

Beautifying Every Corner: The Georgetown Garden Club¹



At this year's Spring Garden Party on May 20, Tudor Place will honor the Georgetown Garden Club for nearly a century of service to our community and its decades of support for garden projects at Tudor Place. The relationship between the two organizations runs deep, going back to the earliest days of the Garden Club.

Founded in 1924 to beautify "every corner of Georgetown which is susceptible of improvement,"¹ the Georgetown Garden Club has been engaged in planting flowers and trees, developing paths and walkways, funding improvements to outdoor spaces and battling against billboards for almost a hundred years. One of the earliest members of the Club was Caroline Ogden-Jones Peter, wife of Armistead Peter 3rd and a matriarch of Tudor Place. She joined the Club around 1930 and remained active until her death in 1965. During this time the Club held some of its monthly meetings at the estate. The minutes of the Georgetown Garden Club note in one instance that the Club met at the home of Mrs. Armistead Peter 3rd on March 13, 1959 and "delicious refreshments were served."²

Following Caroline's death in 1965, the Georgetown Garden Club passed a resolution in memoriam, citing in particular that her "sweet and gentle manner, her quiet voice and her gracious hospitality made a special spot for her in our memory."³ The following month, Armistead Peter 3rd asked that the Club hold a meeting at Tudor Place each year in memory of Caroline, a request that was honored for many years. Armistead's warm relationship with the Club resulted in his selection as an Honorary Member of the Club in 1971, a rare distinction for his gender.

Armistead Peter 3rd's affection for the Club was expressed even after his passing. In his will, he stated his hope that the Club continue to meet at Tudor Place "at such time as they may select."⁴ The Club has returned often to enjoy the beauty of the gardens and learn about projects that advance the care and splendor of the site.



Annual Club Meeting in the Bowling Green, 2017

¹ Georgetown Garden Club, *Gardens of Georgetown: Exploring Urban Treasures* (Washington, DC: Georgetown Garden Club, 2015), p.92

² Georgetown Garden Club Minutes, March 13, 1959. Peabody Room, Georgetown Branch, DC Public Library.

³ Ibid, October 8, 1965.

⁴ Last Will and Testament of Armistead Peter 3rd, p. 18

Members of the Peter family beyond Tudor Place have been associated with the Club as well. Both Grace Dunlop Peter (Mrs. Walter G. Peter, Sr.) and Evelyn Booth Peter (Mrs. Walter G. Peter) were active members of the organization. In 1956, Grace spearheaded an effort to erect a memorial to Sarah Louise Rittenhouse at Montrose Park, recognizing her work to preserve the 16 acres that became the park. That memorial (although vandalized in 2019) still stands at the entrance to the Park. Grace's husband, Walter, Sr., drew the illustration, shown above, that still adorns the cover of the Club's handbook. Daughter-in-law Evelyn served as recording secretary throughout much of the 1950s, taking minutes at the monthly meetings.

During its years as a historic house museum, Tudor Place has maintained a close relationship with the Georgetown Garden Club, serving as a venue for club gatherings and opening its grounds for the Georgetown Garden Tour. Each May since 2000, the Tour has provided participants a peek into the private gardens of Georgetown village. All funds raised from the Tour are contributed to the maintenance and care of Georgetown's public spaces.



Tree Work, 2011

For two decades Tudor Place has been a grateful recipient of funds, all directed toward important improvements around the grounds. Early projects included the creation of replica pedestals in the North Garden, lightning protection for historic trees, plant labels with botanical names to educate visitors and restoration of the Box Knot Garden. Recent projects have focused upon the restoration of the site's perimeters, including the removal of invasive plants and the installation of heirloom and native plants, and recovery from the 2018 boxwood blight. Through the Club's support in 2016, Tudor Place acquired IrisBG, a botanical garden collection management database.

The generous support of the Georgetown Garden Club has been essential to the care of the 5½ acres of gardens at Tudor Place. The Club's ideals about the health and sustainability of the neighborhood have been shared by the Peter family and the Tudor Place Foundation. In gratitude for its generosity and in recognition of the special relationship between these organizations, Tudor Place is pleased to recognize the Georgetown Garden Club as the honoree of the 2020 Spring Garden Party.

-- Executive Director Mark Hudson with assistance from
Curator Grant Quertermous



Restoration of Box Knot, 2010

ⁱ Article from *Tudor Place Times*, Spring 2020 edition.