



On This Site in 1784

William Churchill Houston's home

SE corner Warren & East Hanover

Born in South Carolina in 1746, William C. Houston graduated from the College of New Jersey in 1768 but stayed on as a tutor. He became a Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy in 1771. When British forces occupied Princeton at the outset of the war, the college closed and most of the students and professors returned to their homes. Houston, however, joined the militia and was later elected Captain of a Somerset County company.



College of New Jersey in 1700's, now Princeton University

After the British withdrew from New Jersey and the college reopened in 1777, Houston returned to his teaching post. That same year he was elected to represent Somerset County in the New Jersey State Assembly. In 1779, while serving as a member of the Continental Congress, Houston decided to study law. He was admitted to the bar in 1781, and became the Clerk of the New Jersey Supreme Court that same year. In 1782 he was appointed the receiver of Continental taxes.

In 1783 Houston resigned from the college to devote himself to his legal career. That fall, when Houston opened a law office in Trenton, the town was frantically preparing to host the next session of Congress. Houston created the official list of all the suitable houses or spare rooms that could be secured to accommodate the visiting statesmen. This was a difficult task, since many of the best rooms in town were already occupied by members of the State Legislature, which had convened in Trenton at the same time so they wouldn't miss all the excitement.

Ironically, Houston became a member of Congress (for the second time) for the 1784-85 session. In 1787, he was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, but only stayed a week due to his failing health.

He died of tuberculosis on August 12, 1788, and was buried in the Second Presbyterian Churchyard in Philadelphia.

To learn more about Trenton in 1784 and the events celebrating the 54 days Trenton was our nation's capital, visit our website at: www.trenton1784.org.