A rare survivor of a heroic ordeal, this humble stool travelled across the American colonies, enduring five years of harsh and rugged conditions encountered by General George Washington and the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. His leadership and experiences as General are well known, captured by hundreds of authors, artists, and film directors, from the 18th century to present. But the history and legacy of his military camp equipment—specifically one folding walnut stool preserved at Tudor Place—are only starting to take shape (Figure 1).

**FROM THE BATTLEFIELD …**

Washington accepted his commission from the Continental Congress on June 16, 1775, and quickly purchased materials that would properly furnish and portray himself as commander in chief. He requested secretary Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Reed to procure “1 ½ dozn of Camp Stools” two folding tables, and dishes. While the full list of items Washington required to live “under canvas” is unknown, many of his goods came from Philadelphia craftsmen who supported the American cause. Less than a year later in May 1776, Washington received three linen marquees, or tents, and “18 Wallnut camp Stools, moreen, brass nails, girth tack and bottoming” from the wealthy and prominent Irish émigré merchant and upholsterer Plunket Fleeson at a cost of £13.10.2 “Bottoming” may refer to the physical labor of making the stools, while “brass nails” and “girth tack” specify the type of fasteners used to secure the fabric to the frame. The entire assemblage was designed to withstand rough transport, harsh weather, pest infestation, rapid assembly and ease of portability, all while conveying the discipline, dignity, and rank of the commander of the new American army.

Fleeson constructed the suite from walnut stock using pegged mortise-and-tenon joinery on the cross legs and stretchers. The legs pivot around an iron fastener with a large, round head, and are joined by two stretchers, their through-tenons visible on the sides of the legs. Four Roman numerals, “I” “II” “V” and “VI,” carved into the seat rails and interior sides of the upright legs aided Fleeson’s journeymen in assembly (Figure 2).

Once the frame was complete, the upholsterer attached the moreen upholstery Washington specified, a choice indicative of the General’s desire for stately seating — a worsted cloth generally given a waved or stamped finish to imitate elegant silk moire. Washington quickly discovered that this fabric was injudicious for the battlefield, and in 1778 requested Fleeson to replace the fabric with more durable leather. For the remainder of the conflict, the seat rail’s chamfered edges supported a weather-resistant, flexible, and easily cleaned surface for Washington’s officers and guests. Physical evidence suggests Fleeson applied a burlap layer to the seat rail with iron fasteners before attaching the linen under upholstery and leather covering for this secondary treatment.4

No matter the occasion, location, or season, Washington consciously created a diplomatic and genteel dining environment for his officers and foreign diplomats. George Benet of Jamaica dined with Washington in the spring of 1783 at his Newburgh, New York, headquarters, and...
later recalled “the dinner was good, but everything was quite plain. We all sat on camp-stools and there was nothing to seen about the house but what any officer in the army might have likewise have in his. Mrs. W. was as plain, easy and affable as he was, and one would have thought from the familiarity which prevailed here, that he saw a respectable private gentleman dining at the head of his own family.”5 After official news of the Treaty of Paris reached Washington in November, he resigned his commission before Congress on December 23, 1783. Washington and his camp equipment returned to Mount Vernon after seven years of conflict.

... TO THE PARLOR

When Washington happily returned to private life at Mount Vernon, the marques and camp stools joined other furnishings on the estate. In all likelihood, their simplicity and worn appearance made them unsuitable for elegant entertaining and dining in the mansion, particularly in the “New Room” Washington devised as a grand entertaining chamber on the north end of the mansion; instead, the portable stools could have been used for informal occasions or in secondary spaces of the house and grounds. The group of stools remained at Mount Vernon until Martha Washington’s death on May 22, 1802. At that time, an inventory of the estate noted “6 leather seats” in the Servants’ Hall (or dependency) and a “doz. Camp seats” stored in one of the third floor lumber rooms of the mansion.6

Prior to a public estate sale held in July of that year, Washington-Custis heirs—including Martha Custis and Thomas Peter—were able to purchase furnishings at Mount Vernon. The Peters purchased numerous goods, from expensive Chinese export porcelain and bed linens to common kitchen utensils. Among their choices were six of the camp stools, valued at $1.50 (Figure 3); Martha Peter’s younger brother, George Washington Parke Custis, purchased the other 12 stools and the marques. The Custis grandchildren likely prized items like the camp stools beyond a commercial value or practical use; these objects became repositories of personal memories Eliza, Martha, Eleanor, and George Washington Parke Custis associated with their grandparents, and in this case, the formidable campaign to establish a new republic.

When Martha Peter died in 1854, Tudor Place and its contents passed to her youngest daughter, Britannia Wellington Peter Kennon, who continued to preserve the family’s collection of Washington-related artifacts. Britannia’s stewardship of the Tudor Place estate and the home’s contents during the Civil War ensured the Washington relics safely weathered the conflict, especially compared to the fate of possessions under the care of her cousin Mary Anna Randolph Custis Lee and her husband Robert E. Lee at Arlington House. When the Union Army took possession of Arlington House on May 24, 1861, house slave Selina Gray guaranteed the safety of the marques and camp stools that were safely locked away in the cellar, having been entrusted with the keys by Mrs. Lee when the family fled to safety in Virginia.7 When the Union army decided to transfer Washington’s military equipment to the Patent Office in January 1862, Britannia Peter Kennon and her 19-year old daughter Martha “Markie” Custis Peter had just returned to Tudor Place after nine nomadic months away from home (Figure 4). In the spring of 1862, she took Union officers and their families as boarders, thus ensuring the financial safety of Tudor Place and the physical preservation of the house and its contents. It is unclear where Britannia stored the Washington heirlooms at that time; many of the home’s contents were stored at the Seminary Building in 1858, hastily salvaged by the family’s neighbor Dr. Joshua Riley when the government confiscated the building in 1861 and relocated “pell-mell” to the private Georgetown residence of another family friend, Mrs. John Abbot.8

In the early spring of 1890, photographers visited Tudor Place to document the elegant 75-year-old matriarch, her five resident grandchildren and the famous house, for the popular publication The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine. Author William Armstrong reported Britannia was the “oldest living descendant of Mrs. Washington, and therefore nearly allied, not only by right of kinship, but of years, to that especial period which gave to these articles historic value.”9 The magazine’s artist Harry Fenn used nine photographs to create the wood-block engravings illustrating the essay, “Some New Washington Relics: From the Collection of Mrs. B. W. Kennon.” Fenn’s prints included one of the Peter family stools, and the series overall captures the esteem and pride Britannia’s household maintained for the Washington-related objects (Figure 5).

The stool photographed for The Century Illustrated appears to have its leather upholstery largely intact, while the under-upholstery below is partially torn. A ram-bunctious Armistead Peter 3rd accidentally damaged this stool a few years later: “as a very small child, I sat when no one was looking and split the old leather down the center.”10 A second stool had already suffered considerable damage, either during Washington’s use or thereafter in the domestic interiors of Tudor

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**Figure 3:** Excerpt from Thomas Peter’s copy of the “Account of Sales of the Personal Estate of Martha Washington (not specifically devised) late of Mount Vernon, deceased”. Tudor Place Archive, MS 3, Box 2, F 43.

**Figure 4:** South Façade of Tudor Place. ca. 1860. Photographer unknown, albumen print. Tudor Place Archive, A2.20.
the Tudor Place collection, and are representative of the tastes of the Peter family.

At the time of Brittainia, Peter Kennon's death in 1911, two of the Peter family's original six stools remained—Armistead Peter, Jr., inherited the stool with the carpet fragments and his younger brother Beverley Kennon Peter inherited the leather-covered stool, which eventually descended to their brother Walter Gibson Peter, Sr.11 In November 1975, Walter Gibson Peter, Sr.'s daughter-in-law sold this stool in the American Heritage Society's Auction of Americana by Sotheby's Parke Bernet, Inc., at which time it was acquired by the Smithsonian's Museum of American History, where it remains on display today.12 Armistead Peter 3rd inherited his father's stool and duly honored family tradition by displaying the artifact in the drawing room and parlor. Today, these stools are the only two remaining from the 18 ordered by General Washington.

Place; it's leather upholstery had long failed, perhaps persuading Britannia or another family member to "make do" by attaching two fragments of old carpets to the walnut frame and recreating the seat (Figure 6). The smaller, lower layer was a 22-inch wide fragment of ca. 1830 – 40s three-ply ingrain carpet, boldly patterned with an orange and red foliate design over a diaper (or trellis-like) ground and secured to the seat rails with brass upholstery tacks. When the floor covering was recycled, the scrollwork was positioned unevenly over the seat rails, suggesting the use of another decorative (or protective) slip cover (Figure 7). A larger fragment of a loop-pile, wool Brussels type carpet, woven with a gold scalloped border and polychromatic, stylized flowers and scrolls, was draped over the front and rear of the stool; this time, the design was centered carefully over the cross-legs and secured to the seat rail with iron fasteners. Both fragments are the only examples of 19th-century European woven floor coverings from the Army's "First Oval Office" and drawing national attention to the historic collections of Tudor Place.13

—ERIN KUYKENDALL, CURATOR

NOTES
11. "Division of Mt. Vernon Things at Tudor Place." Tudor Place Archive.
Communications Officer Mandy Katz interviews Curator Erin Kuykendall about the history and conservation of Martha Peter’s 1795 wedding trunk, recently named a Top 10 Endangered object by the Virginia Association of Museums.

Mandy Katz: Let’s start with the basics. How old is the trunk?

Erin Kuykendall: The Philadelphia saddler and merchant Jesse Sharples made this lockable traveling trunk around 1795.

Mandy Katz: What is the trunk made of?

Erin Kuykendall: Sharples used sawn pine boards and lined the interior with plain-woven linen. He covered the exterior with durable tanned leather. For additional security and strength, sheet iron plates and straps reinforced the trunk’s edges and joints. Reflective brass furniture tacks fix four leather straps which helped secure the container during transit on a coach or vessel.

Mandy Katz: Why did Tudor Place nominate it for the “Top 10 Endangered Artifacts Contest”?

Erin Kuykendall: The trunk is significant for two reasons: its owners and its maker. The trunk bears witness to an important occasion – the marriage of Martha Washington’s second eldest granddaughter and namesake, Martha Parke Custis (1777-1854), to Maryland-born Thomas Peter (1769-1834). The couple wed on January 6, 1795.

Mandy Katz: January 6 is another famous wedding day, isn’t it?

Erin Kuykendall: Yes! The Peters married exactly 36 years to the day after George and Martha Washington’s marriage in 1759!

Mandy Katz: As son of Georgetown’s first mayor Robert Peter, 26-year old Thomas was considered an eligible bachelor at the time, no? Did the Peters know the Washingtons?

Erin Kuykendall: Yes, the Peters and the Washingtons were friends and business associates. We know that Martha Washington wrote a letter to her niece about the engagement, saying “… from what I can hear Patty and Mr. Peter is to make a match … and in the last letter I had from Mrs. Stuart she says Patty had given him leve (sic) to visit her as a lover.”

Mandy Katz: “As a lover!” Do other letters from the Custis family survive about the marriage?

Erin Kuykendall: Yes. Martha’s younger sister Eleanor [Nelly] Custis Lewis wrote a childhood friend that Martha was “now settled in the Federal City very charmingly—her husband the best and most affectionate. She is perfectly happy.”
From the Executive Director

Dear Member:

Hopefully the government shutdown and default threat are “history” as you read this, but as I write, our government is mired in a stalemate. Hardened positions and strong words prevail among vastly different perspectives on how to move forward in an uncertain world. As unsettling as it is, it reminds me, once again, that history can be a helpful teacher: Our founding fathers had to forge a path forward among similar discord in even more uncertain times. As ever, we must hope for — and groom — leaders well schooled in their example and all that we can learn from the past.

In an ironic windfall, the closing of the Mall museums has led to a doubling of our attendance, with 50-60 visitors coming to tour every day. We are pleased to offer our nation’s history to foreign and domestic visitors and provide a welcome retreat, as well, for local residents. For those furloughed, we offered half-price admission.

This holiday season we will have fresh new displays in the mansion, thanks to the hard work of staff, suggestions from interior designer John Peters Irelan, and the generosity of trustee Marcia Mayo. The house will truly sparkle! I hope you will come to one of the many events planned to experience the magic of the holidays. In the first week of December, be sure to stop by the Museum Shop for our special Member Sale, to pick from an array of gifts in the newly stocked holiday shop.

In October, we welcomed the Friends of Rose Park for their annual fundraiser. Always a part of the Georgetown community, Tudor Place seeks to support and engage our fellow Georgetowners.

I want to give a big thanks to the Georgetown Kiwanis Club for its very generous gift to support our children’s education programs. All of our outreach to D.C. Public Schools is funded through contributions. The Kiwanis donation will make a tremendous difference in the lives of many young students, including some who have never left their own neighborhoods.

This edition of the newsletter includes two wonderfully informative articles by Curator Erin Kuykendall and an interview with her by Communications Officer Mandy Katz. Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Executive Director

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**Sharple’s tradecard**

**MK:** What a wonderful sentiment! Was the trunk a wedding present?

**EK:** The trunk itself probably was not the wedding present — more likely the goods inside it were the real gifts. Unfortunately, we do not know what they were! Thomas and Martha Peter’s daughter, Britannia Peter Kennon (1815 - 1911) wrote a note, now attached to the lid: “This trunk was sent by Mrs. Washington from Philadelphia, (Gen’l Washington being Pres[ident] and residing in Phila at the time) to her Grand-daughter Miss Martha Custis, filled with a part of her Wedding trousseau. Jan[uary] 1795.”

**MK:** So what is significant about the maker, Jesse Sharples?

**EK:** Sharples owned a large saddle manufactory near Chestnut and Third Street from 1789 to 1799. With the arrival of President Washington and the federal government in 1790, he expanded his leather-working business by importing and selling expensive silver bridles, stirrups, bits, silver-mounted riding whips, and brass coach furniture. These luxury transportation goods complimented the locally-made leather saddles, trunks, and saddle bags tanned and sewn by his journeymen and apprentices.

**MK:** Are there other trunks from Sharples’s shop that survive?

**EK:** This trunk is the largest of three trunks bearing Sharples’s trade card, including one in the collection at Winterthur and a second in a private collection. Functional and relatively plain leather trunks were common household items in the 18th-century, but few survive in museum collections given their unassuming materials and use. To have one with a trade card is pretty special!

**MK:** What are the museum’s plans for conservation?

**EK:** The trunk requires the immediate attention of object conservators to stabilize the deteriorating leather, textiles, label, and hardware. Conservation will begin as soon as funds are raised. Early estimates are that treatment will cost $6,500.
Red, Green & Gold, The New and the Old — Tudor Place Sparkles for Christmas

Experience the best of Tudor Place traditions and 21st-century flair over the holidays, as you tour “Red, Green & Gold, The New and the Old - Tudor Place Sparkles for Christmas.” Through six generations at Tudor Place, the Peter family celebrated their Washington-Custis lineage while simultaneously embracing contemporary art, technology, fashion, and modern conveniences. For the first time, this seasonal installation in- and outside the National Historic Landmark creatively imagines how Tudor Place might have decorated in the present day. Guests are sure to be charmed by our stunning heirloom space that blends historic Peter family collections and traditions—most notably the beloved goose-feather tree decorated antique German glass ornaments from the late 19th and early 20th centuries—with lush winter greenery, the warm glow from over 100 linear feet of lights plus bows, swags, and thousands of colorful ornaments. The familiar 15-foot ft. tall tree returns to illuminate the grand Temple Portico, a warm invitation to friends and neighbors to celebrate with us.

Do you love the holidays? Are you interested in decorating? Tudor Place is seeking spirited volunteers to assist with our behind-the-scenes preparations for this holiday season the afternoon of Monday, November 4, from 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. We will assemble greenery and wrap presents while enjoying hot chocolate and light refreshments. Space is limited, so please contact ekuykendall@tudorplace.org if you are interested!”

WINTER 2013
Education Programs

Pride and Prejudice Afternoon Tea
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2
1:00 - 3:00 P.M.
LOCATION: MEET AT ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, 1670, 31ST STREET
Enjoy a celebration of the 200th anniversary of Jane Austin’s best known novel, Pride and Prejudice. Join costumed interpreters for a spirited discussion of the author’s works during a lively period appropriate tea, complete with tea sandwiches, scones, and assorted desserts. Following the tea, tour the entertaining spaces of the historic mansion to learn about Federal period entertaining in America.
MEMBERS: $25 / NONMEMBERS: $30

Toys Through Time: Scouts in Georgetown Day
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9
10:00 - 11:30 A.M. DAISIES & BROWNIES
1:00 - 2:30 P.M. JUNIORS
Party into the past, as Scouts journey through the historic mansion to learn about toys, games, entertaining methods and dances from the past! After the tour, Scouts learn period dances and create their own paper dolls and doll houses to take home.
SCOUTS AND TAGALONGS: $10
ADULTS: $3

Mathew Brady: Portraits of a Nation
NOVEMBER 12
6:30 - 8:30 P.M.
Join author Robert Wilson for a discussion of his acclaimed new book on Mathew Brady, Civil War photographer. Connecting Brady’s photographs to those places and people beloved by the Peter family, Mr. Wilson will include photographs of Robert E. Lee and the Custis-Lee Mansion. Join us for a glass of wine in advance of the lecture. Books available for purchase.
LANDMARK SOCIETY MEMBERS: FREE
MEMBERS: $15 / NONMEMBERS: $20

Fall Harvest Tea at Tudor Place
NOVEMBER 16
1:00 P.M.
LOCATION: MEET AT 1670
Enjoy a traditional Victorian tea complete with tea sandwiches, scones, delicious desserts and historic tea blends in a beautiful 1870s Georgetown house. After the tea join...
Thank you Georgetown Kiwanis Club!

Tudor Place gives thanks to the Georgetown Kiwanis Club for its very generous support of its programs for school and community children! The Kiwanis Club does many excellent community service projects and is seeking new members. To join, contact Ron Snider, Treasurer, at (202) 337-3274 or Jennifer Mottershead, President, at (202) 333-7654.

docents for guided tour through the 1816 National Historic Landmark mansion.
MEMBERS: $25 / NONMEMBERS: $30

Tiny Tots Thanksgiving at Tudor Place!
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24
10:00 - 11:00 A.M.
AGES 3 - 5

Celebrate turkey day at Tudor Place! Tiny tots enjoy an interactive story and then scour the historic mansion in search of historic games and toys. After the hunt children make a special holiday craft to take home and enjoy period dancing.
MEMBER CHILD: $5
NONMEMBER CHILD: $8
ADULTS: FREE

Ho! Ho! Ho! Celebrate the season!
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5
6:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.

Enjoy an historic holiday celebration at Tudor Place. The mansion will be trimmed with festive greenery and décor, just in time for the holidays. Martha Washington’s Holiday Rum Punch will be served along with light appetizers.

AGES 21+
MEMBERS: COMPLIMENTARY
NONMEMBERS: $15.00

Holiday Wreath Workshops
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6; SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7; FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13
10:00 A.M. OR 1:00 P.M. SESSIONS

Create your own holiday wreath from a variety of plant materials direct from the Tudor Place garden! Cedar boughs, magnolia leaves, berry-laden holly, pinecones, and boxwood offer opportunities for distinctive wreaths. All wreaths are medium-sized and all materials are provided.
MEMBERS: $38 (PER WREATH)
NON-MEMBERS: $48 (PER WREATH)

Gingerbread House Workshop!
AGES 5+
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, THURSDAY,
DECEMBER 19, OR FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20
10:30 A.M. - 11:30 NOON OR 1:00 P.M. - 2:00 P.M.

Children celebrate the holidays by becoming history detectives as they tour the historic mansion in search of clues as to how holidays were celebrated in the past. After the tour, children design and build their own edible gingerbread house to take home.
MEMBERS: $10 (PER CHILD)
NONMEMBERS: $12 (PER CHILD)
ADULT CHAPERONES: FREE

Chocolate and Tea Tasting for Girl Scouts!
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15
1:00 P.M.

Sample 18th century period teas and chocolates at a festive holiday tea! Costumed interpreters lead participants in an informative and engaging presentation on the history of tea and chocolate. After the tea, take a tour of the historic mansion festively decorated for the holidays. This program has been created for Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors.
MEMBERS: $20 / NONMEMBERS: $25

Gingerbread Storytime
AGES 3 - 5
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18
10:30 - 11:30 OR 1:00 - 2:00

Celebrate the holidays at Tudor Place! Children participate in an interactive read loud and detective hunt through the historic mansion. After the hunt, children decorate their own gingerbread cookies to take home.
MEMBERS: $8 (PER CHILD)
NONMEMBERS: $10 (PER CHILD)
ADULT CHAPERONES: FREE

Chocolate House Workshop and Tea for Families!
AGES 5+
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21
10:30 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. OR 1:30 - 3:00 P.M.

To begin, children and adults sample period teas and delicious desserts at a festive holiday tea. After the tea ceremony, costumed interpreters lead children in a chocolate workshop to create their own 3D holiday chocolate houses!
MEMBERS: $20 (PER CHILD)
NONMEMBERS: $25 (PER CHILD)
ADULTS: $10

Holidays through History
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14
4:00 - 8:00 P.M.

Celebrate the holidays at Tudor Place, Dumbarton House, Woodrow Wilson House, and Anderson House! Stroll through the four mansions and delight in their holiday ambience and festive decorations that interpret traditional holiday celebrations from the Federal period through the Gilded Age.
At Tudor Place, children create their own holiday cards in an art workshop lead by Artist-in-Residence Peter Waddell. Shuttle bus transportation provided between sites.

MEMBERS: FREE
TUDOR PLACE ONLY: ADULTS: $10,
CHILDREN: $5
FOUR MUSEUM PASS: ADULTS: $16
(ADVANCED RESERVATIONS) OR $20 AT THE DOOR, CHILDREN: $10