In December 2016, the museum was fortunate to receive a significant collection of artifacts adding to and rounding out several parts of its Custis-Washington family collection. Descendants of the late Kate Upshur Brown of Richmond, Virginia, donated more than one 160 objects associated with the Peter family and their Custis-Washington ancestors. The donation augments a similar one in 1993 from the same donors (who wish to remain individually anonymous), direct descendants of Thomas and Martha Peter’s daughter, America Pinckney Peter Williams.

America P. Williams died in Buffalo, New York, in 1842, and her husband William died four years later in the Mexican War. Following their deaths, the orphaned Williams children came to Tudor Place to live with their grandmother, Martha Peter. Many items in the gift were collected by America’s eldest daughter, Martha “Markie” Williams Carter (1827-1899), who spent much of her youth at Tudor Place and also lived at Arlington House while caring for her great uncle, George Washington Parke Custis (Martha Peter’s brother). Markie’s youngest sister, Katherine Alicia Williams (1834-1864), married Admiral John Henry Upshur (1823-1917) and had five children before her untimely death at age 30 in 1864.

Markie, having no children of her own, assumed a maternal role for her Upshur nieces and nephews until their father re-married. When Markie died in 1899, the Upshur children inherited many objects of hers now returning to Tudor Place as part of this gift alongside objects they received from another aunt, Columbia Williams Upshur (1828-1886).

Among the notable items in the collection are a small oval toilet box found in Martha Washington’s desk, which Martha Peter later presented to her own granddaughter; an 1814 Book of Common Prayer given to America Peter by her aunt, Nelly Custis Lewis; the 1824 United States Military Academy diploma of America’s husband, Lt. William G. Williams; and a stocking worn by America on the day of her June 1826 wedding at Tudor Place—joining its mate already in our collection. The gift also includes pieces of Custis, Peter, and Williams family silver, including teaware and flatware by Georgetown silversmith Charles A. Burnett that complement objects already at Tudor Place. Daguerreotypes depicting family members, militaria associated with the Revolutionary, Mexican, and Civil Wars, and other family items round out this important gift.

Research undertaken on these objects since their arrival at Tudor Place sheds further light on their significance both to our collection and to our nation’s story. One of the collection’s most intriguing items, a small scrap of silk fabric, was accompanied by a note in the hand of Markie Williams, dated March 30, 1854. It identifies the fabric as a piece of a British flag surrendered at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781. A second fragment, also with an explanatory note, is said to be from a Hessian flag also captured at Yorktown.

How did Markie acquire fragments of captured Revolutionary War battle flags 73 years after the war’s end? She herself ultimately provided the clues that solved this mystery through
her diaries in the Tudor Place archives and those at Arlington House. In a transcript of Markie’s 1854 diary, I came upon an entry of March 7, 1854, written during a stay at Arlington House:

*This evening, Uncle [G.W.P. Custis] came in, as usual about twilight, in a loquacious mood & affectionate manner said “Well Markie dear, I don’t know anything that has made me so happy for a long time as getting those flags from the Alexandria Museum—or rather seeing a clear prospect of getting them. Tomorrow morning, by times I shall go to Alexandria and bear off the dear old collors [sic]. I shall bring them home & we can look over them & dust them up and then I will write a letter to the President and ask him how he will receive them. “These dear old Collors [sic]” Said uncle enthusiastically. “When I last saw them they were at Mount Vernon where they used always to stay in a tin case.” What makes these flags most valuable, said he, is that they were the British and Hessian Collors [sic] taken at the Surrender of York Town—the very close of the war, and Presented to General Washington by the Old Congress. I think there were two presented to Count de Rochambeau & two to count de Grasse at the same time.”*

Another diary entry, from March 29, 1854, provides further information. On that day, Markie wrote:

> I took some jagged atoms to keep as a souvenir of the flag surrendered by Lord Cornwallis—the flag of the 7th Regiment of the Line. Then I [unrolled with dear Uncle’s assistance, the Hessian Flag, taken from Col. Niphaussen [Knyphausen], who commanded the Hessians at Yorktown. This is a beautiful flag of white brocaded silk on one side is a bald eagle with extended wings grasping in his talons a branch of palm and one of—I know not exactly what—perhaps it is intended for laurel—over this is a scroll in wh is “Principe et patria” all worked in gold. On the other side a crown & some letters wh I do not define. I have however taken a copy of both flags for my remembrance.*

While Markie’s diary provides key information about the historic nature of the flags, she or her great-uncle slightly confused the identity of one of the flags. At the end of the American Revolution, Congress presented General Washington with two captured flags to commemorate his military victories. The first, as Markie noted, was the captured King’s Color of the British Seventh Regiment of Foot. However, this flag was captured not at Yorktown, but in Canada, in October 1775, the first British flag captured by American troops. The second was taken at Yorktown in October 1781 from a Hessian regiment in service to the British.

Washington’s step-grandson and adopted son, George Washington Parke Custis inherited the flags, calling them the “Alpha and Omega of the war.” Custis even loaned the flags for display at a museum in Alexandria established by the Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22, the first public venue to display artifacts related to George Washington. Four years after Markie and her uncle unrolled the flags on that March 1854 evening, he gave them to the War Department because he was concerned about their long-term preservation and recognized their historic significance to the country. The government later transferred the flags to the United States Military Academy at West Point, which by an act of Congress became the official depository for all trophies of war. Today, these important flags remain in the collection of The West Point Museum.*

The two fragments at Tudor Place arrived still enfolded in the notes Markie penned about them at Arlington House 163 years ago. These scraps of historic fabric and their fascinating history provide just one example of how the items in this gift can be used to tell the story of Tudor Place, the Peter family, and our nation.

Tudor Place is grateful to Mrs. Brown’s descendants for this gift of significant objects. Our thanks also go to former Tudor Place Director Osborne Mackie for facilitating the acquisition.

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Martha “Markie” Williams Carter, ca. 1850

Oval toilet box and tweezers found in Martha Washington's desk by Martha Peter

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Grant S. Quertermous, Curator

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Dear Friends,

With a successful Bicentennial celebration complete, we enter our third century looking to the future. Much of our planning has focused upon sustainability, both institutionally and globally. Several projects and endeavors are underway at Tudor Place that will advance the stewardship of this National Historic Landmark, while reducing operating costs and minimizing our environmental impact.

This newsletter is one example. By moving to online delivery of Tudor Place Times, we significantly reduce printing and postage costs, while also conserving paper and the energy needed to deliver each copy. It also accelerates delivery and allows us to provide color images, digital links, and other enhanced content.

We are finalizing designs for a new system for capturing rainwater from the roof of the Main House to irrigate the lawn and water plants on the perimeter of the site. The new cisterns, when fully operational, will reduce water consumption, minimize erosion and runoff, and promote the health of trees and other plants at the south end of the property. This project is complemented by the introduction of new plants on the southern and eastern perimeters that will absorb precipitation and promote soil retention. While we are still raising funds and seeking approvals, we hope to proceed by mid-year.

During the past year we have worked with architects and consultants to devise a long-term plan for the care of collections, with a particular emphasis upon creating optimal environmental conditions in the exhibition and collection storage areas. This year-long planning effort, funded through the National Endowment for the Humanities*, prescribes a highly efficient HVAC system that will use geothermal energy for heating and cooling. This system will promote the long-term preservation of collections, conserve fragile historic building fabric, and minimize energy costs. Implementation of this system is part of the Master Preservation Plan that we hope to implement by the end of the decade.

With funding from the Phillip L. Graham Fund, we will embark upon multiple energy saving measures later this year. Restoration of the windows in the Garage building will advance the preservation of this historic structure, while reducing energy costs and making that space more comfortable for the staff and students who work and learn there. Following completion of that project, we will install energy panels (interior storm windows) that will reduce thermal loss and conserve even more energy.

These are but a few examples of the ways we are advancing the important mission of Tudor Place, while also being good stewards of our resources and of the environment. Each day the staff of Tudor Place dream of new ways to promote these ideals through efficient operations, conservation of materials and effective facilities management. I welcome your ideas and would love to share more details of these activities with you.

Mark Hudson, Executive Director

P.S. Sincere thanks are extended to each of you for helping make our 2016 Bicentennial a success. In addition to commemorative events held throughout the year, we had our highest annual attendance ever, with over 25,000 people experiencing tours, programs, and events at Tudor Place.

*Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this article do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.
Farewell to a Friend—C. Jackson Ritchie

Two days before Christmas, Tudor Place lost a dear friend and fearless champion. Trustee C. Jackson Ritchie was a wise counselor whose cheerful disposition and boundless sense of humor added joy to our Board and committee meetings. He challenged our ideas about finances and capital projects, often raising questions no one had thought to ask. But even when serving as devil’s advocate, Jack’s kind nature and respect for others shone through.

Jack was just days from beginning his third term on our Board when he succumbed to the cumulative effect of injuries sustained from recent falls. Jack fought to the end and kept his humor. He still had a sparkle in his eye and made light of his circumstances when I last saw him in the hospital in October.

Since his passing, I have learned of the many other passions and interests, beyond Tudor Place, that occupied Jack’s restless energy—golf, banking, church, and service to many charitable causes, especially Army Emergency Relief, whose Distinguished Service Award is named in his honor. We know how fortunate we are to have counted among the organizations that benefited from Jack’s time, ideas and financial support.

Jack used to call me every so often when he had a new question or idea. These conversations always concluded with a compliment and words of encouragement. I will miss receiving those calls and I will miss my friend Jack. The entire staff and I extend our deepest sympathies to his wife Jane, his family, and his many friends in Washington, D.C., and beyond.

—Mark Hudson

Staff Changes at Tudor Place

In recent weeks, we have had some major staff changes in the Education and Visitor Services Department. In early December, Eliza Bird resigned as visitor services supervisor. For seven years she has been the person giving a cheerful greeting to our museum visitors, ensuring that each tour was a positive experience for the thousands of people who come here each year. Liza also helped enhance merchandising in our museum store and was always willing to help a colleague. We will miss Liza’s smiling face in the Tudor Place Visitor Center and wish her well with her future pursuits.

The New Year began with the departure of Elizabeth Killian, who was our rental events & visitor services manager for the past two and a half years. In this position, she patiently and competently managed our private events, including weddings, private teas, and birthday parties. She also applied her considerable skills toward marketing museum tours and events, designing signage and publications, and assisting with tours. Elizabeth brings these and many other talents to her new position at the National Society of the Children of the American Revolution.

—Hillary Rothberg, Director of Education and Visitor Services
Under the Floor Boards at Tudor Place

One of the joys of being at Tudor Place is the constant possibility of new discoveries. Although not as stunning as uncovering two James McNeill Whistler prints a couple years ago, we recently made an interesting find that is worthy of note. While repairing wood floors in the dining room of the Dower House, Facilities Manager Lisa Manderson uncovered a 1924 calendar wedged beneath the floorboards.

In addition to providing clues about the date of prior work on these floors, the calendar is interesting because it is an advertisement for Bradley, Beall & Howard, Inc., a D.C. firm representing the Franklin Fire Insurance Company of Philadelphia. In 1924, William M. Beall, the firm’s Vice President, was living at the Dower House. He resided there until his death in 1961 when the property was purchased by Armistead Peter, 3rd, and again became part of Tudor Place.

We look forward reporting upon our next amazing find at Tudor Place!

MUSEUM SHOP NEWS

Stop by the Tudor Place Museum Shop to see many changes. In addition to new fixtures and a fresh layout, the shop is carrying a lot of new merchandise, including Tudor Place branded items.

While you are there, be sure to get your copy of Tudor Place: America’s Story Lives Here, a richly illustrated book exploring the residents, collections, architecture, and landscape of this historic estate. Published last fall as part of the Tudor Place Bicentennial, the book is a must for everyone who loves this place and wants to learn more about it. Tudor Place: America’s Story Lives Here can be purchased at the Tudor Place Museum Shop or our online shop for $49.00 (Tudor Place members receive a 10% discount).

SAVE THE DATE

25th Annual Spring Garden Party

Please mark your calendars for the Tudor Place Spring Garden Party on Wednesday, May 24. Garden Party Co-chairs Sassy Jacobs and Blaire Bourne are planning a memorable event that will recognize honoree Tim Matz and celebrate the 25th Anniversary of this Tudor Place tradition. If you would like to receive an invitation to the Garden Party, please contact Felice Herman at fherman@tudorplace.org.
Spring Events at Tudor Place

We invite you to join us for these upcoming events. For additional details and to register, please visit www.tudorplace.org/programs

A Landmark Society Event: Curator’s Conversation with Flora Fraser

Wednesday, March 15 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Join Tudor Place Curator Grant Quertermous as he sits down with acclaimed historian and biographer Flora Fraser to discuss her book, The Washingtons: George and Martha, Partners in Friendship and Love, the challenges of researching their relationship, and the fascinating American story than drew Ms. Fraser to Tudor Place.

Free for Landmark Society Members | All others are asked to pay what you can

Tudor Nights: Paw Prints

Thursday, March 23 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

From livestock to hunting dogs to doves, animals have thrived for two centuries at Tudor Place. Join us for cocktails and animal tales, as well as art and objects of special interest to pet lovers.

Free for Tudor Place members | Non-members: $15.00

Consider becoming a member today: www.tudorplace.org/get-involved/become-a-member

10th Annual Eggstravaganza!

Saturday, April 8 | Friday, April 14 | Saturday, April 15 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Join the Easter Bunny for a special morning as children of all ages enjoy games, crafts, an Egg Hunt, and thrilling Egg Roll Contest, down the grand South Lawn of Tudor Place. This event has become a tradition for many Tudor Place families and often sells out. Please make your reservations early.

Member child: $7 | Non-member child: $10 | Accompanying adult: $5

Consider becoming a member today: www.tudorplace.org/get-involved/become-a-member

Tudor Nights: Juleps and Jodhpurs

Thursday, May 4 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Warm up to Kentucky Derby fever with a look at racing in the streets and tracks of America’s young capital, where wealthy locals including Thomas Peter of Tudor Place bred, raced, and bet on the fastest horses in town.

Free for Tudor Place members | Non-members: $15.00

Consider becoming a member today: www.tudorplace.org/get-involved/become-a-member

Earth Day Plant Sale and Picnic

Saturday, April 29 from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Help us kick off our annual Plant Sale and celebrate Earth Day by supporting preservation and education at Tudor Place. In celebration, the gardens and grounds will be open for picnicking, so bring a basket and blanket! Enjoy the historic gardens and browse a range of native and heirloom perennials, as well as a variety of house plants.

The event is free, but registration is encouraged