In a time before refrigeration and supermarkets, ensuring a steady food supply was a year-round, time-consuming effort involving many hands. At the center of that effort for the better part of two centuries was the humble smokehouse. The word first appears in print and written records in the first half of the 19th century, sometimes as “smoak house” or, occasionally, “meat house” or “smokery.”

Culinary traditions of the southern states, including Virginia, West Virginia, and parts of Maryland, were dominated in the 18th and 19th centuries by a taste for pork, and if one wanted to preserve pork products, particularly larger cuts of meat, a smokehouse was vitally important. In fact, the regional predilection for pork products was so well established that it was commented on by numerous travelers to the region, and the smokehouse, and the pork products it produced, became an important symbol of regional identity. Dr. John S. Wilson of Columbus, Georgia, noted in 1860 that pork was consumed in some form “continually, morning, noon, and night” by “all classes, sexes, ages, and conditions.”

Fashionable households in particular, like that maintained by Martha and Thomas Peter, the first owners of Tudor Place, relied on having a variety of meats available throughout the year.

While meat preservation operations on rural farmsteads and plantations could often be very large—reaching upwards of 100 hogs per season in some cases—the same operations were repeated in the smokehouses of urban farms and estates like Tudor Place, if on a slightly smaller scale. Britannia Peter Kennon, the founders’ daughter, recalled “20 hogs brought down each fall from Oakland [the Peter plantation in Seneca, Maryland] for use the coming winter.”

Whether hogs were brought live to Tudor Place and then butchered and processed on the property, we do not know. It seems likely that, given the large number of workers available on the Seneca plantation for labor-intensive butchering, the meat may have been butchered and undergone its initial salting prior to being transported to Tudor Place for smoking and aging. Since the medieval age in Europe, December was the traditional time for butchering and smoking, as cooler weather afforded the best environment for safe handling and processing of meat, and a full larder of stored foodstuffs would be assured come winter.

The location of the smokehouse on a farmstead typically conformed to a functional division of space followed consistently throughout the region. Even in rural areas, where space was not at a premium, a domestic yard that is spatially and functionally distinct from the farm yard can typically be found. The domestic yard, located next to the house, was a working space with an assortment of buildings that might include the privy, laundry, milk house or springhouse for dairy storage, smokehouse, well, poultry house, wood pile, and often the kitchen. The farm yard supported the agricultural operations of the property with barns, granaries, stables, corn cribs, wagon houses and the like.

The layout at Tudor Place appears to have typified this division; in the domestic yard at the west side of the house, just outside the kitchen, the smokehouse, laundry, and perhaps other small outbuildings were clustered—sepa-
rated from the family’s living quarters but close enough to permit easy daily access and oversight. Farm functions were located further west in the area of the present day Garage, and in the area of the north garden.

In its size and shape, the Tudor Place smokehouse likewise follows a regional formula that originates in Virginia; reflected in the square floor plan and steep, pyramidal roof. The timber framing is indicative of Tidewater methods of the late 18th century, with petite wood framing members, diagonal “down braces” supporting the vertical members at the corners, and projecting rafters that create an overhang at the eaves (Figure 1). Dr. Carl Lounsbury, Senior Architectural Historian at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, notes that the pyramidal roof helps to hold the smoke among the hanging cuts of meat, and surmises that the square floor plan may be driven by a desire to centrally locate the fire for even smoke distribution (Figure 2). Britannia Peter Kennon recalls how “poor old Will Johnson [the coachman at Tudor Place] used to start his fire in the smoke house and keep it smoking but he never let the fire burn up to heat the meat—kept it smothered and smoking continually.” Like many of the other enslaved workers at Tudor Place, Johnson would have been charged with a variety of tasks in the course of maintaining the large and prominent estate.

Considerable care was generally put into building a strong smokehouse for longevity and security. Meats could be stored to age up to two years, so a large portion of the estate’s “food wealth” was contained in this small structure. A building too loosely and cheaply constructed was an inefficient smoker, easy to break into, and prone to vermin. The smokehouse was essentially a meat safe; under lock and key with limited access typically controlled by a family member or trusted servant, to keep out thieves of both the human and animal variety.9

Documentary evidence does not clearly tell us when the smokehouse was built, nor how long it was used, but many of its features are consistent with other examples built in 18th-century Virginia. We do know that seven buildings were on the property in 1805 when Martha and Thomas Peter purchased it from Francis Lowndes of Bladensburg. A dendrochronology dating study of the building timbers is currently underway, and preliminary data suggests a late 18th-century construction date. While we know that the family continued to use the smokehouse into the latter part of the 19th century, we do not know definitely when this ceased.

A comprehensive restoration of the structure funded by a local foundation, highlighted a number of features that provide a deeper understanding of the construction and history of this small building. Clearly visible are black creosote deposits on original and early framing, and are joinery techniques common to the tentative period of construction in the late 18th century, such as hand-cut and pegged mortise and tenon joints and hand-planed timbers (Figure 3). Several timbers bear the crudely scribed “hash” numbers (Figure 4) used by builders to piece together the frame. And while nails were not common in 18th-century framing (which generally relied on mechanical joints like the mortise and tenon), both

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Figure 1: The square building is constructed with slender wood framing, characterized by the common 18th-century Virginia technique of using “down braces” or diagonal timbers extending from the mid-point of a post to the floor on either side, for stability. The modern concrete-laid brick floor is visible at the bottom of the photo.

Figure 2: The pyramidal roof structure allowed smoke to circulate freely among the hanging cuts of meat.

Figure 3: Framing in a corner highlights the complexity of 18th-century framing techniques. “Scuff” marks on the soot blackened timbers are the result of cutting and planning by hand. The clean appearance of the 20th-century diagonal sheathing boards helps to distinguish later renovations from original material.
assisted builders in positioning timbers.

Figure 4: Marks like the “III” visible here assisted builders in positioning timbers.

18th-century hand-wrought and 19th-century cut nails were found protruding from rafters, where they may have held meat strung up for smoking.

Restoration also uncovered a rich history of repairs. By nature, smoking caused great stress to building materials. Salt, used heavily in the smoking and curing process, is a natural enemy of brick and mortar and deteriorates timber by displacing residual water in the wood, eventually turning it soft and crumbly. Numerous repairs clearly undertaken while the building was still in use as a smokehouse (as evidenced by the presence of creosote) bear the marks of advancements in construction techniques, such as the vertical marks of up-and-down sawn lumber and the introduction of machine-cut nails.

The presence of a variety of construction methods and technologies, nail types, and wood species reveals the complicated construction sequence, and the long history of use and re-use, of this small building. While many of its early elements remain, the smokehouse's predominant story is one of change and adaptation. We may never know exactly what the building looked like in its early days. Typically, a smokehouse door would have faced the domestic yard (at the west side of the house), and a later owner's references to reorienting the building strongly suggest that the door may have been relocated to reflect a new aesthetic, rather than utilitarian, sensibility (Figure 5). As the building’s functions changed, greater airtightness may have become more desirable. In 1919, Armistead Peter, Jr., noted improvements underway: “Ben Daily [Daley] putting new boards on roof. Original [wood] shingles have rotted so replaced with slates using old ones from the house. Later will have new clapboards put on.”

It seems likely that diagonal sheathing boards on the interior walls also date to this project, as they are uniformly milled and provide a secondary level of insulation not necessary for a working smokehouse.

Was the building still in use in 1919 when Armistead Peter, Jr., undertook his repairs? It seems likely that its disuse prompted the renovations. No longer needed for smoking meat, the building was repurposed in 1927 by Armistead Peter 3rd, who converted it to a pigeon aviary. A building permit issued for the work included repairing “weatherboard” and “change in openings, etc.” Improvements included the addition of a sliding glass window in the south wall, to allow the birds to fly in and out of the adjacent enclosed arbor and shelves built on the east and west walls for nesting pigeons. Later, a new concrete subfloor and water fountain were added.

Whether the existing beaded weather-boards and molded cornice were first installed in the early 20th century when mention is made of replacing the clapboards, or if these features already existed and were simply replicated during each renovation, is unclear. Paint analysis by Dr. Susan Buck found that despite Armistead Peter 3rd’s report that most all the exterior siding had been replaced, the cornice, corner boards, and uppermost weatherboards are older. They exhibit an early off-white, hand-ground, oil-based paint that could easily date to the early part of the 19th century, perhaps to the first period of Peter ownership. It was not uncommon for utilitarian outbuildings to undergo “makeovers” as tastes and fortunes changed. Precedent for this can be seen in several smokehouses at Colonial Williamsburg that were upgraded visually during other renovation campaigns on their properties.

As time went on, the Tudor Place building found new use as a storage building, a kennel for Cocker Spaniels in the 1950s, and, briefly, in the early years of the Foundation’s ownership, as a home for pigeons once again.

While maintenance was clearly an ongoing part of the smokehouse’s story, the nature of a wooden outbuilding is that decay is constantly at work. As early as 2002 the structure was being studied for its interpretive potential, and by 2010, as the need for a comprehensive restoration and interpretation plan became fully apparent, staff began documenting the building and developing a scope of work for its restoration. Restoration carpenter Gus Kiorpes, whose expertise has shaped projects at many of the region’s significant historic properties, addressed issues ranging from insect and water damage to incompatible repairs using a variety of conservation techniques to preserve as much original material as possible (Figure 6). In concert with Tudor Place’s interpretive policy, the...
recently completed work illustrates the story of the smokehouse and its subsequent uses. The structure is now open for public viewing for the first time in its history, offering an exciting window into the vital role of this humble building, its importance in feeding the estate, and its adaptable utilitarian nature.

—Jessica Zullinger, Director of Preservation

NOTES:

4. Olmert, 74.
7. Lanier and Herman, 55.
10. Armistead Peter Jr., Diary, February 18, 1919. Tudor Place Archive, MS 14, Box 73, F4.
11. District of Columbia Building Division, Repair Permit, December 31, 1926. Tudor Place Archive, MS 21, Bills & Receipts, Maintenance and Repair. 1927.

Eating Local...Inside the House

Celebrating the restoration of the original timber-frame smokehouse, the interior of the house will display early 19th-century objects, agricultural tools, and more that illustrate the activities of the small farm. In the Conservatory, view select 19th-century agricultural implements, including scythes, rakes and hoes, used by enslaved workers who grew vegetables, tended orchards, and managed livestock on the 8.5 Georgetown acres and their rural Maryland Plantation, “Oatland,” owned by the Peters at that time. In the dining room, a porcelain dinner service, drinking glasses, glass decanters and cutlery will be set for a sumptuous 1830s dinner featuring stores from the smokehouse, ham and sausages. The meal imagines an elegant dinner similar to those hosted by Martha Custis Peter (1777-1854) and prepared by enslaved cook Patty Allen before the Civil War.

Scythe with pine handle and wrought iron blade.
“The Evening Mist Clothes the Riverside with Poetry”
Whistler’s Lithotint Nocturne Re-discovered

When Curator Erin Kuykendall recently examined receipts from the early 20th century in the Archive for a conservation project, she came across one that noted the purchase of a Whistler engraving. Upon further investigation in paintings and print storage, James A. McNeill Whistler’s celebrated lithotint Nocturne (The River at Battersea) designed in 1878 in London, England, was found among the museum’s fine collection of prints and is now out for conservation.

Born in Lowell, Massachusetts, Whistler moved to London in 1859, settling in east London’s impoverished district of Wapping. In 1867 he moved west to Chelsea, where his flat at 2 Lindsey Row (present-day 96 Cheyne Walk) overlooked the river Thames and the industrial Battersea riverfront. He painted several Nocturnes in the 1860s—moody, atmospheric London scenes defined by the city’s famous fog and shadowy mists. In Tudor Place’s Nocturne, a solitary waterman hunches over his shallow barge, holding an oar to guide the vessel along the water. At the river’s edge, the lights and buildings of the Battersea riverfront emerge from the mist. Londoners would have recognized the sloping slag heap, the spire of the Battersea Church, chimney stacks, and the Morgan Crucible Company’s illuminated clock tower. Gas lights from the warehouses are reflected onto the water’s surface. The artist’s iconic signature, a butterfly monogram, appears in the lower right corner.

And when the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry, as with a veil, and the poorer buildings lose themselves in the dim sky, and the tall chimneys become campanili, and the warehouses are palaces in the night, and the whole city hangs in the heavens, and fairy-land is before us—then the wayfarer hastens home; the working man and the cultured one, the wise man and the one of pleasure, cease to understand, as they have ceased to see, and Nature, who for once has sung in tune, sings her exquisite song to the artist alone, her son and her master—her son in that he loves her, her master in that he knows her.

—J.A.M. Whistler, 1885

Whistler’s printer Thomas Robert Way (1861-1913) described the artist’s creative process in detail for The Print-Collector’s Quarterly in 1913. According to Way, Whistler prepared the lithographic stone in Way’s printing offices on Wellington Street, Covent Garden, and mused “Now, let us see if we can remember a Nocturne;’ and thinning out his ink, proceeded to lay broad washes across the stone. The subject he drew was the familiar Chelsea Reach to the river opposite his house in Lindsey Row, and he completed it at one sitting—or standing, rather—for he always stood when he worked. When the ink was quite dry he deliberately scraped out the lights reflected in the river … He made no retouching at all, and when he had finished, the drawing was ready for its etching to deposit the grease in the stone, and then to pass to the printer.”

This second state of Nocturne was printed in black ink on blue-gray wove paper laid on French ivory plate paper, one of 100 printed for Way’s 1887 edition of Whistler’s portfolio Notes. When Whistler went bankrupt, Way sold several of the artist’s prints, including Nocturne, to American collectors such as industrialist Charles Lang Freer (1854-1915) and dealer Edward Guthrie Kennedy (1849-1932). In 1912, Kennedy assumed ownership of his business partner Hermann Wunderlich’s print gallery, changing the name to Kennedy & Company. Armistead Peter 3rd purchased the lithotint at auction from the Fifth Avenue show-room of Anderson Galleries for $325 on May 3, 1923, acquiring the print from the ex-collection of the wealthy American lawyer Howard Mansfield.2

—Erin Kuykendall, Curator

THE ROLE OF AN HISTORIC LANDSCAPE
This past June, Director of Gardens and Grounds Suzanne Bouchard spoke at Oatlands for a workshop of the Virginia Association of Museums (VAM) on how Tudor Place utilizes its historic landscape.

Participants heard about how Tudor Place’s 200 years of single family owners allows staff to talk about the landscape’s evolution from farmstead to ornamental garden. It provides opportunities to include current topics like native plants and the urban farming movement into educational programming and outreach efforts.

Murray Levison, grandson of Huntington T. Block (Bucky), visited with Executive Director Leslie Buhler to learn more about his grandfather and his leadership on the Board from 1996 to 2008.
Steve Vogel, former reporter on the Washington Post’s national staff, gives a gripping account of one of the critical turning points in American history, the 1814 burning of Washington as the British sought to crush the fledgling American republic. In his book, Through the Perilous Fight, Mr. Vogel brings the burning of Washington to life and details the last stand at Baltimore that helped save the nation and inspired its National Anthem. With references to several Peter family members who either fought against the British or recognized Americas weakness, Mr. Vogel combines virtuoso storytelling with brilliantly rendered character sketches to recreate the thrilling six-week period when Americans rallied from the ashes to overcome their oldest adversary.

**LANDMARK SOCIETY + guest, FREE**
**Member, $15 | Non-Member, $20**

### Through the Perilous Fight: Six Weeks That Saved the Nation
**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2014**
6:30 P.M. – 8:30 P.M.

Like today’s trendiest locavores, Tudor Place’s founders fed their household both home-grown and outsourced foodstuffs, a balance that shifted on the estate as it did for the nation. Come get a sneak peek at the newly restored smokehouse—one of the oldest outbuildings still standing in the District—and enjoy fall harvest themed hors d’oeuvres. Learn about food storage and preservation practices vital to feeding the Peter family in the early 19th century, and enjoy a specialty cocktail on a crisp autumn evening!

**AGE 21 +**
**MEMBERS: FREE | NONMEMBERS: $20**

### Red, Green, and Gold: All That Sparkles
**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4TH**
6:00 – 8:00 P.M.

Enjoy an historic holiday celebration at Tudor Place. The mansion will be trimmed with festive greenery and holiday décor. Come experience the unique mix of old and new traditions at Tudor Place, while sampling holiday appetizers and tasting a festive cocktail.

**AGE 21 +**
**MEMBERS: FREE | NONMEMBERS: $20**

### Breaking Boundaries in Early 19th Century Baltimore
**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2014**
6:30 P.M. – 8:30 P.M.

Author Natalie Wexler returns to Tudor Place with her latest novel, on the true story of a bold woman who defied 19th-century expectations of “a lady.” In 1807, 26-year-old Eliza Anderson became the nation’s first female magazine editor when she founded “The Observer.” The same year, she also challenged convention by translating a racy French novel and entering an extramarital relationship with an emigré French architect. Weaving fact and fiction, Ms. Wexler conjures Eliza’s fictional maid with ambitions of her own, who isn’t above spying on her mistress to achieve them. Incorporating actual excerpts from periodicals of the time, The Observer illuminates the lives of two women living in the same house but in separate social worlds, unintentionally united by their aspirations to move beyond the roles society prescribes for them.

**LANDMARK SOCIETY + guest, FREE**
**Member, $15 | Non-Member, $20**

### The Key to the Desk
**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2014**
6:30 P.M. – 8:30 P.M.

Curator Erin Kuykendall offers a close look at Francis Scott Key’s partners’ desk. When called to negotiate an American prisoner’s release in late August 1814, Key spent a fateful night outside Baltimore. The 25-hour British attack inspired his poem “Defence of Fort McHenry” which eventually became the U.S. national anthem, the “Star-Spangled Banner.” While Key is well known as the source for the national anthem, his achievements as a lawyer and politician after the War of 1812 are significant as well. That story comes to life as Ms. Kuykendall examines Key’s twice signed partner’s desk, revealing fresh insights into his legal and political work as well as Georgetown society after the War of 1812.

**LANDMARK SOCIETY + guest, FREE**
**Member, $15 | Non-Member, $20**

### A Unique Site for Your Special Event
Choose Tudor Place for your next family event or corporate function! Our gardens and indoor spaces provide elegant settings for dinners, lunches, special occasions and children’s birthday parties. (A lovely indoor location is available in case of rain.) For pricing and availability, see our website, tudorplace.org, or contact us at 202-965-0400 x 115, events@tudorplace.org.