In 1848 Alexander Hamilton’s widow, Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton, rented a house on H Street in Washington owned by Britannia Peter Kennon of Tudor Place. This house was inherited by Britannia through a series of events that included her marriage to Captain Beverley Kennon in 1842, his advancing naval career, and his sudden death in 1844 aboard the U.S.S. Princeton. At the home on H Street, Eliza Hamilton was in the social hub of the city, where she engaged with such notable neighbors as former first lady Dolley Madison and General Winfield Scott. In this article, Archivist Wendy Kail describes the details of the property acquisition, the tragic event that sent Britannia back to Tudor Place, and the activities that took place in and around the H Street house during Mrs. Hamilton’s tenancy.

The Residence on H Street N.W.: Mrs. General Hamilton


Captain Beverley Kennon (1793-1844) was born in Mecklenburg County, Virginia, the son of Elizabeth Beverley Munford Kennon (1762-ca.1825/1830) and General Richard Kennon (1759-1805) of Fine Wood, Mecklenburg, Virginia. Beverley Kennon’s father, Richard Kennon, had served with great distinction in the Revolutionary War, where he was a member of General George Washington’s staff; he was County Lieutenant of Mecklenburg County in 1789 and Speaker of the Virginia Senate in 1801. He was first governor of the Territory of Louisiana by order of President Thomas Jefferson. Captain Beverley Kennon had a distinguished naval career. He was appointed a midshipman in May 1809 and served on the Frigate U.S.S. Essex in 1810 and the Frigate U.S.S. Congress in 1811. After being commissioned a Lieutenant on July 24, 1813, from 1817-1818 he was stationed aboard the Ship of the Line U.S.S. Washington. After duty in Norfolk, Virginia, he was commissioned aboard the Frigate U.S.S. Guerrière in 1821 and aboard the Frigate U.S.S. United States in 1822. Again, he was assigned duty in Norfolk 1823-1824, but reassigned to the U.S.S. Frigate United States 1825-1827. In 1828-1829 he was granted a leave of
absence, and commissioned Master Commandant in April 1828. Stationed at the repair facility Naval Rendezvous, Hampton Roads, Virginia, he was appointed to the command of the Sloop of War U.S.S. *Vandalia* in May 1830; the Sloop was located on the coast of Brazil in the squadron of Commodore Stephen Cassin. Beverley Kennon left Norfolk for Baltimore, Maryland, to embark for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, onboard the Frigate U.S.S. *United States*, headed to assume command of the *Vandalia*.

An officer who had been onboard the *Vandalia* described the captain’s arrival:

Our new commanding officer, Captain Beverley Kennon, arrived out on September 30, [1830] in the American ship [United] ‘States,’ as a passenger . . . At 11 a.m. I was sent, as officer of the boat, to convey the captain to the ship, of which he at once assumed command, relieving Lieutenant Boarman . . . On the 12th of October, in company with the ‘Hudson,’ we got under way and stood out of the harbor . . . our ship [bound] southward for the river La Plata, coming to anchor off Montevideo [Uruguay] . . . on the 22nd of the month.

Although the ship was stationed in Montevideo, Uruguay, its proximity to Buenos Aires, Argentina, was most favorable, and Officer of the Boat Benjamin F. Sands recalled the time spent there, “the most pleasant we ever had.”:

Captain Kennon, being more of a society man than his predecessor, made more acquaintances amongst the people on shore, and our wardroom and steerage officers, following his example, soon had a large circle of agreeable friends. The captain always had two or three midshipmen in his suite on his visits ashore and took great pride in introducing us as ‘our future Admirals,’ although Captain was the highest grade in the service at that time, the title of Commodore being one of courtesy given to flag-officers. He would come to our rooms to see that we were *comme il faut*, before leaving the ship to attend parties or balls, and he squared our collars by ‘lifts and braces,’ and made perfectly square bow-knots of our neckties, which acts of graciousness and interest in us won us completely. Our Captain encouraged us to take dancing lessons, and also engaged a teacher of Spanish to be on board for the cruise.

It was not until January 28, 1831, however, that the *Vandalia* joined squadron headquarters at Rio de Janeiro. By September 3 the Sloop *Vandalia* was awaiting relief, for which the U.S.S. *Lexington* arrived on October 10; three days later the *Vandalia* was homeward bound, “towed out of port by all the boats of the men-of-war in the harbor.” Eager to reach the United States, she was anchored off the northeast coast of Pernambuco, Brazil, by mid-November, and aided by a light wind arrived at Norfolk, Virginia, on December 16. The Officer of the Boat’s last portrait of Beverley Kennon recalled:

After an uneventful trip we made the light on Cape Henry [Virginia] after dark on the 15th of December, and no pilot was to be seen. But the captain, being a native of these parts, brought the light to bear west, and standing in anchored in Lynn Haven [Lynnhaven, Virginia] bay, passing the Cape at 11 p. m. . . . the next day we received a pilot and beat up for Hampton Roads, where we anchored at 9:30 p.m.
Captain Beverley Kennon awaited orders from 1833 to 1835, until being stationed at the Navy Yard in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1836. On February 9, 1837, he was commissioned as Captain and given command of the Frigate U.S.S. *Macedonia*, on which he served from 1839 to 1840. After awaiting orders again in 1841, he was given command of the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C., a position he held as Commandant from 1842 to 1843.

Beverley Kennon had married Elizabeth Dandridge Claiborne (1808-1832) of Liberty Hall, King William County, Forest, Virginia, in 1829. The couple had two sons, Beverley Kennon II (1830-1890) and William Dandridge Claiborne Kennon (1832-1872). The *National Intelligencer* noted the death on September 24, 1832, at Norfolk, Virginia, of the consort of Capt. Beverley Kennon of the United States Navy, in her twenty-third year, leaving her husband and two children, “the younger one five days old.”

In November 1841 a reception was held at the Octagon House in Washington, D.C., in honor of the marriage of Miss Ann Ogle Tayloe and Henry H. Lewis, United States Navy. There Captain Kennon met Britannia Wellington Peter (1815-1911), the youngest daughter of Thomas Peter (1769-1834) and Martha Custis Peter (1777-1854) of Tudor Place. No details of a courtship have been recorded, but a year later, on Thursday, December 8, 1842, Britannia Peter and Captain Beverley Kennon were married in the drawing room of her home in Georgetown by the Reverend John Francis Hoff (1814-1881) of Christ Church. A note to “Miss Peter,” from her cousin Frances Bassett Washington Lear (1767-1796) confirms this date:

My thoughts & the best affection of my heart are with you Dearest Britannia on this your wedding day—Then be assured of my constant love & ardent wishes for your happiness now & forever (sic) and remember that I remain affectionately your attached friend & cousin/ F.D. Lear/December 8, 1842.

According to family legend, the Captain and his bride lived at the Navy Yard in the Tingey House (Quarters A) due to his position as Commandant. Built in 1804, the Commandant’s House was on the highest point of the grounds overseeing the entire yard. The house was built under the supervision of Captain Thomas Tingey (1750-1829), Commandant of the Navy Yard from 1800 to 1829, who determined that the Commandant’s house should be within the boundaries of the yard, as was the custom in Britain and France.

But if Beverley Kennon was Commandant of the Navy Yard, his wife Britannia Kennon was commandant of their household, which included members of his family: two sons from his previous marriage, Beverley and Dandridge; the sister of his first wife, Lucy Ann Claiborne (1802-1863), charged to aid with the care of his sons; his nephew Lieutenant William Henry Kennon (1832-1876), son of the Captain’s deceased brother Erasmus Kennon (1786-1840); his deceased brother Dr. Richard Kennon Jr.’s (1803-1840) wife, Mary Anne Byrd Kennon (1805-1857) and daughter Emily Kennon (1834-1876). Britannia Kennon later recalled that the Captain was a devoted husband and “never spoke a hasty or unkind word to her.”

The Navy Yard to which the Captain was assigned was located at the extreme eastern section of the city of Washington, east of Third Street S.E. and south of East Capitol Street. The area was known as “Navy Hill Yard,” a high plateau which reached the Anacostia River.
It was quite beautiful. It had, indeed, in old times, many of the characteristics of an English village – its public markets, its village green, its public springs and wells, its extensive common, and its churches among the trees. Many of the streets as laid down on the city’s plan had not been opened to travel and were either taken up entire as farms or gardens by the owners of the adjoining land, or were mere lanes, verdant and picturesque, bordered on either side by fields of grass or grain. Fruit and shade trees abounded, many of them in parts of the closed streets, and there were few houses in rows. Most of the houses had their little parks in front. Everyone had plenty of breathing space . . . Cows and pigs and chickens roamed at large . . . The playgrounds of the boys, the swimming places in the river, the skating ponds and river coves, the distant woods and fields for hunting and nutting . . . Fish and game, fruit and vegetables, and nearly anything that people needed, were cheap and easy of obtainment. Education . . . was not neglected, religion was enthusiastically fostered . . . Everybody knew everybody, and there was a spirit of fraternity and love of locality among men, women, and children that made life almost ideal.16

But what was the relation of the Navy Yard to the city of Washington at that time? A resident remembered that in days gone by, “the Navy Yard and the Marine Barracks were centers of interest to all visitors at the Capitol – and especially for the fashionable young people who patronized the drills and dances of the Barracks.”17 The Marine Barracks stood in the Yard in the middle of village buildings. Between the east front of the Capitol and the Navy Yard were wide open spaces with occasional houses, dominated by the Marine Asylum and Hospital, designed by Benjamin Latrobe. Many of the small buildings were private homes or boarding houses, “for at that time hardly a prominent man connected with the general government had a house of his own.
in the city.” The boarding houses and hotels thrived. West from the Navy Yard to Greenleaf’s Point was unkempt land with few houses and many brick kilns, as brick making was a chief industry at the time.

The Washington City Canal started at the Navy Yard and met the Tiber Creek [formerly Goose Creek] in the Mall south of Pennsylvania Avenue. It had been formed to connect the Eastern Branch with the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal at the foot of Seventeenth Street N.W., comprising a stone ditch from ten to fifteen feet in depth but from fifty-five to one hundred and fifty-five feet wide; iron bridges spanned the streets cut by the canal.

Within the limits of the city, “scarcely one third of the area had been built upon.” Spreading along the Mall were houses and various structures, but it was a gathering place still covered with trees and meadows with footpaths and carriage trails. Three structures were built upon it: The Smithsonian Institution; the Government Armory; and the Washington Monument. From Sixth to Fourteenth Streets were lumber yards, sawmills, brass and iron foundries, coal yards, and the Center Market which stretched from Seventh to Ninth Street. From this point to the north, the land bordering on the river was sparsely populated. Rock Creek divided Washington City and Georgetown; with very few exceptions the land between M Street and the boundary was open field. The city had many clear springs and streams from which the wells were supplied, and also depended on a large reservoir on the heights of Georgetown.

But progress was not to be denied. The gas office was built on Tenth Street and soon would supply evening light. Steamboats and other vessels left the city docks and sailed down the Potomac River to Alexandria on their way to Hampton Roads, Virginia, and out to sea. The only railroad in the city was the Baltimore & Ohio, whose tracks reached the city in 1835. Passenger trains operated on First Street just below the Capitol and in approximately two hours arrived in Baltimore. In 1843 Congress allocated $30,000 for Samuel Finley Breese Morse (1791-1872) to build a telegraph line between Washington and Baltimore. He completed the forty-mile line strung along poles beside the Baltimore & Ohio tracks, and on May 24, 1844, the first telegraph message crackled across the wires. Morse’s Western and Southwestern Telegraph Office at the corner of D and Seventh Streets, Morse’s Northern and Eastern Telegraph Office at the corner of Sixth and Pennsylvania Avenue, and Morse’s Telegraph Office at the corner of High and Prospect Streets in Georgetown, were firmly established by 1853. Omnibuses would run from Georgetown along Pennsylvania Avenue, although in winter sleighs were still the preferred mode of transportation.

Meanwhile, Captain Beverley Kennon’s career developed. The National Intelligencer noted on March 9, 1843, that Captain John H. Aulick would replace Kennon as Commandant of the Navy Yard, with Kennon replacing Captain David Conner, who had resigned as Chief of the Bureau of Construction, Equipment, and Repairs. On March 2, 1843, Captain Kennon was officially commissioned Chief of the Bureau of Construction, Equipment and Repairs, one of five administrative subdivisions of the Navy Department. Captain Kennon was no longer associated only with the Washington Navy Yard; he was now in charge of all navy yards, navy construction, and naval repair facilities. In his new position it would not be necessary for him to live on the Yard. He was assigned to the Navy Department Building located west of the President’s house fronting on 17th Street west with an office on the first floor. His salary would be $3,000 per annum.
The Captain must have known a promotion was coming his way and that his large family would soon require new headquarters, as a happy addition to the household was expected. On April 21, 1843, Anna Maria Thornton, a family friend, held a small party for Mrs. Kennon, possibly in honor of Britannia Kennon’s pregnancy, for a daughter was born to the Kennons on October 18, 1843. Early in 1843, the Captain entered into negotiations for a house on H Street N.W. for his growing family.

**Contract Pending**

A contract was executed between Beverley Kennon and Grenville C. Cooper, United States Navy, stating that Cooper would sell the house and lot in which he currently resided on H Street N.W. in the City of Washington, D.C. This contract included the lot, all premises, and a stable, for $5,500. Kennon agreed to pay $3,000 in cash, “provided the funds with which said Kennon offers to pay should be satisfactory to the said Cooper, consisting of George Town Corporation Stock and a Bond of Samuel B. Watkins and others.” Cooper was to make Kennon a clear and unencumbered title to the property by March 3, 1843. A cautionary note was added: “If the Stock above mentioned shall be below par then the said Kennon & the said Cooper are exonerated from adhering to the above agreement.”

For unknown reasons, Cooper did decline to take the stock and informed Kennon of this on February 23. Kennon replied quickly with a return address from the Navy Yard on February 24: “You, by the terms of our agreement, [are] at liberty to find another purchaser –& me to find another house.” Cooper relented, however, and a contract was drawn up the day he received Kennon’s dismissal.

**A Motivated Seller**

Grenville C. Cooper (1800-1844), was transferred to the Naval Asylum and Naval Yard at Philadelphia. This transfer may explain why he decided to sell his house, yet in reply to a letter of March 21 from Captain Kennon sent regarding the payment of the bond, Cooper again experienced hesitation. On March 23, Cooper wrote to Richard Smith (No Date-1897), cashier of the Bank of Metropolis handling the finances of the sale, and who by coincidence had been one of the three previous owners of the H Street house sold to Cooper in 1842. Cooper stated that despite his initial hesitation, he now wished to comply with the final agreement that he and Captain Kennon had drawn up. Kennon would pay $3,000 in cash on April 1, 1843, provided that Richard Smith and William Wilson Corcoran (1798-1888) still “pronounce as you did before said bond of Watkins & others, perfectly good & easily collected.” He apologized to Smith for asking him to intervene on his behalf: “Were I not a suffering invalid as I am no one should be troubled with agency from me.” He requested that Smith refer this letter to Captain Kennon, “Having now addressed you so fully on the subject matter between us together with my ill state of health.” Richard Smith complied and sent a copy to Captain Kennon, certified and witnessed by Abel B. Upshur, a clerk in the Secretary’s Office of the Navy Department.

Evidently Smith and Corcoran did approve the bond as payment. A letter from Cooper’s wife, Jane A. Cooper, to Captain Kennon explained her husband’s anxiety:

Mr. Cooper thus delayed his reply . . . hoping to be able to write you himself –but his protracted sufferings from his second attack of hemorrhage, under which he was in fact laboring when you last saw him, still make it necessary for me [to] attend whenever
practicable to all his private writing- . . . on the Subject of the bond for $1300, by which letter to Mr. Smith you will observe he proposes to comply with your wishes thereupon.

Grenville C. Cooper’s and his wife’s references to his ill health were not unfounded; Cooper’s death almost one year later to the day of Jane A. Cooper’s letter confirmed their worst fears.30

One more problem occurred concerning the title to lot 5 in square 250 on which the stable stood. When questions arose about the legality of this particular part of the transfer, Captain Kennon notified Richard Smith that he referred this matter to his own attorney, Henry M. Morfit, to return an answer. Ever vigilant, Kennon added a note to Morfit on this letter that Smith was sure to see: “Capt. Kennon wishes Mr. Morfit to understand that the titles must be made perfect before he will do more in the matter. So inform Mr. Smith.”31

Captain Kennon’s choice for attorney, Henry Mason Morfit (1793-1865), had a formidable reputation in Washington. Born in Norfolk, Virginia, he studied law and was admitted to the bar. In 1832 he was elected a delegate to the Democratic Convention in Baltimore; by 1835 he was Judge Advocate of the Navy. In 1836 he was sent as an emissary to Texas by President Andrew Jackson to assess the existing situation between the Republic of Texas and Mexico, advising the president against immediate recognition of the Republic because of unrest in Mexico. He returned to practice in Washington and was officially noted as a practicing lawyer in Livingston’s Law Register for 1852, and was elected to the Maryland legislature.32 In an undated letter Henry M. Morfit replied to the Captain’s request:

The title to lot 5 in square 250 on which the house stood was imperfect but that the technical fault did not lie with G.C. Cooper’s contract, but with the contract of the previous owners, Smith, Hill, and Larned, who did not have in fact a correct bond for the conveyance from D.A. Hall, from whom they purchased the property.

He added: “The title is imperfect as to the conveyances . . . but no doubt good as to the intent of the parties [Smith, Hill, Learned]. . . . The great reliance would be upon the General warranty of Smith, Hill, and Learned.”33

On May 22, 1843, Richard Smith acknowledged that Beverley Kennon delivered the joint and several bonds of Samuel B. Watkins, C.M. Watkins, and Thomas S. Watkins, and L. Colton for $1300. The bonds, dated January 26, 1842, bore interest from that date to the present, and a credit was endorsed upon it. Grenville C. Cooper directed that the interest on the bonds from January 1842 to March 1843 be paid to Captain Beverley Kennon.34 The house on H Street, including its stable, now belonged to Captain Beverley Kennon.

Location, Location, Location

Life at 1325 H Street would be a bustling change from the Navy Yard. There were few shops in Washington, but by 1845 several were well known and patronized by the very residents who would be the Kennon’s neighbors. According to Marian Gouverneur (1821-1914), a respected social recorder of her time who lived nearby on G Street and was a close friend of Elizabeth Hamilton’s daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton Holly, almost all of the fashionable shops with a few notable exceptions were located on or in close proximity to Pennsylvania Avenue.35
Although she noted that many prominent Washingtonians made many of their purchases in Baltimore, a popular dry goods store for textiles and clothing was owned by Clagett and Dodson at the corner of Ninth Street N.W. and Pennsylvania Avenue, with nearby Walter Harper & Company as its primary competition. Charles Demonet was a well-known confectioner on the Avenue between Seventeenth and Eighteenth Streets N.W.; however, Charles Gautier, also on the Avenue between Twelfth and Thirteenth Streets was more highly regarded in aristocratic circles.

The Semmes family appeared to have a monopoly on groceries in the area, with shops kept by J. H. Semmes, B.J. Semmes, Thomas J. Semmes, J.H. Semmes, and J.B. Semmes operating south of the Avenue between Sixth and Ninth Streets. J.H. Harrison Semmes, the market of choice, was an exception to the rule of Pennsylvania Avenue: his grocery store was opposite the Center Market on Ninth Street and Louisiana Avenue. Joseph L. Savage kept a hardware store on Pennsylvania Avenue, although his exact location on the Avenue varied along the years. Taylor & Maury’s bookstore on the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue near Fourteenth-and-a-Half Streets, “where many scholarly men of the day congregated to discuss literary and current topics,” was under the patronage of Franck Taylor, who kept a bust of Sir Walter Scott over the front door and shielded the store’s windows to prevent the light from fading his books. Last but not least, Gouverneur noted articles of dress “dear to the feminine heart” were purchased at Madame Marguerite Delarue’s fancy store on the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue between Twelfth and Thirteenth Streets N.W.

The Wheel of Fortune

The newlyweds, having moved into their new home, had every reason to expect much happiness in their lives, but fate intervened:

On the 28 day of February 1844 on Wednesday on that day Mr. gustavus Higdon and My Selve wher up on ninth St West and a singular Mark appeared in the elements and it Ran from the north west and from the north west and divided the sky between south east and north east I said to Mr. Higdon come and said I to him The lor hav Mercy on us something Shurly going to happened and that eveng that sad affair accured and the lord have Mercy on them and I hope that ther souls are at Rest.  

Thus Michael Shiner, an enslaved worker at the Washington Navy Yard, foresaw what the National Intelligencer of February 29, 1844, headlined: “Most Awful and Lamentable Catastrophe!”

On February 28, 1844, the Screw Steamer U.S.S. Princeton left Alexandria, Virginia, for a pleasure trip down the Potomac River. On board were President John Tyler, members of his cabinet, and other guests numbering about two hundred. The highlight of the trip was to be the firing of Captain Robert F. Stockton’s (1795-1866) cannon, the Peacemaker. On her return trip to Alexandria after her third discharge, the final firing of the Peacemaker was a salute to Fort Washington, situated on the bank of the Potomac River. The wrought-iron gun carrying a two hundred- and twenty-five-pound cannon ball burst. When fired this third time, the left side of the cannon failed, sending the blast and hot shrapnel into the crowd assembled around it. Among the dead killed by this explosion were: Secretary of State Abel P. Upshur; Secretary of the Navy Thomas W. Gilmore; Representative Virgil Maxey of Maryland; Mr. David Gardiner, ex-senator from New York; Armistead, an enslaved African America valet to President Tyler;
and Captain Beverley Kennon., Chief of The Bureau of Construction, Equipment, and Repairs. The explosion injured twenty other passengers and Captain Robert F. Stockton, Commander of the U.S.S. Princeton, though not seriously wounded, was violently stunned by the explosion.

The bodies of the dead were removed the next morning to the Executive Mansion. A joint Committee of Arrangements was appointed, and funeral services were quickly but carefully formulated for March 2. Orders were issued in token of respect for the memory of Captain Beverley Kennon, late of the United States Navy, by John Tyler, President of the United States, on February 29, 1844:

General Order. Navy Department: On the day after the funeral honors have been paid to the late able and lamented Secretary of the Navy, minute guns to the number of 13 will be fired between sunrise and sunset; mourning for the space of thirty days will be worn on the left arm, and the flags of the vessels in commission at the Navy Yards and Stations will be hoisted at half-mast, as a token of respect to the memory of the late Captain Beverley Kennon, Chief of the Bureau of Construction, Equipment, and Repair, who had won for himself the highest rank of service, by the faithful and diligent discharge of his duty, and by his acknowledged gallantry and uniformly officer-like deportment. L. [Lewis] WARRINGTON, Secretary of the Navy, ad-interim. / By command of the President.

Elizabeth Crawford Davidson (1793-1850), a Georgetown resident, described the shock of the event in a letter from her home, Evermay, on March 3, 1844, to a cousin in New Orleans:
Yesterday I attended the obsequies of the illustrious dead – the long military and civic procession enhanced but little to my eyes or feelings the intrinsic solemnity of the event but the dirge of the marine band at the grave was very plaintive and seemed to breathe from the heart a requiem to the souls of the departed ones of whom Captain Beverly [sic] Kennon was lately Commandant of the Navy Yard and possibly well known to them. Business was entirely suspended in Washington and Georgetown and many of the stores of the former clad in mourning – indeed a sense of general calamity evidently prevailed – Never my dear Joseph since we were a Nation, has death in the space of time been so busy in high places.41

Eleanor Parke Custis Lewis (1779-1852), Britannia Kennon’s aunt, described the aftermath of the tragedy on the Captain’s family. She had received a letter from a niece, Martha Custis Williams (1827-1899), who was present aboard the U.S.S. Princeton accompanying her aunt Britannia and Captain Kennon when the accident occurred. A letter of April 5, 1844, from Eleanor Lewis to a friend relates what her niece saw and heard:

Martha was with her poor Aunt on board the Princeton, & by her presence of mind saved her poor Aunts life, or reason by concealing her knowledge of the dreadful effect on Capt. K, until they returned to W[ashingto]n & were sustained by poor Brits Mother & Brother. Captn. K left them at one end of the ship where they were all sitting together, from a sense of duty as head of the Bureau of construction, to see the Gun fired off. When the explosion took place, she inquired for Captn. K, but had no idea that he had suffer’d, she was told that he was with Mr Upshur who was badly wounded. She asked several of the officers to show her where Captn. K was … but they assured her that she could not see him. At last Miss Claiborne (Captn. K’s sister in law) rushed in, exclaiming “Brit Captn. K is wounded” . . . Martha pacified her & went to make inquiries. She heard an officer say “Captn. K never breathed.”42

Britannia Kennon was told that her husband was slightly wounded and attending to Secretary Abel P. Upshur, his good friend. She returned home to H Street where her mother, Martha Peter, waited with the Kennon’s infant daughter. According to Eleanor Lewis’ information, Britannia Kennon advised her mother of the event and went to prepare the Captain’s room for him. At this point Martha Williams told her grandmother of the Captain’s death. Martha Peter sent to Georgetown at once for her son, George Washington Peter (1801-1877), who arrived and broke the sad news to his sister.

Captain Kennon’s brother, Dr. George Kennon (1788-1855), arrived soon thereafter to comfort his sister-in-law. As the legal guardian of his brother’s two sons, he removed the boys to Richmond, Virginia,
accompanied by their aunt, Miss Lucy Ann Claiborne. Eleanor Lewis added that Britannia is “now comfortably fixed at home.” On March 22, 1844, a niece of Dolley Madison’s had noted, “Washington is beginning to throw aside the gloom which has overshadowed it since that sad catastrophe on board the Princeton . . . Mrs. Kennon has gone to her mother’s in Geo. Town.” By this date, then, her home was no longer H Street but once again Tudor Place.

Captain Beverley Kennon’s will, which he had written January 1, 1844, left the H Street house to his wife and children. He named his wife executrix of his estate, with his sister-in-law, Lucy Ann Claiborne, serving in the position in case of his wife’s death. The will was witnessed by George Washington Peter, his wife’s brother. A codicil added January 3, 1844, regarding family debts and the dispersal of his first wife’s belongings, was proved by oaths of George Washington Peter, Henry M. Morfit, and Borden M. Voorhees, “citizens of Washington.”

On March 14, 1844, the National Intelligencer advertised that “handsome furniture . . . at the residence of the late Captain B. Kennon on H Street between 13th and 14th Streets” included household and kitchen furniture, a buggy and a barouche carriage, a carriage horse, and a fine ladies’ horse: “The house is for rent and possession given immediately. Inquire of Robert Dyer and Company, auctioneers.” On April 3, 1844, the Orphan’s Court of Washington, D.C., recorded that it held the will of Captain Kennon, late of the United States Navy, deceased, which named his wife Britannia Kennon executrix; the same notice advertised, “The house recently occupied by Commodore Kennon is offered for rent. Apply to H.M. Morfit.”

There is no further reference nor account of Britannia Kennon’s reaction to the event that altered her life and the life of her daughter Martha Custis Kennon (1843-1886). She saved her copy of the Reverend Clement M. Butler’s address at the funeral of those killed aboard the U.S.S. Princeton, wherein Butler described her husband: “that none knew him but to love him-so pleasingly were blended in him, the characteristic excellencies of his profession, with those which were peculiarly and strikingly his own.” Privacy fittingly prevailed.

Home is Where the Heart Is

Nothing is known of the occupants of the H Street house until it was rented to Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton (1757-1854), Mrs. General Alexander Hamilton. Britannia noted the circumstances of this arrangement and Mrs. Hamilton’s suitability as a tenant:

Mrs. Alexander Hamilton boarded on Capitol Hill. -(She was trying to put some claims through congress at the time) but, as she grew older, she, with her daughter, Mrs. [Hamilton] Holly, decided to take a house of their own and so took the house owned by me on H Street; good tenants they were, paying the rent always on the day it was due and if not called for on that day a note would come from Mrs. Hamilton saying it was ready.
Elizabeth Hamilton had moved to Washington from New York by 1848, accompanied by her daughter Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton Holly (1799-1859), the widow of Sidney Augustus Holly (1802-1842) of Stamford, Connecticut. Elizabeth Hamilton had visited the city many times before in the effort acknowledged by Britannia, the sale and publication of her husband’s papers. She was determined that his memory be vindicated and his manuscripts properly credited to him and published.\(^5\) Elizabeth Hamilton’s earlier presence in the capitol city is documented in a letter of Margaret Bayard Smith (1778-1844) to Smith’s sister, Anna [Maria] Bayard Boyd, from Washington in the spring of 1829: “For your sake dear Maria, I will visit Mrs. Hamilton, tho’ I have resisted many inducements to make new acquaintances.”\(^5\) Further documentation of Mrs. Hamilton’s earlier presence in the capitol city can be found in an invitation to Elizabeth Hamilton from Dolley Payne Madison (1768-1849) on January 16, 1845: “Will, my dear Mrs. Hamilton, console me for a tedious reign of influenza by passing the evening of tomorrow sociable with me; accompanied by her charming daughter Mrs. Holly? The moonlight and genial weather will favor my hope of seeing them. /Affectionately/ D.P. Madison.”\(^5\)

An incident occurred in the city before Elizabeth Hamilton’s permanent removal to the capital and H Street that illustrates her loyalty and determination. After James Monroe completed his presidency in 1825, he called upon Elizabeth Hamilton, who was boarding with her daughter in Washington. She had not extended an invitation to Monroe, so she was surprised when the ex-president’s card was presented to her. She had always blamed Monroe for exposing her husband’s involvement with Maria Reynolds to the public by accusing Hamilton of financial irregularities to support his affair. Rather than deny Monroe entry, she agreed to see him. When she entered the room where he waited, he rose to greet her. She did not invite him to be seated, which was considered a social breach of which they both would have been aware. According to the written account of a nephew who was present, Monroe bowed and made a speech suggesting that so much time had passed since their last meeting and past differences should be forgotten and forgiven. But Monroe did not know his opponent, who could forgive but not forget. She replied,

Mr. Monroe, if you have come to tell me that you repent, that you are sorry, very sorry, for the misrepresentations and the slanders, and the stories you circulated against my dear husband, if you have come to say this, I understand it. But, otherwise, no lapse of time, no nearness to the grave, makes any difference.\(^5\)

Monroe exited without another word; she had proved herself worthy of the title “Mrs. General Hamilton.”
During her tenure in Washington, Elizabeth Hamilton and Dolley Payne Todd Madison (1768-1849) were neighbors and formed a fast friendship. Dolley Madison spent the last twelve years of her life in the house her husband, James Madison, had built in 1819, a square gray house that had its entrance on the east side of Lafayette Square at the corner of H Street.\(^5\) She was famous for her dignified bearing and generous manner. It was considered an honor to attend her New Year’s Day and Fourth of July receptions.\(^5\) The two women were respected as the backbone of Washington society. Influential figures in presidential circles, their continued presence suggests that the executive branch “was still influenced to some extent by ideals and practices of an earlier day.”\(^5\) When the cornerstone of the Washington Monument was laid on July 4, 1848, both women were invited to attend. Dolley Madison was 80, Elizabeth Hamilton was 91, and both had known George Washington.\(^5\) Their presence at such a patriotic occasion added an aristocratic confirmation to it and signified Washington’s importance, for the Capital City was their demesne. In accepting the invitation to attend the laying of the cornerstone, Elizabeth Hamilton altered her plans, notifying the Chairman of Committee of Arrangements:

I was about to leave this city, where I have been for a very long time engaged in an application to Congress, which, in the probable course of human events, will be the last, as it is the most interesting, business of my protracted life. The ceremony in which I am invited to participate calls back recollections so deeply interesting to me, from my early and intimate association with the illustrious man to whom this tribute of a nation’s gratitude is so justly due, that I cannot deny myself the great satisfaction of witnessing it.\(^5\)

The two women were closely identified in the public eye, though each with a distinctive personality. Jessie Benton Frémont (1824-1902), daughter of Missouri senator Thomas Hart Benton (1782-1858) and wife of General John Charles Frémont (1813-1883), explained: “Each of them I knew in her old age when time had put its stamp and verdict on the result; each had large talents entrusted to her, and long life and conspicuous position in which to use them.”\(^5\) According to Frémont, Dolley Madison had the gifts of beauty and common sense and quick wit, but “her crowning talent was her charm of manners;” she recalled that Madison “was handsome, majestic and simply dignified. And very agreeable—with a memory and kind words for every one. She dined out often and was the chief person always.”\(^5\)

But Jessie Frémont firmly stated that “the widow of Alexander Hamilton, was in absolute contrast to Mrs. Madison. … I knew her very well in her many visits to Washington quite toward the close of her long, useful, but quiet life.”\(^6\) Frémont remembered a portrait of Elizabeth Hamilton, when Hamilton was “the quiet high-bred young wife as yet untouched by sorrow”:

Elizabeth Hamilton’s face was delicate but full of nerve and spirit . . . The eyes are very dark and hold the life and energy of the restrained face . . . there is something deep and strong in the steady eyes and closed mouth which show a character of her own. She had not the beauty of her splendid mother . . . But the high resolute nature was all there.\(^6\)
A manuscript held in the Cutts Family Collection of Papers of James and Dolley Madison in the Library of Congress describes Eliza Hamilton’s social profile:

The names of these two distinguished ladies were often associated together as patronesses to public balls given on Washington’s birth night and other patriotic occasions. Mrs. Hamilton was a most excellent woman, charitable and benevolent. She caused herself to be beloved by those who came within her influence, her life was prolonged for 96 years, a few [years] previous to her death she took long walks from the Capitol to the President’s Square, and though not robust in appearance, it is said, she enjoyed uninterrupted health. She was very industrious, fond of knitting, and the small specimens of her workmanship, which she gave to the public charity were eagerly sought and brought good prices from those who prized souvenirs of the illustrious Hamilton.⁶³

Actually, Elizabeth Hamilton distributed pieces of her work to friends and relatives as well as to charitable organizations. On April 25, 1848, she received the following note:

My dear Mrs. Hamilton/ I am delighted with the specimen of your work, with which you have favored me this morning. It is beautiful, and precious, coming from your hands- I shall always treasure it for your sake- and beg you now to accept my afftc. salutations for yourself & Mrs. Holly./ (signed) D.P. Madison⁶⁴

Her sister Catherine van Renssalaer Schuyler Cochran (1781-1857) acknowledged a gift on February 17, 1849:

You were so kind my dear Sister as to send me a piece of needlework by your own hand as a memento of your kindness for a fortnight after receiving it I could not reply in consequence of the severe illness of Mr. [James] Cochran. When I did, I afterwards learned you had just left New York for Washington.⁶⁵

Elizabeth Hamilton’s devotion to charitable organizations, particularly to organizations to house and care for orphans, was legendary. Jessie Benton Frémont described the roots of this preoccupation: “the young widow found in her own sorrow and her own orphaned children the motive for a life which should lift neglect and sorrow from thousands of children. … Her grief over her own children took the form of protection of those who were poor and unfriended as well as orphaned.”⁶⁶ Elizabeth Hamilton is credited with establishing the Orphan Asylum Society of New York City, but her concern for orphans did not end in New York. In 1836 she was listed as a donor of the Washington City Orphan Asylum, located on H Street N.W. between Ninth and Tenth Streets.⁶⁷ This concern never ceased; years later Elizabeth Hamilton Holly noted in a letter to her brother, “Yesterday, Mama rode to the Orphan Asylum without any apparent fatigue, though not without a slight increase to her cold.”⁶⁸

Elizabeth Hamilton was frequently the guest of the presidents of the United States and was entertained at presidential dinners. A newspaper noted Dolley Madison’s and Elizabeth Hamilton’s presence at President John Tyler’s Birth Night ball in February 1845, where members of the Diplomatic Corps wore their court uniforms.⁶⁹ She attended a nine-course state dinner that lasted from seven to nine o’clock given by President Millard Fillmore, who escorted her to the table, “a plain little old lady and very plainly dressed.”⁷⁰ But not to be outdone, Elizabeth Hamilton entertained presidents:
She was the first to introduce ice-cream at the national metropolis, and she used to relate with rare humor the delight displayed by President Jackson when he first tasted it. He liked it much, and swore, ‘By the Eternal!’ that he would have ices at the White House.\textsuperscript{71}

One friend remembered that “after passing the compliments and congratulations of the day, [she] insists upon her visitors taking a merry glass from General Washington’s punch bowl, which, with other portions of his table set, remains in her possession.”\textsuperscript{72}

In 1927 Mary Louise Michel of Bedford City, Virginia, looked back on her relationship with Elizabeth Hamilton and the residence on H Street.\textsuperscript{73} When she was ten years old, she was fortunate enough to be invited to spend a summer in Washington with her uncle, Edward Johnston. As a country girl, the activity of city life fascinated her, and she was glad to oblige his invitation. Her uncle was on the staff of the \textit{National Intelligencer}, and his house was the resort of many artists, writers, actors, and government officials. He was also engaged in editing the papers of Alexander Hamilton. In this capacity he introduced his niece to Mrs. Alexander Hamilton, who lived on the north side of H Street between Thirteenth and Fourteenth Streets.\textsuperscript{74} Elizabeth Hamilton and her daughter were very fond of children, and soon Mary Louise Michel was encouraged to divide her time between her uncle and her new friends.

Mary Louise Michel remembered the house on H Street as “one of two handsome three-storied brick residences, opposite an open field.”\textsuperscript{75} The two brick residences were placed rather far back from the pavement and were sometimes referred to as the \textit{Chain Buildings}; the chains were convenient for visitors to tie their horses.

The chains also were delightful for a young girl to swing upon and observe the neighbors in the second house, 1321 H Street, General Winfield Scott (1786-1866) and his family, and Mary Louise Michel did not pass up this opportunity. She described the General “as he piled his great size and magnificence, his splendid cocked hat and gorgeous uniform, with great difficulty into a cab, preparatory to his departure for some function at the White House.”\textsuperscript{76}

According to Marian Campbell Gouverneur, whose father-in-law Samuel L. Gouverneur, Senior, owned the house in which General and Mrs. Scott lived, the General moved to Washington in 1850 and occupied one of the three houses that had been built or occupied by Count Charles Julius de Menou, the French minister to the United States from 1822-1824. The three houses were consequently also referred to as the \textit{de Menou Buildings} as evidenced by the indenture drawn up between Purser G.C. Cooper and Captain Beverley Kennon which included reference to “the block of three brick three story houses, sometimes called \textit{Count de Menou’s Buildings}, erected on the south side of the Square.”\textsuperscript{77} Located between Thirteenth and Fourteenth Streets, two of the three buildings were combined into one, that being the house the General Scott’s family occupied. The third was owned by Mrs. Beverley Kennon, and in it lived “the venerable Mrs. Alexander Hamilton and her only daughter, Mrs. Hamilton Holly.”\textsuperscript{78}
General Scott was “head and shoulder above all the rest, and nearly always in uniform, brave, handsome, and frankly vain.” He proved a large presence in Washington society. Marian Gouverneur noted that New Year’s Day was an important festive occasion. General and Mrs. Maria Mayo Scott always kept open house on January 1, and “a bountiful collation was served.” Army officers dressed in uniform tied their horses to the chain fence and paid their respects. The General always called on the president early in the day, but he also “always called on two venerable women – Mrs. ‘Dolley’ Madison … and Mrs. Alexander Hamilton, his next door neighbor.”

In Elizabeth Hamilton’s house Mary Louise Michel recalled a hall, sitting-room, and dining room on the first floor. Spanning the whole front of the building’s second floor was a beautiful drawing room filled with gifts to the Hamilton family, including Gilbert Stuart’s half-length portrait of Washington, a silver wine cooler, and china from the French government. There was also a bust of Hamilton placed near the corner of the mantel.

If the weather was severe, Elizabeth Hamilton would not let the servant take Mary Louise Michel back to her uncle’s. They played backgammon at these times, which Elizabeth Hamilton had been taught to play by Benjamin Franklin in 1776 when he visited her father, General Philip Schuyler (1733-1804). Mary Louise Michel claimed she would always remember Elizabeth Hamilton wearing her snowy white cap with the crimped ruffle, “well and bright,” but added, “To this day I deeply regret that no one had the foresight to have me write down the many things I heard and saw in that house.”

Another personal remembrance of Elizabeth Hamilton at the H Street house was recorded by Julia F. Miller of Buffalo, New York. Julia Miller was a schoolmate of Abigail Fillmore, daughter of Millard Fillmore, at the State Normal School in Albany, New York. When Fillmore became president of the United States in 1850, his daughter accompanied the family to Washington. Abigail Fillmore invited her friend Julia Miller to visit, and therefore, “to the capital, with its many pleasures and interests, social, political, and literary, there came in the winter of 1852, by a singular turn of the wheel of fortune, a young girl who was well fitted to appreciate all its varied attractions.” But despite the glamour of Washington society, Julia Miller’s meeting with Elizabeth Hamilton made the most lasting impression upon her. One day the two girls were invited to visit Elizabeth Hamilton, and Julia Miller recalled:

She was ninety-two year of age at this time . . . She kept me by her side, holding me by the hand, telling me of the things most interesting to me. How she knew Washington (with whom she was a great favorite) and Lafayette . . . How they were often at the house of her father, Gen. Philip Schuyler. How when she was a child she was free of the Washington residence, and if there was company Mrs. Washington would dress her up in something pretty and make her stay to dinner . . . She showed me the Stuart portrait of Washington, painted for her, for which he sat; the old Schuyler chairs and tiny mirrors; most interesting to me. This tiny dot of a woman and of such a great age, happened to think of something in her room she wanted to show Abbie. Her granddaughter [daughter], Mrs. Hamilton Holley [Holly], offered to get it for her. ‘Sit down, child, don’t you think I can get it myself?’ and up she went and got it, whatever it was.

Her energy was legendary. Another visitor remembered that shortly before her death,
The widow of Alexander Hamilton has reached the great age of ninety-five and retains in an astonishing degree her faculties and converses with much of that ease and brilliancy which lent so peculiar a charm to her younger days . . . At this time she showed a great deal of vigor, walking from her own house on H Street to visit her old friend, Judge Cranch, three miles away, on Capitol Hill, in the city of Washington.85

On November 9, 1854, Elizabeth Hamilton’s son, James Alexander Hamilton (1788-1875/8), notified his aunt Catherine Cochran in Oswego, New York: “My dear mother finished her course here this morning at about 4 o clock. She was conscious to the last and although her utterance was inarticulate she said very kind things –She passed off without a struggle altho (sic) for a few weeks past she had suffered much.”86

Britannia remembered that once Elizabeth Hamilton had wanted to visit Mount Vernon and asked Martha Custis Peter (1777-1854), Britannia’s mother and the granddaughter of Martha Custis Washington (1731-1802), to go with her. Britannia recalled this because it was her mother’s last visit there, and it “made her very sad to go there, everything was so changed from what it used to be when she was a child.”87

In speaking of the tenant of the H Street house years later, Britannia told her grandson, Armistead Peter, Jr. (1870-1960), “It was in this house that [Elizabeth Hamilton] died. … Before her death she worked me a piece of worsted work and sent it to me.”88 The bearer of this gift was Elizabeth Hamilton’s daughter, Elizabeth Hamilton Holly. It is not known if Elizabeth Hamilton Holly continued to board at 1325 H Street after the death of her mother or if she lived elsewhere in the city:

Mrs. [Hamilton] Holly, who resided with her [mother], still remains in Washington grieving for the loss of a parent many years her companion and charge. Altho (sic) to the delightful home of her brother, Mr. James [Alexander] Hamilton, on the North River, she has been most affectionately invited.89 Elizabeth Hamilton Holly died in Washington in 1859.

Records show Britannia Kennon paid taxes on Lot 5 and Lot 21 in Square 250 until 1861.90 The names of her other renters are not known. But referring to Mrs. General Hamilton and Elizabeth Hamilton Holly, she recorded, “I knew them and used to call on them and charming people they were.”91 Although Britannia Kennon had lived at H Street only a few months, home is always where the heart is. While circumstance curtailed her happiness most abruptly, the presence in that house of kind and benevolent friends would have stood her in good stead.

2 Leland P. Lovette, Lieutenant Commander, Naval Customs: Traditions and Usage (Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1939), 224. Lovette notes that “the lower grades of captains were originally styled ‘master and commander’ and commanded small ships of war.”
The title was introduced in England. In 1838 the United States Navy introduced a law that changed “master commandant” to “commander.”


8 Benjamin F. Sands, 53. Various dates for anchoring off Pernambuco exist; newspaper accounts contradict Sands’ date of departure.


11 Tudor Place Historic House & Garden Archive, Papers of Armistead Peter, Jr., Manuscript 14, Box 69, Folder 24, *Britannia Peter Kennon’s Reminiscences*. Britannia Peter Kennon stated that she met Captain Kennon at a reception held on November 30; evidently the reception was held the same day as the wedding ceremony.

12 Tudor Place Historic House & Garden Archive, Papers of Britannia Peter Kennon, Manuscript 7, Box 1, Folder 1, F.D. Lear to Britannia Peter, letter of December 8, 1842; Joan M. Dixon, *National Intelligencer* Newspaper Abstracts 1842 (Westminster, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 2004), 450: “Mrd: on Dec 8, at Tudor Place, Heights of Gtwn, Capt Beverley Kennon, U S Navy, to Miss B W Peter, d/o the late Thos Peter.”

13 Armistead Peter 3rd, *Tudor Place* (Washington, D.C., Georgetown: Privately Printed, 1969), xi. Peter states: “she [Britannia Peter] married Commodore Beverley Kennon, and went to live in the Commandant’s quarters at the Washington Navy Yard.” According to Christine F. Hughes, Historian, Naval and Heritage Command, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C., there is no official list or memorandum of residents of Tingey House, although it is probable that Captain Beverley Kennon lived there due to his position in the Yard.


15 John McGill, 616-617; 638; 642. Tudor Place Historic House & Garden Archive, Papers of Armistead Peter, Jr., Manuscript 14, Box 69, Folder 24, *Britannia Peter Kennon’s Reminiscences*. The *Reminiscences* note that Emily Kennon married Edward C. Doran (No Date-
1883). McGill, 642: Doran was commissioned a Purser in the United States Navy, until appointed Navy Agent, serving eventually as Paymaster and then Pay Director. See: Register of Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the United States Navy, Including Officers of the Marine Corps for the Year 1843 (Washington, D.C.: Alexander and Barnard, Printers, 1843) for commission dates and duty stations. It is of interest to note that the son of Emily (Kennon) Doran and Edward C. Doran, Charles R.B. Doran (1868-Date Unknown) wrote an article on his cousin Captain Beverley Kennon II published in Confederate Veteran, Volume XVI, Number 1: Doran, Charles, “Daring Method of Destroying Enemy’s Ship,” p.15. See Papers of Britannia Peter Kennon, Manuscript 7, Box 7, Folder 48. Charles Doran sent a copy of this magazine to “My Dear Cousin,” Britannia Kennon.


20 We are indebted to David D’Onofrio, Special Collections Librarian, Special Collections and Archives, Nimitz Library, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, for the explanation of Captain Kennon’s new assignment. For commission, see Register of Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the United States Navy, Including Officers of the Marine Corps for the Year 1843.


22 Ibid., 125.

23 Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Anna Maria Brodeau Thornton Papers, Volume 5, Diary entries: April 21, 1843; October 18, 1843.

24 University of Virginia Library, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, Peter Family Papers, MSS 7605-a, document of February 24, 1843.

25 Ibid., document of February 24, 1843.

26 Ibid., document of September 3, 1842.


29 Ibid.; Reintzel notes A.B. Upshur (1821/1822-1895) as a Recording Clerk in the Secretary’s Office in the Navy Department, 124; Towers, 47.

30 University of Virginia Library, Peter Family Papers, document of March 26, 1843, Jane A. Cooper to Captain Beverley Kennon. Pippenger, 272: Pippenger records that the National Intelligencer of March 6, 1844, announced Cooper’s death in the 44th year of his age, but Pippenger’s summary of Cooper’s will misspells the name as “Greenville (sic) C. Cooper, purser in the U.S. Navy.” Joan M. Dixon, National Intelligencer Newspaper Abstracts 1844, 276: On June 17, 1844, the National Intelligencer printed “Appointments by the President with the Advise and Consent of the Senate” and noted that Lieutenant William Henry Kennon was commissioned a Purser to replace Grenville C. Cooper; Lieutenant Kennon was Captain Beverley Kennon’s nephew.


33 University of Virginia Library, Peter Family Papers, undated document. For Smith, see supra. 26. Charles Hill: (No Dates) Washington Directory, and National Register, for 1846 (Washington, D.C.: John T. Towers, 1846), 49; Allen C. Clark, “Colonel William Winston Seaton and His Mayoralty.” Records of the Columbia Historical Society Volume 29-30 (Washington, D.C.: The Society, 1928), 15-16. Director of the Bank of the Metropolis, Hill lived on the north side of Massachusetts Avenue between 14 and 15 Streets west. A disgruntled French visitor to his estate in 1840 noted: “I went to see Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hill, who live at the extreme end of the city; my carriage sank up to the axle-tree in the snow and mud; it was necessary to leave the carriage, which had to be dragged out and scraped . . . I don’t know how anyone can get to the Hill’s on Monday next, when they give a ball . . . This is how it is in Washington—streets not paved, swept or lighted.” The visitor was Chevalier de Bacourt, French Minister Plenipotentiary to President Van Buren. James Larned: (No Date-1849) Pippenger, 339; Joan M. Dixon, National Intelligencer Newspaper Abstracts 1841, 251, 422; Washington Directory, and National Register, for 1846, 56. Chief Clerk in the office of the First Comptroller of the Treasury, an office he held until
March 1849. He controlled stock in the Washington City Corporation and in the Bank of Washington, and in 1841 was noted as a trustee of the Washington Public Schools and contributor to the Female Union Benevolent Society. He lived on the west side of 13 Street between F and G Streets north.

34 University of Virginia Library, Peter Family Papers, document of May 22, 1843.

35 Marian Gouverneur, As I Remember: Recollections of American Society during the Nineteenth Century (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1911), 175-176.; Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton Holly was the goddaughter of Marian Gouverneur’s eldest daughter, and at Elizabeth Hamilton Holly’s insistence the naming ceremony of this child was held “in the house of Mrs. Alexander Hamilton, in the De Menou buildings. Mrs. Holly and I characterized the gathering as a revolutionary party, as so many of the guests bore names prominent during our struggle for independence.”, 287. See Hunter: Almost all the shops mentioned by Gouverneur are listed in Hunter; some locations vary, but Pennsylvania Avenue continues to dominate.

36 Alfred Hunter, 90.


39 Ibid., 104.


41 Georgetown University Library, Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Crawford Family Papers, GTM-GAMS261. Elizabeth Crawford Davidson to “My dear Joseph,” letter of May 3, 1844. Elizabeth Crawford Davidson was the wife of Lewis Grant Davidson.

42 Patricia Brady, George Washington’s Beautiful Nelly (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 239-241, Eleanor Lewis to Elizabeth Bordley Gibson, letter of April 5, 1844.

43 Ibid., 240.

44 Allen C. Clark, Life and Letters of Dolly Madison, 334, Annie Payne to Miss Theodosia Davis, letter of March 22, 1844. Annie Payne also notes that her aunt, Dolly Madison, was on board the Princeton, “but fortunately down below.”


Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Penguin Group, 2004), 730: Chernow gives 1848 as the year Elizabeth Hamilton moved to Washington. Allan McLane Hamilton, *The Intimate Life of Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), 109: Allan McLane Hamilton states that the Hamilton manuscripts finally were purchased by the government in 1849, 115. The Library of Congress cites 1848 as the year Congress appropriated $20,000 to buy the papers, and specifies that the papers, originally held at the United State Department of State, were transferred to the Library in 1904.

Gaillard Hunt, Editor, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society Portrayed By the Family Letters and Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith [Margaret Bayard]* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1906), 289, Margaret Bayard Smith to Mrs. Anna [Maria] Bayard Boyd, letter of Spring 1829.

Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Cutts Family Collection of Papers of James and Dolley Madison, Dolley Payne Madison to Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton, letter of January 16, 1845. We thank Hannah K. Scroggs, Research Associate, James Madison’s Montpelier, Orange, Virginia, for her help in locating this letter.

Allan McLane Hamilton, 116-117.


Ibid., 110, 112-113.

Ibid., 116.

Ibid., 116-117.

Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Cutts Family Collection of Papers of James and Dolley Madison, unidentified manuscript, No Date. Ben: Perley Poore, *Perley’s Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis Volumes I and II* (Philadelphia, Chicago, Kansas City: Hubbard Brothers, Publishers, 1886), 323: Poore records that at the Birth Night ball of February 22, 1845, President John Tyler was accompanied by President-elect James Polk and that Mrs. Madison was also present with Mrs. Alexander Hamilton.

Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Cutts Family Collection of Papers of James and Dolley Madison, Dolly Payne Madison to Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton, letter of April 25, 1848. We thank Hannah K. Scroggs, Research Associate, James Madison’s Montpelier, Orange, Virginia, for her help in locating this letter; according to Miss Scroggs, the nature of the gift remains a mystery.

66 Jessie Benton Frémont, 118.
68 Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Alexander Hamilton Family Papers, 1737-1917 [1847-1849], Elizabeth Hamilton Holly to James Alexander Hamilton, letter of April 17, 1847
69 Ben: Perley Poore, 323.
70 *Cleveland Daily Herald*, Cleveland, Ohio, March 1, 1845; Allen C. Clark, *Life and Letters of Dolly Madison*, 488-489.
71 Ben: Perley Poore, 168.
72 Allan McLane Hamilton, 115.
74 Alfred Hunter, 45.
75 John B. Larner, 350.
77 University of Virginia Library, Peter Family Papers, document of September 3, 1842. Information on Count de Menou is sporadic. Samuel C. Busey, *Pictures of the City of Washington in the Past* (Washington, D.C.: Wm. Ballantyne & Sons, 1898), 307: Busey lists Count Julius de Menou as an attache to the [French] legation; Kate Kearney Henry, “Richard Forrest and His Times, 1795-1830,” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* Volume 5 (Washington, D.C.: The Society, 1902), 93, note that according to records de Menou played an active part in Washington social life; Hunt, 174, records a letter of Margaret Bayard Smith in which she mentions the presence of Count de Menou, Secretary of Legation and Chargé d’Affaires ad interim of France, at her house in Washington while awaiting the returns of the election of John Quincy Adams to the presidency, Margaret Bayard Smith to Mrs. Anna [Maria] Bayard Boyd, letter of February 11, 1825; Litchfield Historical Society, Samuel Fisher Collection, Helga J. Ingram Memorial Library, Litchfield, Connecticut, records that Count Charles Julius de Menou (No Dates) was schooled in Annapolis and Baltimore, Maryland. He attended law school in 1808 at the Litchfield Law School in Connecticut, and was admitted to the Maryland bar in 1809. In 1820-1824 he was listed as an attache to the French Legation under Count de Neuville, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. He lived later in Baltimore, but removed to Paris by 1856. He returned the Charles Willson Peale portrait of George Washington to the United States when he sold the painting to Charles B. Calvert of Prince George’s County, Maryland, in 1841. We thank Linda Hocking, Curator of Library and Archives, Litchfield Historical Society, Litchfield, Connecticut, for permission to use information from the Historical Society’s website.
78 Marian Gouverneur, 193.
Anne Hollingsworth Wharton, 314. Wharton credits Miss Julia Miller of Buffalo, New York, for the description of General Scott.

80 Marian Gouverneur, 197.

James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, Editors, *Appleton’s Cyclopaedia of American Biography* Volume V (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 433: “During the Revolutionary war the congressional commissioners to Canada –Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Chase, and Charles Carroll- were entertained at his [General Philip Schuyler’s] residence in April, 1776.”

82 John B. Larner, 353, 351.


84 Ibid., 317-318.


87 Tudor Place Historic House & Garden Archive, Papers of Armistead Peter, Jr., Manuscript 14, Box 69, Folder 24, *Britannia Peter Kennon’s Reminiscences*.

88 Ibid.; Tudor Place Historic House & Garden Archive, Papers of Armistead Peter, Jr., Manuscript 14, Box 69, Folder 22: an undated note in the hand of Armistead Peter, Jr., refers to this piece of worsted [twisted woolen yarn made from long-staple fibers] given to Britannia Peter Kennon by Mrs. Elizabeth Holly, “When Mrs. Hamilton died, Mrs. Holly gave me a piece if embroidery, the last that her mother had done.” Collection of Tudor Place: Accession Number 8726.01, linen, cotton, and wool pillow case with blue edge and backing to front, 35 cm. X 35 cm. [14” W X 13 ½ “ H]. An identification tag in an unidentified hand [Britannia Peter Kennon’s] sewed to the pillow cover reads: “Made by/ Mrs. Alexander Hamilton/ a short time before her/death, for Mrs. Kennon.”


90 Tudor Place Historic House & Garden Archive, Papers of Britannia Peter Kennon, Manuscript 7, Box 6, Folder 28. Scattered tax receipts are held for the years 1847, 1848, 1849, 1850, 1852, 1853, and 1861, including tax assessments of December 9 and 10, 1852, for a sewer and paving the alley in the rear of the lot.
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Grant Quertermous, Curator, Tudor Place Historic House & Garden, Washington, District of Columbia

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