In his 1969 book, Tudor Place, Armistead Peter 3rd (1896-1983) said of the house’s cluttered attic, “I am afraid I will have to leave it to those that come after me to look through these things, piece by piece, and identify them as best they can.” That’s exactly what the Collections staff has been doing as part of an ongoing effort to fully inventory its contents. Among the many exciting finds along the way was one from earlier this year, a trunk filled with more than thirty military uniforms from Armistead Peter 3rd’s Naval service in both World Wars. The trunk’s rediscovery is especially timely as we observe the centennial of American entry in World War I.

In the trunk, we found eight bags filled with pieces of every imaginable World War I Naval uniform component, including dress whites, undress whites, dress blues, two service undress uniforms, a summer white service dress uniform, two wool pea coats, and even a wool greatcoat. It was an impressive number and variety of uniforms, given that Armistead Peter 3rd’s WWI Naval service lasted all of 366 days, from December 17, 1917 to December 18, 1918.

We recognized some of the uniforms right away, from a series of 1917-18 photographs of Armistead taken by his father that are in the Tudor Place archive. In several, the young sailor sits proudly astride his 1916 Harley-Davidson motorcycle in his Naval dress blues. Studio portraits and a crayon drawing by Edith Whiting also depict Armistead in uniform, further helping us catalog each item.

More clues came from the uniforms themselves. Rating badges, service stripes, and other insignia helped date the uniforms with reference to the 1917 Uniform Regulations of the U.S. Navy along with and bills and receipts in the Tudor Place archive. One such bill, dated 30 November 1918, itemized one “Navy blouse & breeches” in the amount of $75 from George T. Keen, a tailor located on F Street. The price suggests it was made to measure. Armistead evidently expected his Naval service to last beyond the Armistice, since he purchased this uniform more than twenty days after the end of the war. He had originally enlisted for a term of four years and was preparing to be sent to a Naval Reserve Air station as a radio officer, but was relieved from active duty on December 18, 1918.

Also in the trunk were several World War II Naval uniform pieces, including a khaki work uniform for tropical weather in the South Pacific and a grey officer’s work uniform. The latter recalls a brief WWII experiment to better camouflage officers while aboard ship.

The fact that these uniforms survive speaks to the Peter family’s appreciation of history. Many of the uniforms are in near pristine condition, having been worn only a few times before being carefully packed away in a trunk in the attic for 100 years. We know that the uniforms were unpacked at least one previous time as they were bagged in large plastic bags. They were also likely frozen along with many other pieces from the
textile collection in the attic as part of a 2006 treatment against carpet beetles—freezing and slow thawing is the recommended course of treatment as it kills the insects and doesn’t damage the textiles. The uniforms, along with the photographs, and materials from the Tudor Place archive help us to better tell the story of Armistead Peter 3rd's military service.

When President Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war against Germany in April 1917, Armistead Peter 3rd was 20 years old. Since graduating from the National Cathedral School for Boys (now St. Albans School) in 1915, he had been working as a clerk at a local bank, a job his father probably had some role in securing in hopes it would lead to a career in business. But “the boy,” as his father called him, had other interests, namely, radio operation and his new motorcycle, a 1916 Harley-Davidson J model. For eight years, Armistead had been assembling radio sets, tinkering first in his bedroom and later in a room over the garage, and communicating in Morse code over the airwaves. By 1914, he possessed a license from the Federal Communications Commission (F.C.C.), so it’s not surprising that he sought out the Navy’s radio division.

Why the Naval Reserve? First, he came from a Navy family. He grew up with his great-grandmother Britannia telling him stories of her late husband, Commodore Beverley Kennon’s, and his exploits during a lengthy Naval career that included service in the War of 1812 and Second Barbary War. Britannia’s step-son, Colonel Beverley Kennon, was an officer aboard the U.S.S. Niagara, which laid the first Trans-Atlantic cable, in 1858. Still earlier, a great-uncle, Admiral John Henry Upshur, had sailed to Japan with Commodore Perry in 1853, eventually rising to command the U.S. fleet in the Pacific. When Admiral Upshur died in 1917, Armistead’s father served as a pallbearer for his Arlington National Cemetery burial.

The family’s Naval tradition may have spurred Armistead to serve, but his parents, or at least his mother (according to his father’s diary), proved less eager to see their only child in the trenches of Europe. By enlisting in the Naval Reserve, Armistead could serve his country while applying his skills in radio communication but also avoid inclusion in the draft registration that would occur later in the summer of 1918. Armistead wasn’t required to register for the first lottery held June 5, 1917 because he was not twenty-one years of age.

On December 14, 1917, Armistead presented himself at the Washington Navy Yard and joined the Naval Reserve. This location is also of significance to the Peter family because seventy-five years before, Armistead’s great-grandfather, Commodore Beverley Kennon, had been its Commandant when he and Britannia were married. For the first year of their marriage, they even lived in the Commandant’s House at the Navy Yard.

Because of his interest and skill in radio operation, Armistead was assigned to the Navy’s radio unit as an Electrician 3rd class. For the first month of his enlistment, he was assigned to the Navy’s radio control center, called “Radio, Virginia,” on the heights of Arlington, Virginia.

In 1910, the U.S. Navy Department was looking for sites around Washington for a high-powered radio station, ultimately selecting an area of high elevation on the Army’s base at Fort Myer, near Arlington National Cemetery. There they built three radio towers, known as the “Three Sisters,” a 200-foot tower, a 450-foot tower, and a 600-foot tower, which at the time was the second largest man-made structure in the world behind the Eiffel Tower. Construction was completed in December of 1912, and Armistead Peter 3rd visited the towers around that time, taking a photo that remains in the Tudor Place archive today. The Navy used the station to relay messages from headquarters in Washington to their fleet across the world’s oceans, including the official declaration of war against Germany in April 1917. This facility also broadcast nightly news summaries from the Nation’s capitol in Morse code, which were received and relayed to troops over much of the east coast and across the Atlantic Ocean during World War I.

When Armistead arrived at Radio, Virginia on December 17, 1917, he found to his dismay that
there were no available bunks in the small barracks building, so he had to commute each day from Georgetown on his motorcycle. It was not uncommon for him to be on duty for eight hours, off duty for eight hours, and then return for another eight-hour shift. In some instances, he finished by 4pm, returned home to rest, and then reported back at midnight. After only a month at Radio Virginia, Armistead was transferred to the Navy’s main radio room at the State, Navy, and War building adjacent to the White House (now the Eisenhower Executive Office Building).

In the summer of 1918, after he had been enlisted for six months, Armistead passed the examination for Ensign and accepted his new rank on August 29, 1918. The following day, he received a transfer from the Office of Naval Communications to the Bureau of Steam Engineering. Following a 1910 reorganization of the Navy, the Bureau of Steam Engineering was responsible for all of the Navy’s radio stations, equipment, and maintenance. He was assigned to the Radio for Aircraft section, where the Navy was experimenting with ground-to-air radio communication and pilot-to-pilot communications.

Armistead Peter Jr. noted in his diary on September 26, 1918, that his son had taken his first airplane flight. And on November 21, Ensign Peter went up in a seaplane, likely a Curtiss Model H-16. Seaplane patrol was a primary method of spotting enemy submarines in the pre-sonar era and an airfield at Anacostia in southwest Washington was used by the Navy as a testing and repair facility for the planes.

The Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918 ending the war. At the time, Armistead was awaiting transfer to a Naval Reserve Air station where he would serve as a radio officer. Two of the uniforms found in the trunk are the forest green colored wool tunic uniforms worn by the Navy’s aviation wing—worn with jodhpur-style pants that buttoned up to the knee and leather puttees.

Twenty-four years after his December 1918 discharge, Armistead Peter 3rd returned to the Navy and active service in May of 1942. He spent the early part of the war serving as a communications officer in Washington for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In the spring of 1944, he requested transfer to an active combat area. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Commander and transferred to the Third Amphibious Squadron in the South Pacific where he served on the U.S.S. Mount Olympus during campaigns to liberate the Philippine islands.

Following Japanese surrender in September 1945, he spent two months in Japan with occupation forces achieving the rank of Commander.

Aside from helping to better tell the story of Armistead Peter 3rd’s military service, the uniforms also illustrate the changing nature of American military service uniforms during the twentieth century. Armistead Peter 3rd’s service dress uniforms from the WWI-era featured a wool single-breasted fly front coat, a style first authorized by the Navy in 1877. In 1919, this style of coat was replaced in favor of the double-breasted dress blue service coat still used by the Navy today. Similarly, the trousers associated with his traditional sailor’s uniform, known colloquially as the “Crackerjack,” featured flared bottoms, a thirteen-button broadfall opening in the front, and a lace-up back to adjust for size.

The headgear associated with each uniform also shows the changing styles, from the “flat hat” complete with tallie indicating Armistead’s service with the “Naval Reserve” across the front to the combination or peaked cap now associated with Naval dress uniforms. Similarly, the khaki shorts associated with Armistead Peter 3rd’s WWII-era service in the South Pacific were part of a uniform authorized for use in tropical areas. These would have been a necessity south of the equator where Armistead Peter 3rd noted that temperatures aboard the ship exceeded 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

It is through photographs and documents in the Tudor Place archives as well as objects in the museum collection that we can tell the full story of World War I-era Tudor Place. These newly re-discovered World War I uniforms have now been fully cataloged and removed from the attic. They were wrapped in acid-free tissue paper and placed within acid-free storage boxes in our textile storage area. These more than 30 uniform pieces join the uniforms worn by other family members in their WWI-related service, including those worn by Caroline Peter as a nurse in World War I and Agnes Peter during her post-war humanitarian work.

—Grant Quertermous, Curator

This sailor blouse was among the items re-discovered in the Tudor Place attic.
Dear Friends,

The top drawer of my bureau at home is a wonderful time capsule of my life. Ticket stubs, souvenirs, name tags from events, and the odds and ends of each day are tucked away there. On occasion I dig around in the drawer, reminding me of moments in my life, important and trivial. In some respects, that drawer is Tudor Place in miniature.

Each day we rediscover something tucked in a drawer, hiding in a trunk, or carefully boxed in the Archive. Sometimes these finds emerge from an inquiry or search; other times, they are purely serendipitous. In the case of the World I uniforms in our cover story, it was a little of each. By continually inquiring and exploring, we uncover new things and make unexpected discoveries.

Some discoveries happen through digging—literally. In June, Dovetail Cultural Resources continued archaeological investigations in the West Service Yard. In the 21 shovel test pits and 11 test units of the investigation, they unearthed over 1,200 artifacts that expand our collection and our knowledge of the site. In addition to offering tangible links to the former residents, the excavation helps describe the area’s “transition from a work area, containing a laundry and smokehouse, to a more formalized entertainment and recreation area with a gazebo, arbors, and ornamental landscaping.”

Another recently “discovered” treasure, in the Archive, was among a set of home movies. Mostly shot by Armistead Peter 3rd in the 1930s and ‘40s, they include footage of pigeons in the Smokehouse and its adjacent fly pen. Though initially viewed with amusement by the staff, the footage proved invaluable as we restored the Smokehouse Arbor this summer to its “pigeon era.” AP3’s film documented how the poultry mesh was fastened to the structure, where perches sat, and other vital details, reassuring us that the restoration was authentic and accurate. In coming months, we will use it to relate to visitors the surprising story of pigeon keeping here.

These and other daily discoveries make it a joy to work here and inform and enrich what we do. None of it could happen without our members and donors, and we invite you to continue sharing the thrill of discovering through this newsletter, on tours, and in our public programs.

Mark Hudson
Executive Director

*From the Executive Director*

Mark Hudson at the newly restored Arbor

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2017 Tudor Place Board of Trustees

We are pleased to welcome Mary Moffett Keaney to the Tudor Place Board of Trustees. Mary was elected at the Board’s June meeting for an interim term. Her full term will commence at the beginning of 2018.

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Staff Changes at Tudor Place

On September 1, we said farewell to our Director of Development, Mary-Michael Wachur. For over three years, she led fundraising efforts including planning the annual Spring Garden Party. Mary-Michael brought her creativity and natural warmth to everything she did as part of the Tudor Place team. We will miss her and wish her the best in her new position at the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond.

Also in September, Jordan Whitaker joined the team as facilities technician. Skilled in building maintenance, Jordan has worked in facilities management for the National Park Service and as an electrician for the Smithsonian, where he developed an interest in history and historic buildings. At Tudor Place, he is responsible for maintenance and repairs of structures and systems. Welcome, Jordan.

Our 400,000th Visitor!

Friday, October 6, 2017 was the 29th anniversary of Tudor Place’s grand opening as a public museum. On that day, Elliott Boone from Long Beach, California arrived at the Visitor Center in time for the final tour of the day. In doing so, he became the 400,000th person to visit Tudor Place since the grand opening. Elliot and his wife Penny were greeted by staff and treated to a gift bag of items from the Museum Store. This event has reminded us that 2018 will mark 30 years that Tudor Place has been open to the public. Please look for information about events commemorating this milestone next year.

An Illuminated Christmas at Tudor Place: 1914

The 2017 holiday theme highlights the Peter family’s return to Tudor Place in early December 1914 following the whole-house modernization that introduced electricity and other 20th-century conveniences. Visitors will see how the family observed that holiday season and how their servants adjusted to life in a house with the latest amenities and technology. Items in the Tudor Place Archive scrupulously document all aspects of the 1914 Christmas interpretation, from gifts exchanged to the tasks of servants.

Armistead Peter Jr. had assumed ownership of Tudor Place in 1911, following the death of his grandmother, Britannia W. Kennon. Two years later, under the guidance of noted Washington architect Walter G. Peter, Armistead’s older brother, a multi-year renovation and restoration began, addressing both structural and cosmetic issues. The project added modern conveniences, like bathrooms plumbed with hot and cold water, steam-radiator heating, telephones, a “modern” kitchen, and an electronic servant call system. As work began in the summer of 1913, the Peter family sailed to Europe for an extended holiday.

On returning to the United States, they lived at their upstate New York farm for several months, then settled back in Washington in time for Armistead Peter 3rd to begin his sophomore year at the National Cathedral School for Boys. Because Tudor Place was still a hive of construction activity through nearly all of 1914, the family rented a series of suites at the old Shoreham Hotel, on H and 15th Streets Northwest. By December 1914, work on the house finally concluded and the family return home for the holidays.

Members have several opportunities to visit Tudor Place and experience the new installation this holiday season, including evening candlelight tours, wreath making workshops (tour not included), and holiday teas. And don’t miss the new Tudor Lights party, December 7, when you can see the house and decorations illuminated at night by the chandeliers and sconces installed during that 1914 renovation. For more information on any of these events, visit our calendar, tudorplace.org/calendar.
FOR UPCOMING HOLIDAY EVENTS — Please join us!

**Holiday Photo Workshop with Lisa Marie**
Saturday, November 4, 2:30 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
Join Lisa Marie of Lisa Blume Photography and Sweet Tea Photography to learn to take beautiful holiday photos with your SLR or DSLR camera. Lisa incorporates southern charm and urban sophistication to create timeless and telling images.
Tudor Place Member: $25 | Non-Member: $35

**Candlelight Tours in the Mansion**
Tuesday, December 5 & Wednesday, December 6, 6:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
Tuesday, December 12 & Thursday, December 14, 6:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
Celebrate a historical Christmas celebration. See the grounds lit for the holidays and enjoy a guided tour of the elegant mansion.
Great for history lovers and holiday enthusiasts alike!
$15 Tudor Place Members | $25 Non-Members
www.tudorplace.org/programs/81/candlelight-tours-in-the-mansion

**Deck the Halls**
Saturday, December 2, 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
Bring the family to celebrate the festive season and its traditions in the historic mansion. Explore the house as a History Detective, finding clues to Christmases past. Nibble on cookies, write letters to Santa, sing with carolers, make yuletide crafts, and enjoy other refreshments throughout an afternoon of warm merriment. For families with children of all ages.
Non-Member Child (under 12): $10 | Non-Member Adult: $5 | Tudor Place Member Child (under 12): $8 | Tudor Place Member Adult: $3
www.tudorplace.org/programs/79/deck-the-halls-a-family-at-christmas

**Tudor Lights**
Thursday, December 7, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Stroll the historic landscape to see it twinkling with holiday lights, an “illuminating” new way to enjoy the season. Indoors, festive decorations and installations recall the mansion’s first electrically lit Christmas, of 1914. In the Dower House, sip, savor and socialize, enjoying hors d’oeuvres, seasonal confections, cocktails and other libations.

**Noon Year’s Eve**
Sunday, December 31, 11:30-12:30
Ring in the New Year with your little one at this special holiday Tudor Tots! Enjoy a festive counting-themed storytime, then count down together to 12 pm. Celebrate the noon-year with noisemakers, confetti, and a sparkling craft, and toast 2018 with juice.
Member Child: $5 | Non-member Child: $8 | Adults: Free
www.tudorplace.org/programs/102/weekend-tots-noon-years-eve