Among the significant Peter family objects in the Tudor Place collection is the portrait of family patriarch Thomas Peter (1769-1834) painted by his son-in-law, William G. Williams (1801-1846). Like nearly every object in the Tudor Place collection, the portrait has an interesting and multi-layered history. Recent imaging analysis by the Smithsonian Institution's Museum Conservation Institute revealed previously unknown information about the portrait, including key facial details of sitter Thomas Peter that had been obscured over the past two centuries. This new information is guiding conservators at Olin Conservation as they carefully remove the layers of later re-paint to reveal details of Williams's original composition.

In spring 2015, Tudor Place Times reported that conservators and scientists from the Smithsonian Institution's Museum Conservation Institute (MCI) had conducted X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analysis on the portrait at Tudor Place. This non-invasive examination analyzed the chemical composition of paints used for the portrait to better understand which pigments were original to the painting and which represented later repainting. After the success of the XRF analysis, the portrait was taken to the MCI in June 2015, for additional investigations to reveal what existed beneath the layers of overpaint and varnish currently visible on the canvas. Tudor Place is grateful to the staff of the Smithsonian's Museum Conservation Institute for undertaking this project.

During earlier conservation treatments in 1986, conservator Charles Olin removed eight layers of varnish and overpaint from a small area of the portrait to expose original details covered during a later re-paint. Overpainting and re-varnishing of paintings, and portraits especially, was common as they aged and became discolored. The varnishes used by 19th-century artists to “protect” oil paintings were organic and tended to yellow over time. Dirt, dust, and other particles trapped in the varnish could cause further discoloration and make a portrait appear dark or clouded.

Many pigments used by 19th-century artists to highlight sitters' lips or to give them ruddy complexions were likewise organic and prone to fading, leaving sitters to appear pale. These changes in a painting's appearance often led to further re-painting. The 1986 conservation campaign hinted at what lay beneath the re-paint in the Thomas Peter portrait, including an equestrian scene over the sitter's shoulder.

The Museum Conservation Institute pursued this and other tantalizing leads by exposing the
Distinct details are revealed when the portrait is viewed with visible light, ultraviolet radiation and digital radiography.

Portraits can be examined under different types of radiation to reveal details not visible under normal light. When the painting was examined under ultraviolet (UV) radiation, for example, different layers fluoresced differently depending on the material. This enabled conservators to determine which surface paints were original and which the products of overpainting. Infrared (IR) reflectography highlighted details of the equestrian scene not visible to the naked eye.

One of the most powerful tools they used on the portrait was digital radiography using x-rays. Just as an X-ray can help orthopedists examine bones beneath layers of skin, it can reveal early layers of paint beneath outer coats. In the case of Mr. Peter, the digital radiography suggested that the sitter’s face had been more defined than it currently appears, with more expressive eyes, brows, eyelids, nose, and lips. The original hairline and face had likewise changed drastically from the original — changes that cause the sitter today to appear nearly expressionless, with pasty skin that resembles heavy theatrical makeup.

With the results of the imaging project revealing new details about the portrait, conservation could proceed. Following preliminary solvent testing by independent conservator Alexandra Tice, the portrait was delivered to Olin Conservation in November. There David Olin, chief conservator and son of Charles, is overseeing treatment 30 years after his father’s initial investigation. Conservation is being carried out in two phases, with the first scheduled for completion in June 2016, when the treated portrait will be unveiled during the Peter Family reunion at Tudor Place. Phase I Conservation has been made possible through a grant from the MARPAT Foundation and contributions from Peter Family members. Thomas Peter’s descendants recognized the significance of his portrait and sought to ensure that future generations could “read” and understand it, getting to know him and his era through the conventions of paint.

While the imaging provided clues that will guide conservators working on the portrait, research by Tudor Place staff is attempting to determine exactly when Peter sat for the portrait. The work is undated, so our best guess allows only that Peter must have sat for it sometime between October 1824, when his future grandson-in-law first visited Tudor Place, and Peter’s death in April 1834. In her unpublished, late 19th-century recollections, Thomas Peter’s daughter, Britannia Wellington Peter Kennon (1815-1911), stated that Williams first came to Tudor Place during of the Marquis de Lafayette’s visit, in October 1824.¹ It was there, Britannia wrote, that Williams, a recent graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, met Thomas and Martha Peter’s 21-year-old daughter, America Pinckney Peter. After a courtship of 17 months, they were married in the parlor at Tudor Place on June 27, 1826.

After their marriage, the couple set up house-
As an Army surveyor and cartographer, Williams was kept away from Washington and his wife and children for several lengthy periods. In the summer of 1830, he travelled abroad for nearly a year, visiting family in England, then traveling the continent and undertaking additional artistic training.

As a portrait artist, Williams frequently used members of his extended family as subjects. In addition to the Thomas Peter portrait, Tudor Place has Williams portraits of his wife, America, with infant, as well as portraits of Williams's sister and father and an ornate oval self-portrait in which he looks over his shoulder toward the viewer. All are at present displayed in the museum.

Thomas Peter died at Tudor Place on April 16, 1834. He was eulogized in The National Intelligencer newspaper and described as "one of the oldest and most respected native citizens of [Georgetown], distinguished through life for his courteous and polished manners, for plain and unpretending good sense, for sterling integrity, for all those qualities in social life which fit a man to be a good citizen, and valuable head of a family." Before photography, a portrait was a cherished reminder of an absent or deceased family member. During the twenty years that Martha Peter lived at Tudor Place following Thomas's death, this portrait would have served as a reminder of her late husband.

When Martha Peter died in 1854, the portrait descended to daughter Britannia, who inherited Tudor Place and the bulk of Martha's estate. In 1911, at Britannia's death, the portrait was bequeathed to her grandson, Armistead Peter Jr. (1870-1960). His diary notes that, on January 15, 1915, he had a new frame made for it. Two weeks later, his diary entry affirms that the frame was completed and the portrait hung.

It will be hung again in the Tudor Place parlor following completion of Phase I, while awaiting funding for a Phase II of conservation that will explore more of the area around the sitter's body and background. It is fitting that we undertake this project exploring the estate's co-founder during its Bicentennial year, applying 21st-century technology to reveal the appearance of a 19th-century man— an appearance that Martha Peter and her children would once again recognize. Stay tuned for updates about the progress of this research and conservation project, and be on the lookout in June for the return of Thomas Peter to Tudor Place.

—Grant S. Quertermous, Curator

Images provided by the Smithsonian’s Museum Conservation Institute.

Notes
1 "Britannia's Reminiscences" Papers of Armistead Peter, Jr., MS 14, Box 69, F 25, Tudor Place Archives
2 National Intelligencer, April 25, 1834. Tudor Place Research Files
At last William Thornton’s architectural gem was complete. Just as Thomas and Martha Peter must have rejoiced upon the completion of their landmark home in 1816, so will we celebrate its 200th anniversary during 2016. Through six generations and over 40 presidential administrations, through wars and economic upheavals—the ongoing parade of historic events—Tudor Place has seen America’s story unfold on its doorstep. The Tudor Place Bicentennial will provide an opportunity to explore our remarkable past, examine who we are today, and dream about where we will go in the future. As a friend of Tudor Place, you are invited to join us as we reflect, celebrate, and imagine.

Tudor Place Bicentennial Schedule of Public Events

**Presidents’ Day Open House**
February 15
With Martha Parke Custis Peter, granddaughter of Martha Washington, as your guide, view extraordinary items from the Tudor Place Washington Collection.

**The First Oval Office**
April 30-May 1
Experience life in the Continental Army! General Washington’s sleeping-office and dining tents will be erected on the South Lawn of Tudor Place. Presented in collaboration with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the Museum of the American Revolution.

**24th Annual Garden Party**
May 25
Join Garden Party Chairwoman Marcia Mayo to celebrate a distinguished honoree—Tudor Place!

**Peter Family Reunion**
June 10-12
Descendants of Thomas and Martha Peter will return to Tudor Place to celebrate their ancestors and share stories.

**Tudor Place Birthday Party**
July 2
Visit during the Independence Day weekend to help wish our beloved Tudor Place a very happy 200th and celebrate with a cake and all the trappings of a lively birthday party.

**1816 Dinner**
October 5
Join us for an elegant South Lawn dinner, catered by a celebrity chef, focused on dishes popular in 1816.

**Bicentennial Book Launch**
In late summer, we will release a richly illustrated and informative history of Tudor Place being published in cooperation with the White House Historical Association.
Dear Friend of Tudor Place,

Welcome to the Tudor Place Bicentennial year! Throughout 2016 we will be celebrating the 200th anniversary of the house’s completion with events commemorating its unique role in the nation’s history. Each will bring the museum to life in a different way, drawing attention to the lives and stories associated with this National Historic Landmark. Details of upcoming Bicentennial events can be found elsewhere in this newsletter, and the full schedule is available on our website.

I am exhilarated to start at Tudor Place on the eve of such an important celebration. Since my arrival in October, everyone—staff, Trustees, volunteers and other friends of the museum—have been kind and welcoming. I have enjoyed meeting many of you and look forward to meeting more in the coming months. Each day has been a joy as I encounter new things and learn more about this important historic landmark.

My deep appreciation extends to the Board of Trustees for the faith they have placed in me to lead Tudor Place into its third century. I am honored to be building on the work of Leslie Buhler, who so capably led this organization for 15 years. Leslie’s visionary leadership transformed the organization, creating a strong foundation for addressing the challenges that will certainly lie ahead. I look forward to joining you in a celebration of Tudor Place’s past and the journey into its future.

Best wishes,

Mark Hudson
Executive Director

At their December meeting, the Tudor Place Board of Trustees elected as Officers: Mr. Thomas E. Crocker, President; Mrs. Beverly L. Jost, Vice-President; Mr. Jerome B. Libin, Treasurer; and Ms. Marcia V. Mayo, Secretary. Mr. Eric Fraunfelter, Ms. Pamela Jenkinson, and Mr. Forbes Maner were elected for second terms as Trustees. The Board also recognized members whose terms were concluding: Geoffrey B. Baker for his leadership as President, J. Bruce Whelihan for his service as Treasurer and Trustee Betty C. Monkman who has served as chair of the Collections Committee.

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Memorial Tribute to Austin Kiplinger

This is a charmed place. It just raises your spirits whenever you’re here. And I feel that way and I have felt that way for many years and I’m continuously reminded that there is a continuity in life, and the more we know about it, the better we can cope with changes that are coming…

— Austin Kiplinger, Honoree, 20th Annual Tudor Place Spring Garden Party, May 2012

The board and staff of Tudor Place mourn the loss of President Emeritus Austin H. “Kip” Kiplinger, who died November 20 at age 97. His passing leaves a void among lovers of D.C. history, and his enthusiasm for preservation and gleanings from our shared past will be sorely missed — nowhere more than at Tudor Place.

“Working with him for 15 years, I found him to be gracious, ebullient, and generous in sharing his love for the history he knew so well of this city and of Tudor Place,” reminisced former Executive Director Leslie Buhler. “He connected the past to the present in very real terms,” she added, praising his “extraordinary memory, sparkle in his eyes, and thirst for knowledge.”

Mr. Kiplinger championed Tudor Place since the museum opened in 1988, when he joined the foundation’s Board of Trustees, becoming president two years later and serving in that role for eight years. He continued to support the museum for the rest of his life. Tudor Place celebrated his lasting leadership and commitment in 2012 by naming him honoree of the 20th Annual Spring Garden Party. His warm ties to Tudor Place were further recognized when Leslie stood as just one of just five people from Kip’s professional and philanthropic life asked (by son Knight Kiplinger) to speak to an audience that packed the Kennedy Center Concert Hall for his memorial on December 11.

A pioneering publisher and journalist, Mr. Kiplinger recognized innately the importance of knowing history to understanding modern times. As he said in his Garden Party address, six generations of one family at Tudor Place “lived through some of the most tortured times in any nation’s history… And we can deal with the present and the future better if we know something about the past.”

Tudor Place sends condolences to Knight and his wife Ann and the extended Kiplinger family. A fund has been created at Tudor Place in memory of “Kip” to support restoration of the arbor and tea house on the South Lawn. Please contact Mary-Michael Wachur at mwachur@tudorplace.org to learn how your gift to Tudor Place can honor Austin Kiplinger’s legacy.

Though still beautiful elements on the Tudor Place landscape, the arbor and tea house are in need of restoration to address structural deficiencies and the effects of time.

Photograph by Bruce M. White, 2015
Welcome to the New Staff Members!

The arrival of new staff at Tudor Place continued in November and December. We are thrilled to welcome two new members to the Tudor Place team.

Laura Brandt hit the ground running as our Education Coordinator in early November with Tudor Tots and a tour on her first day. Laura received her M.A.T. in museum education at The George Washington University and has previous experience at the National Air and Space Museum and the National Archives Foundation. She has enjoyed learning about the multiple generations of the Peter Family, but professes a particular fascination with Britannia Wellington Peter Kennon. Laura is a lifelong museum enthusiast who enjoys swing dancing and hiking when she is not working at or visiting a museum.

Hissing steam valves welcomed our new Facilities Manager Sam Young in early December. Since his arrival Sam has embraced the challenge of preserving buildings from different time periods and has developed an appreciation for past efforts to preserve and document Tudor Place. He most recently served as preservation manager for the Historic Annapolis Foundation and holds a degree in historic preservation from Savannah College of Art and Design. A student of international languages and culture, Sam enjoys traveling abroad.

Be a Docent!

If you have an interest in American history, architecture, or historic objects, books and manuscripts, Tudor Place is a wonderful place to volunteer. Comprehensive training is provided, so you can learn while you engage our guests with the stories, artifacts, and architectural history of this important estate that has witnessed the growth of our country. Join staff and fellow volunteers for outings to other historic sites, behind-the-scenes experiences and seasonal gatherings. Hours are flexible and parking provided. To inquire about becoming a docent, contact the Director of Education & Visitor Services Hillary Rothberg, at education@tudorplace.org.

Now in the Museum Shop!

Enjoy Martha Washington’s Cacao-Infused Tea

Cozy up this winter with a cup of Martha Washington’s favorite tea! Brew for 3 minutes, and enjoy a full-bodied, slightly bitter infusion with strong notes of chocolate and light flavors of melon. Mrs. Washington’s cacao-infused tea is available for purchase in the Tudor Place Museum Shop any time we’re open, or call for mail-order, 202.965.0400.
Upcoming Programs at Tudor Place

To register or for more information about these and other Tudor Place events and activities please visit tudorplace.org.

**Presidents’ Day Open House**
Monday, February 15
11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

View highlights from one of the largest public collections of George and Martha Washington objects. Washington granddaughter and Tudor Place founder Martha Parke Custis Peter showcases her family’s elegant heirlooms and the fascinating stories behind them. (“Mrs. Peter” will be portrayed by a historical interpreter.)

Members: Free | Non-member Children: $5 | Non-member Adults: $10

**Tudor Nights: March Madness!**
Thursday, March 10
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Just in time for NCAA basketball mania, inner jocks meet inner history geeks at this lively cocktail evening centered on the sporting life at Tudor Place. Quaff cocktails, socialize in the house’s elegant reception rooms, and enjoy an up-close look at the collection’s “jock-iest” items, presented by Curator Grant Quertermous.

More details forthcoming, but mark your calendar now!

Members: Free | Non-members: $20

**10th Annual Eggstravaganza**
Saturday, March 19, Friday, March 25 or Saturday, March 26
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Location: Check in at front entrance gates on 31st Street

Rolling green lawns, bright spring blooms, and the elegant mansion on a hill serve as backdrop for this festive annual attraction. Join the Easter Bunny for a special day as children of all ages enjoy an Egg Hunt (10:30 a.m.) and thrilling Egg Roll Contest (10:45 a.m.) down the grand South Lawn. Play games from the past and create holiday crafts. Self-guided tours of Tudor Place’s 5½ acres of glorious gardens are also available. Bring your own basket, spoon, and one hard-boiled egg per child.

Tudor Place Member Children: $7 | Non-member Children: $10 | Adult Chaperons: $5