An Afternoon at Tudor Place:
PUBLIC & PRIVATE ENTERTAINMENTS IN
WASHINGTON CITY, 1810-1830

Tudor Place served as an impressive public stage upon which Martha and Thomas Peter, their guests, business associates, and political friends or foes created a new social order in the Federal City. When settling into their spacious new home in Georgetown Heights, the Peters mixed old family pieces from Robert Peter’s estate and Mount Vernon with new, fashionable designs from the 1810s and ’20s. The lighting devices, tables and chairs, and musical instruments explored below created the ideal setting for their grand entertainments.

In the post-war prosperity following the War of 1812, citizens and government officials built and decorated more houses in the first twenty months of peace than in the preceding five years. Two kinds of social elites populated this burgeoning landscape: the established gentry of Virginia and Maryland and transient occupants, such as congressmen, foreign ministers, and merchants in residence during congressional sessions and the concomitant social season from January to March. In 1829, Dr. E. Cooley compiled an important guidebook for the ladies and gentlemen of the region, entitled A Description of the Etiquette at Washington City. He began by asserting, “There is no place in the United States where ceremony is so much observed, and practiced as the city of Washington.” For elites like the Peters, their belongings served as physical manifestations of the young country’s republican ideals.

Martha Peter (1775 – 1854), her close friend Anna Maria Thornton, and the socialites of Washington created strong links between the landed gentry and transient politicians through attendance at legislative sessions, politically-oriented discussions within the home, and hosting large entertainments such as dinners or balls. Former statesman Josiah Quincy accorded Martha Peter “first place” among the “notable matrons” of Washington society, describing her as “…an intelligent and ardent Federalist, and from the heights of Tudor Place looked down upon the democratic administrations of Jefferson and his successors in a spirit of scornful protest. … For a quarter of a century the good lady had hoped against hope for a Federal President, in whose court she might conscientiously assume the commanding place to which descent and talents entitled her.” As a Federalist and thus opposed to the policies of Presidents Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, Martha Peter created her own satellite court at Tudor Place. From 1804 through the 1828 election, congressional caucuses determined presidential nominations, a practice that made morning calling rituals and evening social events an important way to meet potential supporters. The
work, watercolor, drawing, and painting Fancy furniture. Given their size, worktables were easily relocated around a room. These tables served both functional and artistic purposes: in addition to providing storage, the painted decoration was emblematic of the genteel habits cultivated by women in the early Republic.\textsuperscript{10}

The table is constructed from beautifully figured striped maple with drawers of contrasting bird’s eye maple fitted with original glass pulls. The top is decorated with a casually strewn collection of objects representative of the leisurely pursuits and educational accomplishments of a young woman, including a calling card labeled “Mrs. Peter, Tudor Place,” printed sheet music, three gaming tokens, a Jack of Spades, a Moroccan leather wallet or purse, and a pencil. While Martha Peter may have attended or hosted a formal dinner once or twice a week, and a grand ball once a month, the ritual of calling happened every day, usually from morning until 4:00 p.m.\textsuperscript{11}

The habit was extremely important in early Washington society. Families of new politicians could interact with local elites who opened doors to further social networks, patronage, and support. In 1819, Louisa Catherine Adams recalled paying 25 calls in a single morning and on a second occasion covered six miles in her routine visits throughout the city.\textsuperscript{12} Calling cards acted as proxies for their owners, standing in when the host could not (or chose not to) be available.

The game card on the worktable underscores the social practice of card playing and gambling, and the specialized furniture developed to support these habits in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Card tables such as those owned by the Peters were carried and opened in the center of rooms when in use, and stored folded against the wall otherwise (Figure 4). Card tables were gender-neutral forms around which men and women intimately gathered to flirt and gamble. The Peters may have used this table (one of a pair) in the front parlor, or drawing room, in concert with tea tables and side chairs. This arrangement reflects a common pattern of formal dinner behavior within wealthy households: after the meal, the family retired or “withdrew” to the other parlor to drink coffee or tea, play cards or listen to music.

Like the card table, a mahogany tilt-top occasional table is the only surviving example of its type from the Peter’s household (Figure 5). The table served multiple purposes around the parlor. When used as a tea table, it was crowded with a teapot, creamer, sugar bowl and tongs, waste bowl, cups, saucers, and teaspoons. The women of Washington used teas as strategic occasions wherein they sought patronage and support for friends or families, conversations that were taboo in overly public spheres defined by male dominance.

Social gatherings centered around the tea table allowed women to act in aggressive and public ways within the domestic sphere, thereby redefining the role of women in politics.\textsuperscript{13} Coffee also required its own set of equipment and the museum is grateful for the loan of a delicate Chinese export porcelain coffee cup, the sole known survivor from a larger set probably purchased around the Peter’s marriage in January 1795 (Figure 6).

Martha Peter’s maternal aunt Rosalie Stier Calvert (1778 – 1821) noted an active social calendar at Tudor Place in 1819: “Our niece Mrs. Peter has not given a dinner, but three balls and several tea parties.” She previously opined, “Music is an indispensible talent for a young lady. Dancing is even more essential.”\textsuperscript{14} By the 1820s, crowded weekly levees and massive winter balls became the most important avenues for men’s and women’s social networking and political strategizing. Unlike formal dinners, “drawing rooms” and balls facilitated a fluid, freewheeling atmosphere of political activity and conversation between both sexes. Musical performances
Unlike most 18th-century flutes with a single key, this instrument has two silver keys for C# (occasionally found on period flutes) and D#. It is possible Peter acquired the instrument second-hand, as the touchkey of D# is lightly engraved “JBW.”

First Lady Martha Washington established the social tradition of weekly levees or parties which mixed a few ladies and men informally with refreshments including tea, coffee, lemonade, plain cake and possibly ice cream. The practice continued in Washington, exploding under Dolley Madison, when “seldom … less than two or three hundred, generally more” people crowded into the White House during her Wednesday levees. Mary Bagot, wife of the British Ambassador, attended several “squeezes” and remembered “tea and coffee and afterwards cold punch with glasses of Madeira and cakes are handed round and by ten o’clock everyone is dispersed.”

The eighteenth-century fashion for punch—a potent alcoholic mixture of rum, water, lemons or other citrus and fruit, sugar, and exotic spices—continued to be a staple beverage at social events in the 1810s and ’20s. The Peters owned an assortment of English glassware and Chinese export porcelains for the libation. The couple purchased “four crack’d bowls” from the Mount Vernon estate, including two in the collection. One bowl served many an intoxicating recipe of punch to Tudor Place guests (Figure 8). The finely painted famille rose decoration draws inspiration from Eastern and Western motifs. A rural Chinese landscape populated by peasants engaged in rice cultivation is seen on the exterior; a dynamic English foxhunt spread before a large country estate is seen on the interior. Only two other known examples survive in museums including the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library.

Painted Fancy chairs and settees were equally important to the more relaxed social activities at Tudor Place. Thomas Peter commissioned an armchair that retains its original rush seat from an unknown chair maker around 1800 that is representative of Fancy styles made before 1815 (Figure 9). Its darkened, ebonized surface conceals evidence of white and green paint throughout below, now seen on the tapered cuffs on the front legs and at the base of the arm supports. The armchair is related to a set of approximately a dozen ebonized side chairs with matching rush seats attributed to local chairmakers Pope and Thompson (Figure 10). The chairs are each stamped with “THOMPSON” on the reverse of the proper right leg. In 1822, Delano’s city directory listed the partnership on the southeast corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and 13th Street.
and family heirlooms. Washington society blended new residents with the older established elite, uniquely mixing cosmopolitan flair with rural neighborhood.

—By Erin E. Kuykendall, Curator of Collections

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From the Executive Director

Dear Member:
Sinclair Lewis noted “Winter is not a season, it’s an occupation.” Certainly, this past winter has been an occupation. What joy then to have the warmth of spring, the bursting of flowers and trees leafing out! While the garden has much to share throughout the year, it is spring that truly makes for a grand experience with nature. Join us for one of the many garden tours and programs and be sure to take a tour through the house as the garden is reflected in the table settings, the textiles, and the books. A reawakening, much needed after the harsh winter!

This spring, the restoration of the smokehouse commences, and we trust we will find out much more about this structure. The frame of the current structure is believed to be the original smokehouse, quite a relic from an earlier time when meat was brought in from the country to hang and smoke, tended by the enslaved servant, Will Johnson.

With thanks to a matching grant from the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities, we will conserve the windows on the Landmark House and complete critical work on the Historic Dower House or Administration Building, repointing brick (literally, one can put one’s finger through the mortar cracks!), and replacing the leaking roof. Bear with us as we undertake this work!

As spring is welcomed, we welcome you to come enjoy and explore!

Sincerely,

Leslie C. Barker
Executive Director

Your Help is Needed — Urgently!

In the dining room hangs an 18th-century English Queen Anne style looking glass with a walnut-veneered and parcel-gilt frame and a beveled-edge plate that urgently requires conservation due to deterioration from the tin-mercury amalgam glass and substantial loss of gesso and gold leaf. Removed from exhibition due to its condition, the looking glass awaits conservation. To contribute, call Curator of Collections Erin Kuykendall at 202-965-0400 ext. 103.

GARDENS IN AND OUT

MARCH THROUGH AUGUST

Stroll through on a tour of the beautiful Tudor Place garden or explore the house, resplendent with flowers on ceramics and textiles, and in books.
WHERE THERE IS SMOKE, THERE IS MEAT!
Restoring the Tudor Place Smokehouse

A smokehouse has stood on the property since the time of Martha and Thomas Peter, if not before. Thought to have been constructed in the late 18th or early 19th century, it is a rare extant example of an urban dependency from this era. From the early years of laborious urban agriculture to a suburban existence in which gardening and husbandry become more pastime activity than survival skill, the smokehouse was adapted. By the end of the 19th century, the Peter family no longer needed the smokehouse for curing meats, and, following its use for storage, converted it into a pigeon loft; an arbor attached to it as an aviary for the birds to exercise. The pigeons departed and the building was again used for storage until 1953, when it became home to the family’s cocker spaniels.

While the Peter family maintained and repaired the smokehouse numerous times, urgent restoration is needed to address deteriorating woodwork and paint. Paint analysis and dendrochronology will help date the construction of the smokehouse and better understand its context on the site, and in the greater regional history of domestic dependency buildings.

As the restoration project gets underway, mark your calendars for a Landmark Society Lecture on Wednesday, April 23, 2014; Architecture and Meat: Building, Working In, and Living With the 18th Century Smokehouse.

BEEs AND BLOOMS

Visitors to Tudor Place will see the trunk of a tulip poplar (Liriodendron tulipifera) at the corner of 31st Street and Q Street NW and wonder where the tree’s once expansive canopy has gone. Earlier this year, it was necessary to remove the weight of the canopy due to decay and a 20’ vertical crack in the main trunk. While the tree will hopefully sprout new growth, a large section of trunk remains to preserve the wild honeybee hive in the tree cavity. The honeybees, which have been active in this hive for more than ten years, roam the garden pollinating a wide range of flowering plants like the linden trees, tulip poplars trees, and many of the center walk’s herbaceous species. The decision to protect the honeybees and preserve the tree for as long as possible was made in concert with the wish of the last Peter family owner, Armistead Peter 3rd, to create a welcoming garden habitat for local wildlife.

A Unique Site for a Special Event

Choose Tudor Place for your next family event or corporate function! Our gardens and indoor spaces provide elegant settings for dinners, lunches, weddings, children’s birthday parties, and picnics. (A lovely indoor location is available in case of rain.) For pricing and availability, see our website, tudorplace.org, or contact Johanna Gabelmann at 202-965-0400 x 115, info@tudorplace.org.
A guided garden tour...

**Historic & Growing: The Tudor Place Landscape**

**Every Tuesday, April 1 – October 28, 2014**

11:15 A.M. and 12:15 P.M.

Indulge in the history and horticulture of centuries-old trees, herbloom plants and flowers and fragrant English boxwood on a lively guided walk across 5.5 acres and two centuries of landscape design. Learn how Tudor Place reflects both its Federal-period origins and changes in land use over time. See how orchards, stables and grazing land made way for lawns, roses, fountains and garden “rooms.” Identify many varieties cultivated here over time, and see how four owners over six generations cared for and embellished the landscape as Georgetown and the Federal city grew around it.

**Call to Reserve or Walk In.**

**Members: Free Nonmembers: $10**

**Japonisme: Inspiring Western Tastes**

**Thursday, April 3**

6:00 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.

In the 1870s, the interiors of American homes embraced the Japanese aesthetic. Japanese pottery and metalwork adorned mantels while paper fans and lanterns were attached to walls. Furniture and wallpaper inspired by Japanese design were at the height of fashion. Explore select objects in the Tudor Place collection dating from the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century that illustrate this stylistic trend inspired by the arts of Japan.

**Members and Landmark Society Members: Free Non-Members: $20.00 Per Person**

**Cherry Blossom Tea and House Tour**

**Friday, April 4 or Saturday, April 5**

1:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M.

**Location:** Meet at Administration Building, 1670 31ST STREET

Sturdy trunks, fragile blossoms, lasting traditions. English and American esthetes have admired for centuries the beauty of Oriental landscapes. Celebrate the blooming of the Tudor Place cherry blossoms with a traditional English tea ceremony, complete with tea sandwiches, scones, delicious desserts and Japanese tea blends. After the tea, guests enjoy a tour of the historic garden.

**Members: $25 Nonmembers: $30**

**Tea with the Easter Bunny**

**Saturday, April 12**

10:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

Enjoy a festive spring tea with the Easter Bunny! Families will sample spring tea blends, sandwiches, petite desserts, and scones, while visiting with the Easter Bunny. After tea, families will partake in a scavenger hunt through Tudor Place’s 5.5 acres of gardens in search of the Easter Bunny’s favorite flowers and animal friends.

**Children: $20 Member Adults: $25 Nonmember Adults: $30**

**Seventh Annual Eggstravaganza**

**Friday, April 18 or Saturday, April 19**

10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

**Location:** Check in at front entrance gates on 31ST STREET

Rolling green lawns, bobbing spring blooms and the elegant mansion on a hill serve as backdrop for this festive annual attraction. Join the Easter Bunny, as children of all ages enjoy an Egg Hunt (at 10:30 a.m.) and thrilling Egg Roll Contest (at 10:45) down the grand South Lawn. Other activities include decorating festive eggs and playing games from the past. Bring your camera! Self-guided tours of Tudor Place’s 5.5 acres of glorious gardens are also available. Bring your own basket, spoon, and one hard-boiled egg per child.

**Member Children: $7 Nonmember Children: $10 Adult Chaperones: $5**

**Architecture and Meat: Building, Working in, & Living with the 18th Century Smokehouse**

**Wednesday, April 23**

6:30 P.M. – 8:30 P.M.

In celebration of Tudor Place’s restoration of its pyramidal-roofed smokehouse, University of Maryland Professor, author, playwright, and Primetime Emmy award winner Michael Olmert unpacks the idea of smokehouses, concentrating on the Tidewater region in the 17th through the very early 19th centuries. Their history and standard design elements will be featured, as well as certain diagnostic tools by which smokehouses can always be identified. The basic design of these structures and the work that
went on in them has hardly changed in a thousand years. With this little piece of the landscape restored, Tudor Place has an authentic, utilitarian building that for some time to come will help us break bread—or at least a ham sandwich—with the Past.

**Landmark Society Members: Free**

**Members: $15 Nonmembers: $20**

**Spring Break Chocolate Workshop for Children**

**Ages 5+**

**Wednesday, April 26 or Friday, April 28**

10:30 a.m. or 1:00 p.m.

Families will take an interactive tour of the historic mansion to learn about favorite spring pastimes. After the tour, children learn the basics of chocolate making while creating your own 3-D chocolate eggs to take home.

**Member Children: $8**

**Nonmember Children: $10**

**Adults: $5**

**Family Celebration of Earth Day**

**Sunday, April 27**

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**Location: Gardens & Garage Classroom**

Enjoy one of Washington's greenest spots by celebrating Earth Day as a family at Tudor Place. The afternoon's activities include games, a scavenger hunt, painting flower pots and planting them with seeds from the historic garden. Eco-friendly refreshments will be served.

**Member Children: $5**

**Nonmember Children: $8**

**Adults: $5**

**D.C.'s Architectural Treasures Tour: Octagon House and Tudor Place**

**Saturday, May 3**

10:30 – 11:30 a.m. Tudor Place Tour;

1:00 – 2:00 Octagon House Tour

Tour two of Washington’s architectural icons, Tudor Place and the Octagon House. From Tudor Place’s unique Temple Portico to the Octagon’s circular entryway and grand sweeping staircase, learn how these buildings were designed by notable architect, William Thornton, and see how the buildings evolved aesthetically and functionally since the 1800s and the challenges surrounding their preservation today.

**Members: $13 Nonmembers: $16**

**Optional Boxed Lunch: $16**

**Lemon Trees and Limoncello**

**Thursday, May 8**

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Citrus trees have been thriving at Tudor Place for generations, summering in the Garden and wintering in the Conservatory.

Explore these and other elements of the Tudor Place Garden, and sample award-winning Limoncello and other artisanal SweetShine liqueurs from Bloomery Plantation Distillery. This local distillery’s complimentary tasting of their hand-crafted elixirs will include insights into their “garden to glass” operation.

**Age 21+ Members: Free Nonmembers: $15**

**Mother’s Day Tea**

**Sunday, May 11**

10:30 – 12:00 o.r 2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Location: Meet at the Visitor Center**

**Ages 5+**

Celebrate Mother’s Day together, sampling period teas, finger sandwiches, and delicious desserts while exploring tea etiquette with the guidance of a costumed interpreter. After the tea, family members can create a special period craft to take home for the Moms in their lives.

**Members: $25 Nonmembers: $30**

**Children: $15**

**Enchanting Garden Explorations: Girl Scouts in Georgetown Day**

**Saturday, May 17**

**DAISIES and Brownies: 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

**Juniors: 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.**

**Location: Meet at Visitor Center**

Scouts become nature detectives during interactive tours and hands-on activities at one of Georgetown’s most celebrated houses. Armed with magnifying glasses, Scouts explore the many nooks and crannies, lawns and outdoor “rooms” of Tudor Place’s 5.5 acres of historic gardens. After the tour, Girl Scouts plant their own flowers to take home.

**Scouts and Tag-Alongs: $10**

**Adults: $3**

**Fairy Tea and Treats**

**Saturday, June 7**

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**Location: Meet at Administration Building, 1670 31st Street**

Bring your favorite Tinkerbell, as children dress up in magical fairy costumes complete with tutus, wands, and wings. Dressed for tea, costumed interpreters explain the favored drink of early America, while guests enjoy tasty desserts. After the tea, children tour Tudor Place’s enchanting fairy gardens and make a special period craft to take home.

**Member Children: $20**

**Nonmember Children: $25**

**Adults: $10**

**Celebrate Father’s Day with our Country’s Founding Dad!**

**Saturday, June 14**

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

**Location: Meet at Main House**

Bring your favorite Father Figure to a home associated with our country’s “founding dad.” Outside Mt. Vernon, Tudor Place is the nation’s largest repository of George Washington artifacts. Celebrate Father’s Day here with an interactive tour through the historic mansion to uncover treasures from the first President. After the tour, families enjoy period games and make a special craft for dad. Bring your own cameras to take pictures with Dad in the gardens!

**Member Children: $7**

**Nonmember Children: $10 Adults: $3**

**Independence Day Tea**

**Saturday, June 28**

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**Location: Meet at Administration Building, 1670 31st Street**

Where better to celebrate the nation’s birthday than at the home of early patriots? Get close to our first family by enjoying a delicious tea with scones, sandwiches, and sweets. After the tea, visitors will join docents for a Washington Collection highlight tour of the historic mansion.

**Member: $25 Nonmember: $30**

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**Georgetown Summer History Weeks at Tudor Place and Dumbarton House**

Children learn by tasting, touching and seeing history every day at Georgetown’s Summer History Weeks held at Tudor Place and Dumbarton House. Indoor and outdoor activities bring to life 175 years of American history and teach about the natural environment. Participants cook and sample snacks and drinks of times past, try on period clothing, explore the historic garden, plant their own gardens, play historical games, paint watercolor landscapes, go on an archaeological expedition, and more. The weekends with an early American “parlor party” they will host for parents and friends!

**Snack provided. Before and After Care Available.**

**Fee: $175 Members, $190 Nonmembers; $10 discount if registering for 2 weeks; $10 discount if registering more than 1 child; $10 if registering before April 1, 2014.**