutionary War hero the Marquis de Lafayette. On the right is another plate with an attractive scenic design made between 1829 and 1836. Both specimens are transfer-printed pearlware and would have been 7 inches in diameter when whole. [Hunter Research, Inc.]



French flacons were found in the stone-lined pit at Rosey Hill. The contents of these small bottles, made of blue-green, hand-blown glass, might have been spirits, oils, or toiletries. When whole, these vessels would have been approximately 10 inches tall. [Hunter Research, Inc.]



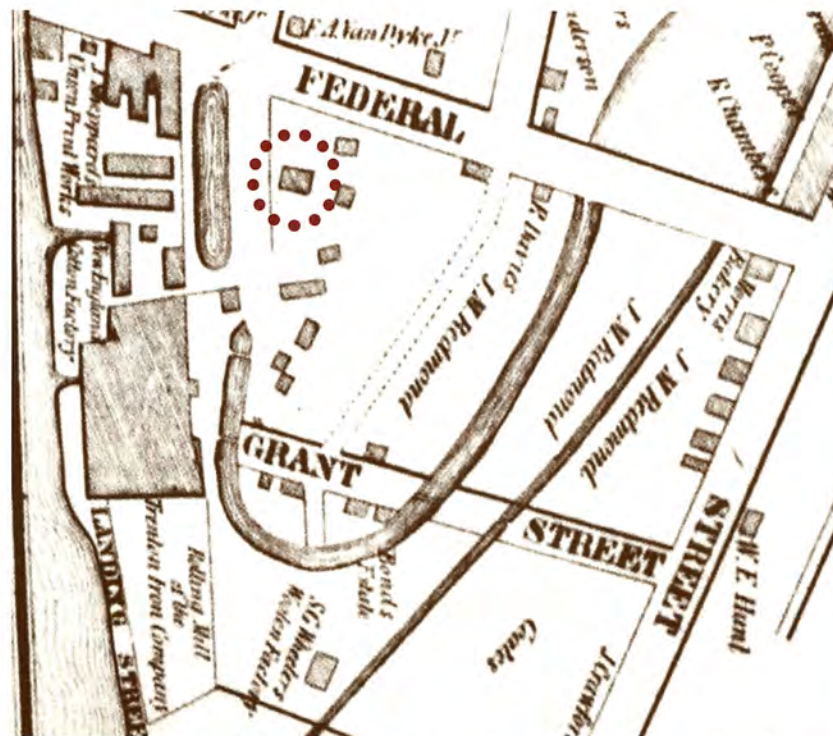
Cordial glasses found in the stone-lined pit at Rosey Hill were believed to have been used in the Sartori household. The vessels that show a full profile are approximately 4.25 inches tall. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

More than 130 wine, spirit, and beer bottles and other glass storage vessels were found, together with numerous tumblers and stemmed glasses. Two fine blue-glass handled cruets (small serving vessels for oil and vinegar) are a matched pair. Perhaps these might have been used for wine during the celebration of mass at the house. Items of everyday life include a candlestick and tobacco pipes. Marbles and slate pencils remind us of the children of the family. Thousands of raspberry and grape seeds were also identified.

Most of the ceramics and glass were manufactured between about 1800 and 1830, the time of the Sartori ownership, and would have been used in the home. Two other artifacts suggest, though, that this was not just trash from the household. One is a commemorative glass flask showing General Zachary Taylor and dating to about 1847. The second is a mass of trimmed window glass, discards from the making of many new windows.



Two views of a commemorative glass flask found in the stone-lined pit at Rosey Hill. George Washington appears on one face (left) and Zachary Taylor on the other (right). The flask was made around 1847 at the Bridgeton Glassworks. The maximum width of the vessel is 4.4 inches. [Hunter Research, Inc.]



By 1849, as seen in Otley and Keily's map of Trenton, the Rosey Hill Mansion (circled) was the home of Charles Hewitt, superintendent of the Trenton Iron Company's rolling mills, and the Sartori property had been transformed from country estate to hive of industry. [Trenton Public Library]

What does this evidence mean? In 1845 entrepreneur Peter Cooper bought the Rosey Hill property as the site for a new rolling mill soon to be operated by the Trenton Iron Company, and he immediately began a major program of building here. The mansion was remodeled as a residence for the manager of the new ironworks. Taking all the evidence together it seems likely that the Sartori household china and glass had been lying around for about 15 years and was finally disposed of by being thrown into the pit during major renovations in the late 1840s. At that time some of the workers possibly toasted the success of General Taylor in the Mexican War by consuming the contents (probably whisky) of the glass flask.

This moment marks the real end of the domestic and farming life that had begun at this site 150 years earlier. From this point on until the mid-20th century the mansion and its estate were occupied by iron and steel plants, railroads, and homes for factory workers. This landscape of industry is described in two other booklets in this series: ***Rolling Rails by the River and Power to the City.***



The sites of the Lambert/Douglas House and the Rosey Hill Mansion today lie beneath this parking lot and southbound Route 29. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

Places To Visit

- ♦ **William Trent House**, 15 Market Street, Trenton, New Jersey: a fine brick mansion erected in 1719, home of the prominent plantation owner for whom the City of Trenton is named; today owned and operated as a house museum by the City.
- ♦ **Alexander Douglas House**, Front and Montgomery streets, Trenton, New Jersey: a modest frame house constructed in 1766; three times moved and famous as the building where George Washington planned the military operations that culminated in the Second Battle of Trenton and the Battle of Princeton in early January of 1777.
- ♦ **Isaac Watson House**, 151 Westcott Street, Hamilton, New Jersey: a well-preserved stone house, built in 1708 by the son of a Quaker settler as the focus of an 800-acre plantation; today owned and operated by the New Jersey Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Reading Suggestions

- ♦ Ian Burrow and Richard Hunter, "Pretty Village to Urban Place: Eighteenth-Century Trenton and Its Archaeology," *New Jersey History* 114 (3-4):32-52 (1996).
- ♦ Richard Veit, *Digging New Jersey's Past: Historical Archaeology in the Garden State*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey (2002).
- ♦ Rev. Monsignor Joseph C. Shenrock, *Upon This Rock: A New History of the Trenton Diocese*, Cardinal Publishing Company, Princeton, New Jersey (1993).

CREDITS

This booklet series is the product of historical and archaeological investigations undertaken for the New Jersey Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration in mitigation of the effects of the reconstruction of Route 29 in the City of Trenton. The preparation of these booklets and other related research activities were conducted in compliance with Federal and State historic preservation laws and regulations. For more detailed technical reporting of the topics addressed in these booklets, readers are referred to the five-volume *Archaeological Data Recovery Excavations and Monitoring, New Jersey Route 29, City of Trenton, Mercer County, New Jersey*, available at selected local libraries, the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, and the New Jersey Department of Transportation.

This booklet was conceived and authored by Ian Burrow of Hunter Research, Inc. Janice Wilson Stridick of Wilson Creative provided design and editorial services.

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OTHER TITLES IN THE HISTORY TRACED BY ROUTE 29 BOOKLET SERIES

- ♦ *Ancient Ways: Native Americans in South Trenton, 10,000 B.C. to A.D. 1700*
- ♦ *Fish and Ships: Lambertton, the Port of Trenton*
- ♦ *Power to the City: The Trenton Water Power*
- ♦ *Rolling Rails by the River: Iron and Steel Fabrication in South Trenton*
- ♦ *Quakers, Warriors, and Capitalists: Riverview Cemetery and Trenton's Dead*



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