



Land for Sale: Inquire Within

*Then as a youth he stood beside the stream
And watched the blue Potomac flowing on
And dreamed fair dreams of cities to appear
In later years upon those wooded shores.
Nor did he rest with dreaming; he achieved
As a surveyor and an engineer,
Far-reaching service, ere he took the sword
To lead his countrymen to Liberty.*

Marietta Minnigerode Andrews, The Master Builders: A Pageant of Patriotism and Freemasonry.

The Shriners' Convention, Washington, D.C., June, 1923.

George Washington in reply to a letter from his stepson John Parke Custis: The money received for your land was, I think, well applied, unless you could have laid it out for other Lands, more convenient—which method I should have preferred, as Land is the most Permanent Estate we can hold, & most likely to increase in its value. [Valley-forge Feby 1st 1778]¹

The Past

As a surveyor, a farmer, a soldier, and even as president, George Washington recognized the value of land and strove to acquire it. In 1754 Governor Robert Dinwiddie (1693-1770) awarded bounty land to the officers and soldiers who had served under Washington in the French and Indian War. On October 5, 1770, Washington set out for Redstone Creek, which emptied into the Monongahela River thirty-seven miles above Pittsburgh, to inspect these lands; from this point he began his trip to the Ohio Valley to establish and locate the lands granted for the Virginia officers and soldiers who had served under his command. Although this journey was undertaken in the interest of his men, Washington's desire for acquiring good land was probably a contributing factor in this matter.²

In his diary from October 5 – December 1, 1770, Washington described in characteristic detail the trials and tribulations of 18th century travel; but despite these rigors, he visited the tracts of interest along the Kanawha River in [West] Virginia. He judged the land for the quality of the soil, noted all manner of wild game and fowls, and observed the trees of the woods –for timber was an important



commodity for building houses and building ships to sail the waters to open new economic opportunities at home and abroad. He calculated the distance from Pittsburgh [Fort Pitt] to the mouth of the Kanawha River, which he reached on September 31, was 266 miles; from there he began his journey to the Ohio River on October 1.³

Because of legal complications, it was not until 1772 that these lands were finally approved by royal proclamation. On December 15, 1772, a patent was issued to Washington by George III, King “by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King Defender of the Faith, etc.” The patent gave, granted, and confirmed to George Washington 2448 acres of land lying in what was then known as Botetourt County, Virginia:⁴

Beginning at or near the upper end of the fourth large bottom on the east side of the Ohio [River] and about sixteen miles below the Kanawha (sic) [River], at a water oak and sugar tree standing on the river bank at a point below a small run and about six hundred yards below the point of an island [Blennerhassett Island], and extending east . . .⁵

Besides describing the boundaries of Washington’s land, the patent granted him the “privilege of hunting and hawking, fishing, fowling and other profits. . .” King George’s only condition upon presentation of the granted land was a fee of one shilling to be paid each year on the feast of St. Michael [September 29] “next after fifteen years. . .”⁶ The patent was witnessed and signed by John Murray, Fourth Earl of Dunmore (1732-1809), of Williamsburg, Virginia.

Eventually under land bounty warrants Washington claimed four tracts in the Great Kanawha Valley near where the Kanawha River emptied into the Ohio River at Point Pleasant, [West] Virginia. This land consisted of two parcels each situated on a river. The first parcel of land was on the Ohio River and was composed of tracts known as *Round Bottom*, *Little Kanhawa (sic)*, *Sixteen Miles Lower Down*, and *Opposite Big Bent*; altogether these tracts comprised 9744 acres. Years later Washington wrote of this land: “These several tracts of land are of the first quality on the Ohio River, in the parts where they are situated; being almost if not altogether River bottoms [a dale or valley] . . . The four tracts have an aggregate breadth upon the River of Sixteen miles and is bounded thereby that distance.”⁷

The second parcel of land was situated on the Great Kanawha River and was composed of five tracts known as *Near the Mouth West*, *East Side Above*, *Mouth of*



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Cole River, Opposite Thereto, and Burning Springs. Washington noted: “These tracts are situated on the Great Kanhawa (sic) River, and the first four are bounded thereby for more than forty miles. It is acknowledged by all who have seen them (and of the tract 10990 acres which I have been on myself, I can assert) that there is no richer, or more valuable land in all that Region . . .”⁸ Altogether the Great Kanawha tracts comprised 23,341 acres. These two parcels together comprised 33,085 acres, as surveyed in 1771 by William Crawford (1732-1782).⁹

As soon as Washington resigned his commission from the army in December 1793, he returned to his home in Virginia. Through all his years of the war as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army, Washington left Mount Vernon, but Mount Vernon never left him; he was a warrior by nurture, but a farmer by nature. After putting his affairs there in order, he was eager to review all his property, and in July 1784 wrote to his friend Dr. James Craik,

I have come to resolution (if not presented by anything, at present unforeseen) to take a trip to the Western Country this Fall, & for that purpose to leave home the first of September . . . It is possible, tho’ of this I cannot be certain at this time, that I shall, if I find it necessary to lay my Lands off in lotts (sic), make a day or two’s delay at each of my tracts upon the Ohio, before I reach the Kanhawa (sic)—where my stay will be the longest . . .¹⁰

James Craik (1730-1814), who had accompanied Washington on his journey in 1770, accepted the invitation, and on September 1 the men set out in the morning with three servants and six horses to embark on what would be Washington’s last journey west. His diary for September 1784 presents an eloquent and detailed description of a journey taken by a farmer to check his property and seek possible new routes of communication between the east and the west for economic profit.¹¹ He still had the eye of a surveyor! He noted the condition of roads and the intervention of hills. He measured distance in miles between towns. He saw where rivers and creeks would be navigable. He determined fields as “arable” for planting or “meadow” for grazing and the condition of their fencing. He identified types of trees. He observed the presence or absence of dwelling houses, kitchens, and stables. But his intention to spend time at the Kanawha was not realized; Indian unrest threatened, and although the distance to where the Ohio River met the Kanawha was just twelve and one-half miles, he wisely returned home without reaching the Kanawha lands:



And tho' I was disappointed in one of the objects which induced me to undertake this journey namely to examine into the situation quality and advantages of the Land which I hold upon the Ohio and Kanhawa (sic) –and to take measures for rescuing them from the hands of Land Jobbers and Speculators –who I had been informed regardless of my legal and equitable rights, patents, etc; . . . were offering them for Sale at Philadelphia and in Europe. –I say notwithstanding this disappointment I am well pleased with my journey, as it has been the means of my obtaining a knowledge of facts . . .¹²

The Land Jobbers and Speculators continued to plague him, however, as did economic worries. By 1794 Washington was determined to sell his western lands, and wrote to a friend, “ Having from long experience, found that landed property at a distance from the Proprietor, is attended with more plague than profit, I have determined to sell all the land I hold on the Ohio & Great Kanhawa (sic) (about 33,000 Acres in eight surveys).”¹³ Plans to sell the property did not reach fruition; Washington’s attention was soon diverted by the Whiskey Rebellion (July-October 1784) in Pennsylvania and later by presidential obligations.

Washington’s will, dated July 9, 1799, was written a few months before he died; it was proved in court in Fairfax County, Virginia, on January 20, 1800, presented by George Steptoe Washington (ca.1773-1808), Samuel Washington (ca.1765-1832), and Lawrence Lewis (1767-1839). He requested that “all of the residue of my estate real or personal” be sold by the executors, the proceeds “to be divided into twenty-three equal parts . . .” Among his twenty-three legatees, Washington included the granddaughters of his wife: “To Elizabeth Parke Law, Martha Parke Peter and Eleanor Parke Lewis, I give and bequeath three other parts, that is a part to each of them.”¹⁴

His lands were not sold as Washington directed in his will, but were divided according to a plan submitted to the heirs by Bushrod Washington (1762-1829) in a meeting of all the legatees or their representatives with power of attorney. The legatees agreed to divide the lands on the western waters, but not Ohio and Kentucky. It took three years for the land to be resurveyed and mapped and divided into 23 parts “according to quantity and quality.” The legatees drew lots for their land, and doing so ratified and confirmed the allotment and bound the legatee and their heirs forever to confirm the division: “It is perfectly understood that the numbers prefixed to each name respectively refers to the tract of land in the



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annexed surveys to which each person is entitled in this division . . . In witness whereof we hereunto set our hands and affixed our seals this 5 day of June, 1805.”¹⁵ Thomas Peter attended this meeting as his wife’s representative. He drew Lot. No. 3, 1425 acres on the Ohio River. This land was part of the parcel on the Ohio River called *Sixteen Miles Lower Down*, a tract originally surveyed at 2448 acres but resurveyed for 2850 acres for the division for the legatees. This land became known as the *Ravenswood Tract* because it would include the future site of the town of Ravenswood, [West] Virginia. It was traversed by Big Sandy Creek and fronted on the Ohio River “three miles and fifty-two poles [measure of length containing five yards and a half] and is furnished with an excellent mill seat.”¹⁶ Thomas Peter signed the agreement for his wife and set his seal on the document of division.¹⁷

The Present

Tudor Place, the family seat of Thomas Peter (1769-1834) and Martha Parke Custis Peter (1777-1854), was built on land purchased with a “. . . sum of money received by me upon the Sale of certain real property belonging to my Wife Martha Peter devised to her by her deceased relative Genl. George Washington . . .”, although the source of this sale of property is as yet undetermined.¹⁸ The property, two wing structures, and several dependencies were purchased from Francis Lowndes (1751-1813) on June 5, 1805.¹⁹ When the Peters began to improve Lowndes’ wings by building inward to accommodate their growing family is not known; but it is accepted that the house was completed 1816/1817, the years of construction interrupted and prolonged by the War of 1812. The dwelling house visible to visitors today is relatively preserved in its original form. But despite the elegant vision of the house and the surrounding property which provided a buffer to the port of Georgetown, the Peter family was not immune to nor untouched by the affairs of the country. Two important turns in the tide of American history would have affected them politically and economically: the defeat of the Federalist Party in 1800 and the economic Panic of 1819.

Politically the Peters were strong Federalists; Martha Peter, a granddaughter of Martha Washington, cherished her Federalist heritage. The successful rise of Republicanism as evidenced in the election of Thomas Jefferson in 1801 had to have had a residual effect on life at Tudor Place. If the Peters nursed hopes that the rise of Republicanism was a bright but brief flame, their hopes were soon shattered. After his two terms in office Thomas Jefferson named his Secretary of State, James Madison, to succeed him; Madison, after his two terms in office,



named his Secretary of State, James Monroe, to succeed him. In 1816 Monroe ran against the New York Federalist Rufus King (1755-1825); Monroe received 183 ballots in the electoral college; King received 34. The Monroe administration went on to assure the victory of the Republican Party, which now faced no formidable opposition.

In the aftermath of the War of 1812 the country beheld no immediate foreign threats; prosperity reigned and Monroe was determined to bring harmony and stability to a beleaguered nation.²⁰ He strove to set an example within his cabinet, and he chose former Federalist John Quincy Adams, a New Englander, for his Secretary of State. Since Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe had all served as secretaries of state previous to their elections as president, Adams as a Northerner appeared to be the heir apparent to end the succession of the Virginia Dynasty. In his other appointments Monroe included both northerners and southerners, Federalists and Republicans, to satisfy the interests of both sections of the country.²¹ Monroe even made a goodwill tour of the country, and in New England, a Federalist stronghold, he was greeted enthusiastically. On July 8, 1817 in the *Boston Columbian Centinel*, Benjamin Russell (1761-1845) observed that an “era of good feeling” had arrived. On the surface, this observation was correct, for when Monroe ran for reelection in 1820, only one elector voted against him. The Federalist Party did not even offer a candidate that year; it had officially died in 1800 when the one-party system came to an end.

But by 1820 the “era of good feeling” was deteriorating, for the nation was experiencing severe economic difficulties. The Panic of 1819 was well underway. Because of the disruption of European agriculture by the Napoleonic Wars abroad, there had been a long period of demand for American farm goods at high prices which benefited the American farmer. These rising prices stimulated a land rush in the west. Speculative investments caused the price of land to rise far above the government established minimum of \$2.00 an acre; land in Alabama and Mississippi rose suddenly to \$100 an acre or more. The land boom was intensified by easy credit to settlers and speculators. Credit from state banks, wildcat banks, and even the Bank of the United States encouraged this boom.

But by 1819 the national banks began to tighten credit, call in loans, and foreclose mortgages. The Bank of the United States collected state bank notes, demanding cash payment which the local banks could not supply. Many banks failed. Prices for manufactured goods and agricultural produce fell quickly. Help was on its way: a tariff in 1824 protected the manufacturers from foreign competition; farmers, already deeply in debt, secured some relief through the land



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law of 1820 and the act of 1821, which lowered the price of land and reduced exiting debts.

The distress that the economic panic produced was not confined to the pocketbook. Many Americans believed that the panic was caused by rapid uncontrolled growth and western expansion. Eventually public debate revolved less around such growth than how to control it; this debate created tension and division in the Republican Party, and was the death knell of the “era of good feeling.”²²

The Panic of 1819 had repercussions all over the country, and the Peter family did not escape unscathed. With the rebuff of Federalism still burning within them, to suffer from the economic panic was an insult to injury. Martha Peter was a legatee of George Washington; his gift, land in [West] Virginia on the Ohio River, eventually would have to be sacrificed due to the ongoing depression of 1819. A series of letters reveals the efforts of the family to dispose of this land for Washington’s observation that “. . . landed property at a distance from the Proprietor, is attended with more plague than profit,” began to prove true.

Thomas Peter’s father, Robert Peter (1726-1806), was a prosperous tobacco merchant and shrewd businessman. He amassed a large fortune, and invested in extensive land speculation. As his oldest son, Thomas Peter must have closely observed his father’s dealings, and he inherited his father’s interest in and ability to purchase land. He owned large amounts of property in the Federal City and the state of Maryland. But he placed his confidence in an agent to handle Martha Peter’s land in [West] Virginia, William Sterret, possibly because of its inaccessibility.

William Sterrett (1776-ND) was born in Carlisle, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. Nothing is known of his schooling. He married Agnes Nancy Bell (born 1772) in 1800 in Augusta County, Virginia; the couple had six children in rapid succession. In 1817 he purchased a farm from Harrison Bailey (ND) on the Kanawha River about three miles above Point Pleasant, Mason County, [West] Virginia, for \$1400 current Virginia money. Point Pleasant, commonly referred to as the “Jamestown of the Ohio Valley, was the oldest English town on the Ohio river south of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, twelve years older than Charlestown, the capitol of West Virginia, fifteen years older than Cincinnati, Ohio, and seventeen years older than Gallipolis, Ohio.”²³

Sterrett qualified as a county clerk, receiving his commission from John Page (unidentified).²⁴ He was a lawyer and a land agent, frequently addressed by his clients as “Major.” His business correspondence holds documents from 1804-



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1866. Besides acting as the agent for Thomas Peter, his clients consisted of other members of the Washington family, including George Corbin Washington (1789-1854) of Georgetown and Washington, D.C., Bushrod Washington (1762-1829) of Westmoreland County and later Mount Vernon, Virginia, Lawrence Lewis (1767-1839) of Fairfax County, Virginia, George W. Spotswood (ND) of Coalbridge, [possibly West] Virginia.²⁵ Other clients included: Colin Auld (ND) and John Roberts (ND) of Alexandria, Fairfax County, Virginia; James Hall (ND) of Harrisonburg, Virginia; E.H Smith (ND) and James Smith (ND) of Harrisonburg, Virginia; John A. Marmaduke (ND) of Hillsborough and Shepherdstown, [West] Virginia; James Swann (ND) and Jonathan Swann (ND) of Baltimore, Maryland; Robert Swann (ND) of Cumberland, Maryland; Robert Worthington (ND) of Charlestown, [West] Virginia; and Auss Buckner (ND, no domicile identified). The date of Sterrett's death is uncertain, but it was recorded that "Mr. Sterrett was drowned getting off a steamboat at his home several miles above Point Pleasant, one dark night when [he was] quite old."²⁶

Thomas Peter and William Sterrett's relationship was based on the business of the land on the Ohio River. Sterrett's job as agent included finding suitable tenants for the upkeep of the land, collecting rent for Peter, and forwarding the rent money to Peter in acceptable bank notes. None of these tasks was easily executed, and all were subject to discussion between the two men.

In an opening letter to Sterrett of May 19, 1819, Peter acknowledged the receipt of Sterrett's earlier letter and explained that he delayed answering in the hope that Sterrett was enabled to collect the rent for 1818 from the current tenant.²⁷ If he had done so, Peter directed him to "deduct amply for your trouble" and to send the notes of payment in District paper or paper of the State Bank of Virginia. The subject of accepted bank notes is common throughout this correspondence, for at the time, "Prices and standards and values varied in different states, and there was no common force or source of authority to adjust to differences. A man who owed \$5,000 in New York might discharge it for \$3,000 in Rhode Island."²⁸ The subject of difficult financial times surfaced immediately: "We have dreadful times here and we fear they have by no means got to their worst – The Franklin Bank of Alexandria shut up on Thursday & if the Broakers (sic) run on the Bank much longer I know not which can stand."²⁹ A few months later Peter again wrote Sterrett, asking if the tenant, A. Waggoner (unidentified), had finally paid: "Every dollar now seems as if it was equal to ten three or four years past – when the Distress will cease none of the wise ones here know not."³⁰ And for the first time



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Peter mentioned the possibility of selling the property: “If I could get 20\$ (sic) pr. acre for this Land Mrs. P. who (sic) it belongs to would dispose of it.”

Many months passed before Peter wrote to Sterrett again; he apologized for his long silence because of sickness. Peter suffered from gout, and was to become –if not already- often incapacitated by it. If Sterrett had judgment against Waggoner in August, Peter suggested that Sterrett send the \$75.56 due him through the Post Master in Washington or by an order “. . . on the Member from your District in my favor . . . it will be convenient for me to receive it as soon as convenient for you to pay it as money is a great object to me in these trying times.”

³¹ Yet Peter, a cautious businessman who paid close attention to detail, was very careful to work within the legal limits of the law where taxes were concerned, for he added,

For the present year I understand the Land is rented for \$80 – on acct. of repairs to be made & the fencing out of order. You say an industrious Fellow lives on the Land & would clear 20 acres if he could get a lease for such time as would be reasonable – this I am willing to grant but wish first to hear from you how long he will require a Lease for – Pray see that the Taxes are paid regularly.³²

In an ongoing correspondence, personal events occasionally arise when explanations are necessary. Thomas Peter referred tangentially only once to such an event, but offered no details on December 13, 1820: “Your favor of the 21st Nov. I received but affliction in my family prevented me from being prepared to answer it as satisfactorily as I could wish.”³³ Peter did not mention the death of his oldest daughter, Columbia Peter (1797-1820). His youngest daughter, Britannia (1815-1911), however, left a record of this:

In the fall of 1820 Father and Mother went to *Oakland*, as was their custom, and Sister Columbia went down to *Woodlawn* to make Uncle and Aunt Lewis a visit. There, she was taken ill with the bilous colic and died in two or three days – word was sent to Oakland of her illness and Mother started immediately for *Woodlawn*. She had to stop in Georgetown long enough for the horses to rest and arrived at *Woodlawn* about an hour after her death (December 3d 1820). I don't believe Mother ever recovered from this blow!³⁴



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Thomas Peter returned quickly to the business at hand. He had learned from Sterrett's letter of November that there was a balance due him of \$154.78, but he calculated himself that the amount owed him was \$165.93. He asked Sterrett to explain the discrepancy of \$11.15 between the two sums. How he received the money was always complicated; in this case Peter preferred the present tenants, Mr. and Mrs. Newel (unidentified), sign a release for the money, which Sterrett should send to the Pay Master General's office with a written order. There Peter could be paid the correct amount. Peter, ever thrifty, instructed, ". . . copy as much on one sheet as possible to save postage, etc."

But their letters crossed in the mail. Sterrett had already forwarded the correct sum -\$154.78- with Mr. B. Smith (unidentified). Peter told Sterrett that he sent his son to call on Mr. Smith for the money, but Smith was unwell and did not receive him. In early January Smith wrote to Peter and asked him to "wait on him" for the money, but Peter was out of town and did not respond. By the time he returned to Georgetown, Mr. Smith had left for Richmond: "I have sent my Son twice since to inquire for Mr. S. but rather expect he comes not back to the City. . . I am extremely sorry that I missed getting the money in the way that you expected, but I hope you will be able to manage it soon without much trouble."³⁵ The repercussions of the Panic of 1819 continued.

Unreliability of the U.S. mail was a constant threat. On January 25, 1822, Peter asked what rent he would receive for the present year, and if one or more tenants lived on the land. Receiving no answer by October 15, Peter perceived that Sterrett, usually fastidious about such details, had not received his inquiries and therefore not replied.³⁶ Peter thought he knew the trouble:

I was sorry you determined to decline acting for me, I have no doubt it gave you more trouble than the Commission was worth. If I could compensate you by increasing or in any other way I would greatly prefer your continuing to act for me- If my Business is too troublesome to You, I should be gratified by You recommending a person more convenient to the Land who I might place confidence . . .³⁷

But Sterrett replied with discouraging news for on November 15, 1822:

Your letter of the 15th ultmo. [*Ultimo*: The last, or the last month, ie., Peter's letter of October 15] came to hand yesterday which is the only one I have rec'd from you since the date of mine March last; and if I could with any



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kind of convenience have continued my agency I would have done so, but your land lies in the section of the County where no decent person resides it is surrounded by a collection of men who are continually killing and destroying others (sic) creatures and keeping up an almost constant war in consequence of which it is impossible to locate on your land a decent tenant; and money amongst us has become so scarce & the price of produce so low that it is impossible to make collections. Corn this fall & for some years has been sold for twelve & one half cents & often times on credit even at that price- The Kanawha Salt works is the only market we have in this country and it is very uncertain people frequently failing & many running away. Your tenant has sold grain & meal enough at that market to have produced five times the amount of rent due but he cant (sic) get a cent and his disappointment is the cause of disappointing you thereby giving me additional trouble. ³⁸

He added that the current tenant, John Neslerade (ND), still owed money and that if he failed to pay, “a suit must be the consequence.”³⁹

Peter understood Sterrett’s frustration and answered in measured manner.⁴⁰ He replied, “. . . I must repeat again I hope you will not give up the Agency.” Most importantly Peter asked for a description of the land, a sure indication that he had never visited it:

It will be pleasing to me if you will give me a description of this Land and opinion of the Value of it. I am told here there is half of the Tract bottom land of 1st & 2nd Qualities that Little Sandy [River] divides the Tract between Fitzhugh’s Heirs & Mrs. Peter & that Mrs. Peter’s part is the upper half. Give me your idea of the value of it pr. acre- TP.⁴¹

Sterrett’s letter describing the land would be of interest today, but his reply to Peter was lost.

In the end Sterrett did not give up the agency. Time passed; more letters exchanged have not been located. But by October 20, 1825, Sterrett had some news for Thomas Peter:

Your old tenant John Neslerade is dead and has left but little behind to pay his debts; for the sake of getting you a monied rent and much more than could be got from any person else I continued him on your land and took



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considerable trouble in assisting him to make arrangements to pay. I got the Judgment for the rent of 1824 and hold his note for the rent of 1825 which will be come (sic) due next March. I believe if the old man had lived I could have worked it out of him, and stil (sic) I can make it out of his estate or a good part of it. I don't expect I can get more than forty dollars a year in money; although I believe I could get four hundred Bushels of Corn which will discover to you the scarcity of money among us.⁴²

Sterrett attached information to this letter for the land rent for 1824, \$70.00. From this amount he deducted his commission of \$15, the tax on the land of \$4.56, and the extra fee to an attorney for handling the judgment of \$2.50. This left Peter with \$47.94. Sterrett suggested Peter allow him to forward this money through the person of a gentleman in Congress from the state of Ohio, Mr. S.F. Vinton (1792-1862).⁴³ Vinton was a resident of Gallipolis, Ohio, located about four miles from the home town of Sterrett, Point Pleasant.⁴⁴ This was not an uncommon method of payment at the time; persons were often more reliable than the mail. Peter could call on Vinton in the Federal City and collect his money.

This technique worked quite well, for Thomas Peter noted in May 1826, "Some weeks ago I drew on you in favor of S. Vinton, Esq., for that amount [\$47.94] he having paid to me the same."⁴⁵ And in reply to Sterrett's news about John Neslerade, Peter's reaction was: "I am sorry to hear the Old Tenant is dead, but I hope the Land is rented for this year."

But Congressman Vinton had been assigned another task, this time by Thomas Peter:

You will observe by the Deed Mr. Vinton is the Bearer of, Mrs. P. & myself have Deeded the land to our Sons and I must beg the favor of you to have it Recorded without delay as some time has passed away & there may be but a Short time allowed by the Laws of Virginia for it to be recorded . . . Please advise me as to the Record.g the Deed . . .⁴⁶

Earlier in 1826 Thomas Peter transferred other lands to his sons. On February 23, 1826 he conveyed his tract "known as my *Seneca Farm*, containing 500 acres more or less" to John Parke Custis Peter for \$5; on February 25, 1826 he conveyed to his son George Washington Peter his tract *Sugar Land Farm* of approximately 380 acres for \$5. Both of these transactions were witnessed by Upton Beal.⁴⁷ The reasons for these transfers at this particular time are unknown.



Almost a year went by and no reply came from Sterrett; Thomas Peter must have written another letter (lost) to his agent wondering about the delay which might endanger the recording of the deed. Sterrett replied:

I yesterday rec'd your letter of 22 ult.o [*Ultimo*] and intend to improve this days mail in returning you an answer. I find I have not clean paper enough to forward you your deed without a cover and use a half sheet to prevent bulk. I suppose if the Justices were to affix scrolls to their Signatures and returned to this office to be annexed in the deed book it might save the trouble of preparing a new deed; it now stands on record as a covenant though not as a legal conveyance and I don't know that any other person other than you and Mrs. Peter could take advantages of it. I have collected last years (sic) rent of your land as also the principal of the rent due from Neslerade for the preceeding (sic) year. The interest and costs of suit only in in (sic) arrear and may be got after some time and probably never . . . I must try however to get some person to live on it to prevent depredation even if he lived rent free. The people in that section of the County are hunters & are in the habit of firing the woods and without care. Your fencing would all be destroyed.⁴⁸

Sterrett attached a final accounting for his client Thomas Peter: land rent from J. Neslerade for 1825, \$70.00; interest for 1825, \$4.20; rent for 1826, \$60, with a total of \$134.20. From this amount he deducted: for personal services for two years, \$30.00; fee to attorney in suit against Neslerade, \$2.50; recording the deed for Peter's sons, \$1.75; letter postage(last letter), .18 ¾ cents; and land taxes for 1825 and 1826 @ \$4.56, \$9.12. The final amount owed Thomas Peter was \$90.64 ¼. Sterrett apologized for the delay in sending the money, but explained, "I would have authorized you to draw on me sooner but I collected considerable of it in Ohio paper and I presume it would not answer you and have been trying to exchange it . . ."

On April 18, 1827, Thomas Peter notified Sterrett that he received the letter of March 13 enclosing the deed to his wife's property, and that he now returned it with the Justice's seals annexed. Always anxious to work within the legal system, he requested Sterrett to have the Justice's seals affixed to the record: "The Deed will then be compleat (sic) & afterwards the Deed I wish returned to me again." He asked that the money due him, \$90.64 ¼, be forwarded by check, ". . . or in as few notes as possible to save postage."⁴⁹ In May he advised Sterrett that he had received the money with the deed. He added, "With many thanks for your



goodness & if at any time I can be of service to you, or my Sons, command us. I am Sir/ with Sincere Esteem/ your Friend & Servt./ Thomas Peter.⁵⁰ Their correspondence was at an end.

The Future

But William Sterrett's correspondence with Thomas Peter's sons, John Parke Custis Peter and George Washington Peter, was just beginning. Years later Britannia Peter Kennon (1815-1911) looked back on her two brothers and remembered:

Father [Thomas Peter] and Mother [Martha Custis Peter] . . . took up their residence in one of the four large brick houses on K street (sic) [Federal City]- built two and two together- their house being the one nearest the lower bridge, over Rock Creek.- These houses were built by Grandpa [Robert Peter] . . . Here it was that Brother John and Brother Washington were born . . . Shortly before Brother John was born [November 14, 1799] General Washington, being in the City, spent the night with them and when he left the next morning Mother went to the door with him and sat on the steps as he mounted his horse and rode away. This was the last time she ever saw the General as he died about a month after Brother John was born.⁵¹

Born November 14, 1799, John Parke Custis Peter (1799-1848) attended Yale College and graduated in the Class of 1820.⁵² He married Elizabeth Jane Henderson (1812-1877) of Williamsburg, Virginia, on February 2, 1830. Britannia Peter Kennon recalled,

Brother John and Jane Henderson were married at *Montanverde* by the Rev. Mr. Armstrong.- I, with Ariana Stuart and Cousin Robert Dunlop left Tudor that morning and drove to *Montanverde*. it was a bitter cold day- we arrived there in the evening and the wedding took place that night . . . The next day we returned to Tudor and that night the bride and groom were given a party by Father and Mother at Tudor Place.⁵³

John Parke Custis Peter owned the Seneca Mill near the C & O Canal in Maryland; he used its red Seneca stone to build his house, *Montevideo*, ca. 1828-1830; *Montevideo* was built in the same Federal style as his childhood home, *Tudor Place*, the name deriving from the view of Sugarloaf Mountain twelve miles



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distant. He built his home on a tract of land named “Conclusion,” property which had originally been purchased by his grandfather Robert Peter in 1794 and then drawn by lot by Thomas Peter after Robert Peter’s death in 1806.⁵⁴ Also on this tract was the Peter family’s home *Oakland*.

John Parke Custis Peter was the first president of the Montgomery County Agricultural Society established in 1846: “Peter’s wealth and lineage undoubtedly counted for much in his being selected first president of the society.”⁵⁵ Peter served as a member of the House of Delegates for Montgomery County 1826-1828, following in the footsteps of his uncle Major George Peter.⁵⁶ He also was on the Darnestown District Board of Education. A Yale College circular letter for the Class of 1820 held in New Haven, Connecticut, on Commencement Day, August 19, 1840, described him as, “J.P.C. Peter –planter in Maryland near the District of Columbia.”⁵⁷

[George] Washington Peter (1801-1861), the youngest son of Thomas and Martha Peter, was born at the Peter residence on K Street, Federal City, on November 18, 1801. Where he was schooled is not known. He embarked in the pursuit of agriculture on property inherited from his father, who owned extensive land in Montgomery County, Maryland. On February 6, 1840, he married Jane Boyce (1813-1882) of Maryland. Britannia Peter, George Washington Peter’s youngest sister, spoke of the event to her grandson, Armistead Peter, Jr. who asked where George Washington Peter and Jane Boyce were married: “At *Montrose*, the house of her father. Mother [Martha Custis Peter] had no use for Jane and refused to go to the wedding . . . so none of us were at the wedding.”⁵⁸

[George] Washington Peter and his wife, Jane Peter, lived in Georgetown, but retained neighboring property in Maryland. In 1844 he and his growing family removed to an estate in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, *Shannon Hill*. Although appointed an executor of the will of his uncle George Washington Parke Custis, his distance from the execution of the will prevented him from assuming responsibility for it; thus this responsibility fell on the shoulders of Peter’s cousin-in-law Robert E. Lee.⁵⁹ Shrinking from this task placed a stain on his reputation.

In 1848 Peter and his family returned to Georgetown, but in 1856 leased a farm of 400 acres in Ellicott Mills [City], Maryland, *Lynnwood*, which had been built ca. 1850, from Robert Harford Hare, a Philadelphia lawyer. Peter purchased the property in 1865.⁶⁰ Difficult times and financial troubles plagued him and his family from this time forward.

With this new correspondence, however, came new economic troubles of the time. Andrew Jackson was elected president in 1829 and set the political stage for



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the democratization of the government. On the surface the theme of Jacksonian America spoke of equality and appealed strongly to the working classes, but in theory the party's national leaders cared little if anything for the farmers and laborers who had supported them so strongly. The party abandoned the disenfranchised enslaved and free African Americans, and did not aid the Native American Indians. Instead, Jackson's party worked to undermine the stronghold of the powerful eastern elite and to strengthen the new entrepreneurs of the South and the West. Jackson had suffered severe setbacks during the Panic of 1797; his business had failed, and he had fallen deeply into debt. From that point on he was suspicious of all banks and paper currency. Now as president, as a result of his past experience, he was inclined not to renew the charter of the Bank of the United States, which was up for renewal in 1836.⁶¹

Two different factions opposed the Bank. The "soft money" faction, composed of state bankers and their allies, objected to the Bank because it restrained state banks from freely issuing notes; this faction believed in rapid economic growth and speculation. The "hard money" faction believed only in the coin as state currency, and condemned the banks that issued notes; this faction was wary of speculation and expansion, and Andrew Jackson was their greatest advocate.

The Bank of the United States was headquartered in Philadelphia and had branches in twenty-nine other cities. It held a monopoly on the deposits of the government, which owned one-fifth of the bank's stock. Its task was threefold: it offered credit to growing entrepreneurs; it issued bank notes as a safe medium of exchange throughout the growing country; and it restrained the loosely managed state banks. Much credit went to Nicolas Biddle (1786-1844), who since 1823 had worked to put the institution on a sound basis. Biddle, in an effort to save the Bank Jackson wanted to destroy, befriended Daniel Webster (1782-1845) and Henry Clay (1777-1852). Under pressure these men persuaded Biddle to apply to Congress to recharter the Bank early in 1832, four years ahead of the expiration date in which Jackson would have time to undermine the renewal. But the Bank supporters in Congress failed to override Jackson's veto of this proposition. Henry Clay, who supported Biddle, ran against Jackson in 1832, but no longer had the winning issue of the Bank before him; he lost the election soundly to a triumphant Jackson.

Jackson continued to wage his personal war against the Bank. He decided to remove the government deposits in 1833. His secretary of the treasury, William Duane (1780-1865), refused to allow him to do so; Jackson quickly replaced him



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with Roger B. Taney (1747-1864), a close personal friend. Taney removed the government deposits and placed them in scattered local state banks.⁶² But Biddle did not back down. He called in loans and raised interest rates on the theory that the Bank's resources were now stretched thin without the government deposits. He knew this action would cause financial distress and hoped a slight recession would entice Congress to recharter the Bank in 1836.

Yet economic conditions worsened 1833-1834 and commercial panic disrupted the economy. When the people went to Jackson to demand the renewal of the Bank's charter to strengthen the economy, Jackson blamed the recession on Biddle and would not accept responsibility for the situation he had in fact created. Eventually Biddle had to reverse himself and grant credit where he had at first denied it. His inability to sustain a strong course ended the chance to renew the charter of the Bank, and Jackson won yet another political victory: "But when the Bank of the United States died in 1836, the country lost a valuable financial institution and was left with a fragmented and chronically unstable banking system that would plague the economy for more than a century."⁶³

Washington Peter initiated his correspondence with William Sterrett on September 28, 1829, by assuring Sterrett, "I should feel much satisfied to have the business of my Brother and my self (sic) attended to by you . . . and should it be absolutely necessary for you at any time to visit the Land we are willing to admit a compensation for your trouble."⁶⁴ Peter also expressed an interest in inspecting the land the next summer or fall.

A long silence ensued, but eventually Sterrett replied, stating that he had omitted to write, ". . . in hopes that I could before that time have collected all arrears of rent . . . and that I could inform you at what state your land was rented . . . But without having entirely effected either object, and fearful that you might conclude that I was neglecting your business, I determined to wait no longer." He furnished Peter with a statement of accounts rendered for 1828, 1829, and 1830. He reminded Peter that his commission was \$5 per year, and noted the perpetual financial difficulty of obtaining "paper money exchanged to suit your section of the Country. You can draw on me for the western balance of sixty one dollars and thirty two cents or direct it to be sent by mail as you may elect." Due to Point Pleasant's location very near Gallipolis, Ohio, he suggested that the Honorable Samuel F. Vinton, senator from Ohio and resident of Gallipolis, would advance the money to him and "receive your order on me," as Thomas Peter had done before him. Sterrett requested that both brothers sign for receipt of the money as they co-owned the land.⁶⁵



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A year passed before Washington Peter wrote: “Not having heard from you since Feby. [26], 1831 and know not to what cause to attribute your silence I have now thought it advisable to satisfy myself by letter of your correspondence also of the continuance of your agency . . .”⁶⁶ Peter added that that he must put off his visit to the land because his father, Thomas Peter, was confined to the house and had in fact been bedridden with the gout for the past nine months, “. . . which gives me much additional business.” Thomas Peter, aware that his son was writing to Sterrett, sent “. . . best wishes for your health and prosperity.”

But negotiations for the sale of the land were in the air! In June 1833 Peter addressed Sterrett again, explaining his delay in correspondence “. . . for my absence from home.” Sterrett must have notified Peter that a buyer made an offer on the land, for Peter instructed him, “My brother and my self (sic) are unwilling to take less than five dollars per acre for the entire tract owned jointly by us- Should we sell a part of the tract the piece must be so regulated . . . as to make the tract neat.” Under these circumstances the brothers were willing and happy to sell. Regarding the fact that the recent tenant had not yet paid the rent for 1831, Peter advised, “Give time and if that fails let their misfortune be their recpt. (sic).”⁶⁷

Actually the Peter brothers had another inquiry about their land, and decided to firmly establish their terms of sale. Washington Peter explained that a potential buyer, Dr. Creel (unidentified), “. . . proposed to pay from \$1000 to \$1200 in hand and asked our longest indulgence on the remaining payments.” The brothers requested that he divide the balance of the purchase money -unspecified herein- in equal annual payments: “We require \$1000 certainly in hand, the balance in \$s (sic) equal annual payments with interest on all notes paid annually.” Furthermore the notes must be endorsed by the endorser to allow them to be negotiable if cashed, and a deed of trust must be drawn up upon the land. Sterrett must have written note of inquiry (lost) which asked a question. Peter answered: “You ask if \$1000 or \$1200 is paid in hand, would not the Land itself be a good security balance- The answer is not- In all the Sales of Land made by me and I have recently made several I have required and obtained . . . the balance in three years.” Sterrett had mistakenly thought that Dr. Creel offered \$7000, but Washington Peter disavowed this: “He made us no offer but required our lowest price which was and is \$5 per acre.” Peter directed Sterrett to have all notes drawn payable to the Branch Bank at Washington, where he transacted his business. In true businesslike fashion he informed Sterrett that he and his brother would allow him a commission of 5% “with all just and necessary fees for Deed, etc.”⁶⁸ But as common with land sales, negotiations continued and Peter became impatient with Creel. He instructed



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Sterrett, “. . . [you] will please decline a Sale to [Creel] on the terms heretofore agreed upon –Doctor Creel has had ample time allowed him to conclude a bargain.”

In a postscript he added, “My Father finding that I have been writing to you desires to be particularly remembered.” This was Thomas Peter’s last message to Sterrett; his health was failing rapidly. He died April 16, 1834.⁶⁹

A brief note of May 5, 1834, to William Sterrett acknowledged receipt of his letter containing \$50 in rent for 1833, “. . . of the Land held jointly by my brother and self in Jackson County[,] Virginia”, noted a change in the line of demarcation for the county.⁷⁰ Mason County, originally part of Kanawha County, was established as early as January 1804, and was named in honor of George Mason (1729-1792), the “Father of the Bill of Rights.” Jackson County, however, carved out of Mason, Kanawha, and Wood County on March 1, 1831, was named for President Andrew Jackson. But habit was strong, and Peter did not refer correctly to Jackson County until 1834!

Finally a promising offer was made for the land by Mr. Thomson (unidentified) of Jackson County, [West] Virginia! Washington Peter was “in circumstance” with Thomson, and relayed to Sterrett: “He engaged by the 10th Sep. [1834] to pay me \$1000 in land to give a Note for \$1000 payable in six months for the balance[,] five equal annual payments with interest on the amount paid annually. This security to be approved by me.” Evidently Thomson was already on the property, although a tenant lived there. Peter agreed that Thomson might “erect buildings and prepare timber,” but “. . . he must not remove anything from the Land or interfere with the Tenants now on the Land till he confirms his purchase.” The importance of timber, an economic commodity, was a constant concern to Peter. He also carefully added that he and his brother claimed the rent for 1834 and that Thomson had no right to it.⁷¹ But once again the potential buyer, Thomson, disappointed the brothers: “I received a letter from Mr. Thomson a few weeks since dated Philadelphia still holding out the idea of making the [purchase]. I agree with you in believing Mr. Thomson to have miscalculated his means . . . The Land is again in market- We are anxious to make a Sale of the Land.”⁷²

Sterrett did in fact collect the rent for 1834 as requested and forwarded it to Washington Peter. Inscribed on the reverse of this letter of February 16 was proof: “William Sterrett this day deposited in the Post Office at Point Pleasant fifty dollars in a letter dated March 1 1835 (lost) directed to Mr. George W. Peter



George town (sic) D.C. in notes of following description viz: 1 note on Bank of Va/1 note on F. Bank Va.”

At last a legitimate offer was proposed and accepted! Sometime late in January 1836 an agent, Mr. Camphur (unidentified), presented a suitable offer from a buyer named [Ephriam] Wells (unidentified). Evidently very experienced in negotiation, Washington Peter wrote to Sterrett when he found “. . . a discrepancy stated to exist between my instructions to you . . . and Mr. Camphur agent for Mr. Wells”:

. . . the Notes from Mr. Wells for the payment of one half of the purchase money they must be dated per agreement the day on which the sale was effected Jany. 25th 1836. Thereby bearing interest from and payable on said date in [18]37, [18]38 and [18]39- as regards the information asked when the Trust deed was to be inforced (sic) in case of a non compliance on the part of the purchaser to vent his objections you suggest nothing was said in the agreement of Sale- My idea was and is that Suit could be commenced and Sale enforced if necessary in cash or all of the Notes when a failure to rent either or all shall be at my option if I am away and you are engaged in the taking of the Notes- You will attend to it- and place the opinion on the most favorable footing- The rent now collected by you and subject to my order you will please retain till you again hear from me.⁷³

Peter stated further that his lawyer, Lloyd N. Rogers (1787-1860) of Baltimore City, would handle the legal work and that Wells’ bank, Riggs, must contact Rogers in reference to payment.⁷⁴

Legal negotiations continued. Peter, true to his word that he had experience in land sales, directed his agent to inform Wells that he should send him a check from The Wheeling Bank, that the check payable to Peter frees both Peter and Wells from risk, for if purloined and Peter’s name forged upon it, the Bank paying the check to the forger would be held responsible for payment. Peter promised to forward the deed for the land to Sterrett immediately upon delivery of Wells’ check. He specifically requested, “In taking the Notes and Trust deed from Mr. Wells the Notes may be drawn to John P.C. Peter . . . my Brother and myself having so arranged it as for me to receive the money payment, He the Notes.”⁷⁵ Wells requested the courses [progress from one gradation to another; survey] of the land included with the deed, which Peter allowed.⁷⁶



Negotiations drew to a close! Sterrett sent a letter May 28 (lost) containing a check for Peter from the Northwestern Bank of Virginia [Wheeling] to be deposited at the Metropolis Bank of Washington. Peter replied:

. . . I this morning presented and received thereon the sum of \$2900 making Mr. Wells' payment to date \$3900. I handed your letter of the 26 May to my Attorney and directed a deed to be drawn as desired- I shall carry said deed with me to Montgomery County on the 10th and with my Brother with me. .
.⁷⁷

Now Washington Peter and his agent William Sterrett parted company:

After the delivery of said deed and executor of the Notes please inform me what experience you may have encountered in attending to my business to date as hereafter our connection in business will necessarily cease- Compliments I disregard therefore never pay but you have secured the respect of Yours Truly. Geo. W. Peter⁷⁸

And so in this manner did Washington's land bequeathed to his wife's granddaughter, Martha Parke Custis Peter, pass from the hands of the Peter family.

--Wendy Kail, Archivist

¹ Tudor Place Historic House and Garden Archive, Papers of Armistead Peter, Jr., MS 14, Box 69, F 25, *Britannia's Reminiscences*. This letter is recorded in an unknown hand; it also acknowledges the birth of Martha Custis [Peter], born December 31, 1777, and the good health of her mother, Eleanor Calvert Custis. Courtesy: Theodore J. Crackel, ed., The Papers of George Washington Digital Edition (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008). Original source: Revolutionary War Series. Volume 13:16 June 1775-31 May 1779.

² John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Diaries of George Washington 1748-1799. Volume I: 1748-1770 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925), 400, n.2.

³ Ibid., 404; Washington recorded in his diary that he returned home from this journey on December 1, “after an absence of 9 weeks and one Day.”, 452.

⁴ Roy Bird Cook, Washington’s Western Lands (Strasburg, Virginia: Shenandoah Publishing House, Inc., 1930), 81. Cook notes that the original patent is in the Library of Congress.

⁵ Ibid., 82-83.

⁶ Ibid., 83.

⁷ John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Last Will and Testament of George Washington and Schedule of his Property (Mount Vernon, Virginia: The Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union, 1939; 6th edition, revised, 1992), 43.

⁸ Ibid., 44.

⁹ Description of acreage of Washington’s lands varies; the fact that the land was surveyed several times by different surveyors and under improved surveying equipment accounts for these discrepancies.

¹⁰ W.W. Abbot, ed., The Papers of George Washington: Confederation Series I, January-July 1784 (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 492-493. George Washington to James Craik, July 10, 1784.

¹¹ John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Diaries of George Washington 1748-1799. Volume II 1771-1785 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925), 279-328. These entries cover Washington’s journey from September 1-October 4, 1784.

¹² Ibid., 317.

¹³ David R. Hoth and Carol S. Ebdel, eds., The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series 16, 1 May-30 September 1794 (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 241. George Washington to James Ross, June 16, 1794. Detailed descriptions of the land are given in Washington’s letters to Presley Nevill, June 16, 1794, and to James Ross, January 15, 1795.

¹⁴ Fitzgerald, 25; Cook, 129. Washington’s will is held in the Fairfax County Courthouse, Fairfax, Virginia. The three granddaughters of Martha Washington were Elizabeth Parke Custis Law (1776-1832), Martha Parke Custis Peter (1777-1854), and Eleanor Parke Custis Lewis (1779-1852).

¹⁵ Cook, 132.

¹⁶ Ibid., 83.

¹⁷ Ibid., 133. Thomas Peter also drew Lot No. 6 of 1100 acres as proxy for his sister-in-law Mrs. Eliza Law; he signed the agreement as “Mrs. Law, by Thomas Peter, her Atty.”, 133.

¹⁸ Tudor Place Archive, Papers of Thomas and Martha Peter, MS 2, Box 1, F 16.

¹⁹ Ibid., Papers of Thomas and Martha Peter, MS 2, Box 2, Oversized: Francis Lowndes/ to/ Thomas Peter/ Deed, “Received 8th June 1805 to be recorded and same day was recorded in Liber No. 12 on folios 379/380 of the land records of Washington County in the District of Columbia.”

²⁰ Alan Brinkley, American History: A Survey. Volume I: To 1877 (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1991, Ninth Edition), 228.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 229.

²³ Delia A. McCulloch, "Point Pleasant." *The West Virginia Historical Magazine Quarterly*. Volume 5, April 1905, No. 2 (Charleston, West Virginia: West Virginia Historical and Antiquarian Society, 1905), 92.

²⁴ Ibid., 94.

²⁵ The Winterthur Library, Wilmington, Delaware, The Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera. Major William Sterrett, Washington Family Property Papers.

²⁶ McCulloch, 94.

²⁷ The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, Earl Gregg Swem Library, Special Collections Research Center, William Sterrett Papers. Although the first piece of correspondence between Thomas Peter and William Sterrett is May 19, 1819, that Peter acknowledged receipt of an earlier letter indicates that their relationship began before the first letter held at Swem Library. Letters from Sterrett to Peter are frequently acknowledged in this correspondence, but are not included in this collection; they have been filed elsewhere or were lost. The letters present in this collection are copy letters; the originals would have been sent to Peter. From references in the Peter-Sterrett correspondence there are approximately 22 letters missing for reasons stated above.

²⁸ Tudor Place Archive, Papers of Armistead Peter, Jr., MS 14, Box 144, F 24. Dr. Thomas E. Green, *Alexander Hamilton, An Appreciation Delivered Before The Sons of the Revolution in the District of Columbia*, January 10, 1920 (Washington, D.C.: No publisher noted, 1920), 3.

²⁹ Thomas Peter to William Sterrett, May 19, 1819, Letter 1.

³⁰ Thomas Peter to William Sterrett, October 25, 1819, Letter 2.

³¹ Thomas Peter to William Sterrett, November 6, 1820, Letter 3. The Postmaster General in Washington, D.C., at the time of this writing was Return Meigs (1817-1823).

³² Thomas Peter to William Sterrett, November 6, 1820, Letter 3.

³³ Thomas Peter to William Sterrett, December 13, 1820, Letter 4.

³⁴ Tudor Place Archive, Papers of Armistead Peter, Jr., MS 14, Box 69, F 25. *Britannia's Reminiscences*. Oakland was the Peter's farm in Montgomery County, Maryland. Woodlawn, built on 2,000 acres of land given by George Washington, was the home of Martha Peter's sister, Eleanor [Nelly] Custis Lewis, and her husband, Lawrence Lewis, in Fairfax County, Virginia.

³⁵ Thomas Peter to William Sterrett, March 6, 1821, Letter 5.

³⁶ Thomas Peter to William Sterrett, January 25, 1822, Letter 6.

³⁷ Thomas Peter to William Sterrett, October 15, 1822, Letter 8.

³⁸ William Sterrett to Thomas Peter, November 15, 1822, Letter 1.

³⁹ Ibid.; John Neslerade has not been identified.

⁴⁰ Thomas Peter to William Sterrett, February 8, 1823, Letter 9.

⁴¹ Ibid. Nicholas Fitzhugh (1764-1814) was the son of Henry Fitzhugh (1723-1783) and Sarah Battaile Fitzhugh (1731-1783). Nicolas Fitzhugh's wife was Sarah Ashton Fitzhugh; Sarah Ashton Fitzhugh's mother, Ann Washington Ashton, was the daughter of George Washington's elder brother Augustine Washington.

⁴² William Sterrett to Thomas Peter, October 20, 1825, Letter 2.

⁴³ Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989, Bicentennial Edition (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1989), 1985. Samuel Finley Vinton (1792-

1861) was born in South Hadley, Massachusetts; he graduated from Williams College in 1814 and studied law. He was admitted to the Bar in 1816 and removed to Gallipolis, Ohio, where he held local offices and served as congressman from the twenty-second through the twenty-fourth congresses; he also served in the twenty-eighth through the thirtieth congresses. He ran unsuccessfully for governor of Ohio in 1851. In 1862 President Lincoln appointed him to appraise slaves emancipated in the District of Columbia.

⁴⁴ Cook, 25.

⁴⁵ Thomas Peter to William Sterrett, May 12, 1826, Letter 11.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Patricia Abelard Andersen, Montgomery County Land Record of Abstracts. Volume II, Liber M to Liber EBP1: 1805-1865, S20, 1826-1827, 31. [unpublished]

⁴⁸ William Sterrett to Thomas Peter, March 13 1827, Letter 3.

⁴⁹ Thomas Peter to William Sterrett, April 18, 1827, Letter 12.

⁵⁰ Thomas Peter to William Sterrett, May 26, 1827, Letter 13.

⁵¹ Tudor Place Archive, Papers of Armistead Peter, Jr., MS 14, Box 69, F 25. *Britannia's Reminiscences*, MS 14, Box 69, F 25. Anne Hollingsworth Wharton, Social Life in the Early Republic (Philadelphia and London: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1902), 66: "Mr. Peter's house is said to have been one of six built by Mr. Robert Peter for his six sons on a tract of land between Twenty-fifth and Twenty-seventh Streets, which was called 'Mexico' on the original plan of the District."

⁵² Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, Sterling Memorial Library, Manuscripts and Archives. Catalogus Senatus Academici, Collegio Yalensi (Republica Connecticut: H. Howe Typographo, 1826), 52: Peter is noted as "Johannes Parke Custis Peter." See also Franklin Bowditch Dexter, Biographical Notices of Graduates of Yale College. Issued as a Supplement to the Obituary Record (New Haven, Connecticut: No Publisher noted, 1913), 63: "John Parke Custis Peter, son of Thomas Peter, of Georgetown, District of Columbia, was born in 1799 or 1800. His mother, Martha Parke Custis, was a granddaughter of the wife of General Washington. He spent his life on his plantation, about thirty miles from Washington, where he died in 1848."

⁵³ *Reminiscences*, MS 14, Box 69, F 25. *Montanverde* was the home of John Parke Custis Peter's uncle Major George Peter (1779-1861).

⁵⁴ Roger Brooke Farquhar, Historic Montgomery County, Maryland, Old Homes and History (Baltimore, Maryland: Monumental Printing Company, 1952), 119.

⁵⁵ George M. Anderson, "The Montgomery County Agricultural Society: The Beginning Years, 1846-1850," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Winter 1986, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Baltimore, Maryland: The Maryland Historical Society, 1986), 305. Anderson wrote: ". . . Certificates were awarded in livestock, agricultural implements, and household manufactures. John Parke Custis Peter received certificates of excellence for the best ewes and the handsomest Durham cows and heifers. It is not surprising that the land holdings of an affluent planter like Peter should have been matched with prizewinning livestock," 307.

⁵⁶ Richard K. MacMaster and Ray Eldon Hiebert, A Grateful Remembrance: the Story of Montgomery County, Maryland (Rockville, Maryland: Montgomery County Government and the Montgomery County Historical Society, 1976), 403-404.

- ⁵⁷ Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, Sterling Memorial Library, Manuscripts and Archives. Circular letter typed document (New Haven, Connecticut: No publisher noted, 1840).
- ⁵⁸ Tudor Place Archive, Papers of Armistead Peter, Jr., MS 14, Box 69, F 22, ND.
- ⁵⁹ Tudor Place Historic House & Garden, Vertical File. *Sentinel*, December 21, 1877; reprinted from the *Ellicott City [Maryland] Times*, "Death of an (sic) Historic Man." No author, ND.
- ⁶⁰ Maryland Historical Trust/ Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form, Inventory No. HO-193, page 13. A copy of a letter from George Washington Peter's attorney, James Mackubin, of March 19, 1875, stated : "In looking over the Policy I find that the property insured is described as being near 'Ellicotts (sic) Mills' Howard Township Anne Arundel County, Virginia. The correct designation then (1852) would have been 'Howard District of Anne Arundel County Maryland.' Now it is just Ellicott City, Howard County, Maryland," 14. There are various spellings of the property known as *Lynnwood*.
- ⁶¹ Brinkley, 253.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, 254.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 255.
- ⁶⁴ George Washington Peter to William Sterrett, September 28, 1829, Letter 14.
- ⁶⁵ William Sterrett to George Washington Peter, February 26, 1831, Letter 3.
- ⁶⁶ George Washington Peter to William Sterrett, August 21, 1832, Letter 15.
- ⁶⁷ George Washington Peter to William Sterrett, June 11, 1833, Letter 17.
- ⁶⁸ George Washington Peter to William Sterrett, November 2, 1833, Letter 19.
- ⁶⁹ George Washington Peter to William Sterrett, February 7, 1834, Letter 21.
- ⁷⁰ George Washington Peter to William Sterrett, May 5, 1834, Letter 23.
- ⁷¹ George Washington Peter to William Sterrett, October 13, 1834, Letter 24.
- ⁷² George Washington Peter to William Sterrett, February 16, 1835, Letter 25.
- ⁷³ George Washington Peter to William Sterrett, February 26, 1836 Letter 29.
- ⁷⁴ Lloyd Nicholas Rogers of Druid Hall, Baltimore, Maryland, had married to Eliza Law (1797-1822), the daughter of Eliza Custis Law, sister of Washington Peter's mother, Martha Peter.
- ⁷⁵ George Washington Peter to William Sterrett, March 24, 1836, Letter 30.
- ⁷⁶ George Washington Peter to William Sterrett, May 14, 1836, Letter 31.
- ⁷⁷ George Washington Peter to William Sterrett, June 8, 1836, Letter 32. Cook notes: "This section was held intact until June 13, 1836, when John P.C. Peter and Elizabeth Jane Peter, his wife, and George W. Peter of [Georgetown] Montgomery County, Maryland, sold 1,425 acres to Ephriam Wells (ND), of Wellsburg, [West] Virginia, for \$4,125.00.", 84. As the Peter brothers were adamant in requesting \$5 per acre, Cook may have mistaken the amount paid, which was in all probability \$7,125.00
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

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