

Tudor Place Manuscript Collection
Robert Peter Papers
MS-1

Introduction

The correspondence, subject files, financial documents, and legal documents that compose the Robert Peter Papers deal almost exclusively with the land transactions of Robert Peter (1726-1806) and the settlement of his estate. The material spans the years 1746 to 1814.

These papers were a part of the estate Armistead Peter placed under the auspices of the Carostead Foundation, Incorporated, in 1966; the name of the foundation was changed to Tudor Place Foundation, Incorporated, in 1987. Use and rights of the papers are controlled by the Foundation. The collection was processed and the register prepared by James Kaser, a project archivist hired through a National Historical Records and Publications Grant in 1992. This document was reformatted by Emily Rusch and revised by Tudor Place archivist Wendy Kail in 2020.

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Biographical Sketch

In 1726 Robert Peter (1726-1806) was born in Lanarkshire, Scotland, at Crossbasket Castle, the seat of the Peter family, to Thomas and Jean (Dunlop) Peter. He arrived in America by 1746, and settled first in Bladensburg, Maryland. By 1752 Robert Peter had opened a store on Rock Creek in Georgetown, then part of Maryland, where he acted as a purchasing agent for the Scottish tobacco firm of John Glassford and Company, a mercantile firm in Glasgow. Glassford agents purchased tobacco from small farmers and gave them credit at a store that stocked a large variety of manufactured goods imported from Great Britain. When the Revolutionary War broke out, Robert Peter bought Glassford's Georgetown holdings.

In 1767 Robert Peter married Elizabeth Scott (1744-1821), daughter of George Scott, High Sheriff of Prince George's County, Maryland, 1763-1765. They had twelve children, eight of whom survived. For a period of time the Robert Peters resided on Cherry Alley [Lane] below M [Bridge] Street, the fashionable part of Georgetown in 1776. Their oldest son, Thomas Peter (1769-1834), built Tudor Place.

In addition to his mercantile ventures, Robert Peter was a significant landowner in the state of Maryland, where he held farms and tobacco-producing estates. In Georgetown he bought land along the Potomac River and built a storehouse; he owned an entire city block, a property known as "Peter's Square," bounded by what is currently 31st Street [Congress Street], Wisconsin Avenue [High Street], M Street [Bridge Street], and K Street [Wapping Street], where the loading and unloading of vessels took place. Aside from extensive land holdings in Maryland, Robert Peter continually purchased and sold large tracts of land in what was known as the Federal City. In June 1791 he and fifteen other local landowners signed an agreement with the Commissioners of the Federal City through which he surrendered one-half of his land in exchange for money and city lots; this enabled President Washington to establish a national capital. The men who did so were titled "Original Proprietors of the City of Washington."

Robert Peter was active in politics. He was a justice of the peace in Frederick County, Maryland. In 1757 he was elected to the Board of Commissioners of Georgetown in charge of the sale of lots of the town, and served in this capacity for thirty-two years. He was appointed first mayor of Georgetown in 1790-1791.

Upon his death in November 1806, Robert Peter left 20,491 acres in land valued at \$479,385. He was buried in Georgetown in the Presbyterian Burial Ground.

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Scope and Content

The bulk of the collection deals with Robert Peter's land transactions. The material consists of deeds, surveys, and other documents created to establish ownership. The collection does not include information on Robert Peter's use of land. Little of the material deals with his transfer of land to the Federal City. In addition to these documents, there are a few pieces of correspondence that deal with specific financial transactions, records maintained by Robert Peter, bills and receipts, and documents related to the settlement of his estate. These records are fragmentary; the remainder of Robert Peter's substantial involvement in the tobacco trade are two receipts, and the only ledger in the collection is one for the year 1795.

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Series Description

CORRESPONDENCE

Series

CORRESPONDENCE

1774-1798

Arranged chronologically

Incoming and outgoing correspondence dealing with business matters, including shipment of goods and land surveys. Includes a letter from George Scott, Robert Peter's father-in-law.

SUBJECT FILES

Series

SUBJECT FILES

1746-1804

Arranged alphabetically and then chronologically

A series of subject files many of which include deeds, surveys, and correspondence related to specific pieces of land. Two files deal with land Robert Peter gave for the creation of the Federal City and land assigned him by the Commissioners.

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Series

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

1759-1814; ND

Arranged alphabetically and then chronologically

Mostly consists of land conveyances, deeds, patents, warrants, and surveys. Also includes a mortgage, legal testimony, and Robert Peter's will.

FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS

Series

FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS

1764-1812; ND

Includes a ledger from 1795, ledger sheets, receipts and receipts for tobacco, and records of accounts Robert Peter maintained with merchants. A large percentage of the documents relate to the settlement of Robert Peter's estate by his sons.

PLATS

Series

PLATS

1792; ND

Consists of plats executed as preliminaries to the creation of legal survey documents.

NOTE

It should be noted that effort has been made to locate the county in which Robert Peter's land transactions took place. In 1745 portions of Prince George's County and Baltimore County were combined to create Frederick County. In 1776 Frederick County was divided. The northern portion retained the title Frederick County, but the southern portion was named Montgomery County. Therefore, after 1776 southernmost land originally credited to Frederick County was newly credited to Montgomery County, and for this reason Montgomery County came to hold land records that had originated in Frederick County.

MS-1
Box 1

Folder		
1	Correspondence	1774; 1780; 1785; 1794
2	Correspondence	1797-1798
3	Correspondence: Land Dispute: Murdock and Robert Peter, <i>What You Will</i> , Frederick County/Montgomery County	1746; ND
4	Correspondence: Robert Peter to John Davidson	1787
5	Correspondence: Relating to the Work of the Commissioners of the City of Washington	1798
6	Certificate of Land Division: <i>Black Oak Thicket</i> [alias <i>The Grange</i>], Frederick County/Montgomery County	1764; 1772; 1786; 1786; 1789; 1790; 1791
7	Certificate of Title: Extract <i>Griffith's Oversight</i> , Frederick County/ Montgomery County	1777; 1787; 1798
8	Conveyance: <i>James Park</i> , Montgomery County	1795
9	Deed and Payment Agreements: <i>Forrest</i> , Montgomery County	1779; 1796
10	Land Patent: <i>Chiswell's Lot</i> , Frederick County/Montgomery County	1794
11	Land Patent: <i>Griffith's Oversight</i> , Fredrick County/Montgomery County	1795
12	Land Warrant: Frederick County Land [Unidentified]	1768; 1770
13	Indenture: Executed Between David Ross and Evan Shelby	1765
14	Plat and Certificate, Survey with Courses: <i>Carderrock</i> , Montgomery County	1786
15	Survey with Courses: <i>Discovery</i> , Frederick County/Montgomery County	1765
16	Survey with Courses: <i>Griffith's Cow Pasture</i>	1761
17	Survey with Courses: <i>Grove's Hunting Outlet</i>	ND
18	Survey with Courses: Resurvey of <i>Hogin's Discovery</i> , Frederick County	1765

19	Survey with Courses: <i>Howards Speculation</i> , Montgomery County	1804; 1805
20	Survey with Courses: Jefferson Street, Georgetown, Federal City	ND
21	Survey with Courses: Parts of <i>King Cole</i> and [<i>Thomas 's</i>] <i>Forrest</i> , Montgomery County	ND
22	Survey with Courses: <i>Madding's Delight</i> , Frederick County	1759
23	Survey with Courses: <i>Pleasant Hills</i> , Montgomery County; <i>Warfields Vineyard/Genoa</i> , Montgomery County	ND; 1786; 1787
24	Survey with Courses: <i>Seneca</i> , Frederick County/Montgomery County; <i>Mount Pleasant</i> , Montgomery County	1786
25	Survey with Courses: <i>White Oak Bottom</i> , Frederick County/ Montgomery County; verso, Note from Samuel Beall	1766
26	Bond: Conveying <i>Sugar Bottom</i> , Frederick County	1770
27	Survey Certificate: Plats [Unidentified]	1814
28	Survey Extract: Partition of <i>What You Will</i> , Montgomery County	1780
29	Testimony: Tobacco Shipment	ND
30	Receipts: Tobacco	1775; 1807; ND
31	Will: Robert Peter, Sr.	Aug 19, 1805
32	Will: Robert Peter, Jr.	Jun 25, 1809
33	Bills of Exchange	1780
34	Bills and Receipts	1764; 1805-1812
35	Letter and Account: Taxes	1805-1806; 1809
36	Robert Peter, Sr. Estate: W. Boyd to William Smith, Surveyor	1812

37	Robert Peter, Sr. Estate: Accounts	1789-1812, scattered; ND
38	Robert Peter, Sr. Estate: Ledger Sheets	Apr 1807- Mar 1812
39	Robert Peter, Sr. Estate: Disbursements, Robert Peter, Junior	1808-1811, scattered
40	Robert Peter Sr., Estate: Disbursements, Thomas Peter	1809-1812
41	Plat: <i>Aix la Chapella</i> [Possibly <i>Chapple Forrest</i> , Montgomery County]	1792
42	Plat: <i>Good Luck</i> , Montgomery County	ND
43	Colonial Currency	1770; 1773; 1774; 1775; 1776; 1778; 1779

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Box 2
Oversized

Archival Cabinet B

Folder		
1	Indenture: <i>Black Oak Thicket</i> ; Patent for <i>Black Oak Thicket</i> ; Resurvey of <i>Black Oak Thicket</i> , Frederick County/Montgomery County	1764; 1762; 1765/1766
2	Articles of Agreement; Certificate of Division; Survey: <i>Forrest</i> , Frederick County/Montgomery County	1757; ND; ND
3	Division of Squares: <i>Mexico</i> , Federal City	1796; 1797
4	Deed: <i>Bachelor's Purchase</i> , Montgomery County	1797
5	Land Patent: <i>Discovery</i> , Frederick County/Montgomery County	1771
6	Resurvey: <i>The Grange</i> , Frederick County	Jun 1766
7	Plats, Lands in Dispute: <i>Hickory Thicket</i> , Frederick County/ Montgomery County; <i>The Grange</i> ; <i>Burdetts Force</i> ; <i>White Oak Bottom</i>	1767
8	Indenture: <i>Friendship</i> , Frederick County/Montgomery County; Resurvey for <i>Friendship</i> ; Plat for <i>Friendship</i>	1767; 1721; ND
9	Indenture: <i>Friendship</i> , Frederick County/Montgomery County	1765
10	Survey with Courses: <i>Friendship</i> , Frederick County/Montgomery County	1769
11	Indenture: <i>Indulgence, Brandy</i> , Frederick County/Montgomery County; Resurvey of <i>Indulgence</i> , Frederick County/Montgomery County	1766; 1769; 1793
12	Land Patent: <i>Edloe's Adventure</i> , Frederick County/Montgomery County; <i>Indulgence</i> , Frederick County/Montgomery County	1766

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Box 3
Oversized

Archival Cabinet B

Folder

1	Courses: Several Tracts of Land for Richard Henderson, Esq.	1731-1762, scattered
2	Land Patent: <i>Little Chance</i> , Prince George's County; Survey: <i>Little Chance</i>	1760
3	Indenture: <i>Bustons Delight, Molly's Rattle, Capernaum, Poor Richard's Almanack</i> ; Correspondence: Nathaniel Ducker's Land	1795; 1804
4	Land Patent: <i>Capernaum</i> , Montgomery County	1785
5	Plat and Certificate: <i>All I Can Get</i> , Prince George's County [Archibald Orme]	1792
6	Courses: <i>Part of The Widow's Mite</i> , Prince George's County; <i>Part of The Vineyard</i> , Prince George's County; <i>Addition to The Vineyard</i> , Prince George's County; <i>Little Prevention</i> , Prince George's County; Orme's <i>Luck</i> , Prince George's County; Survey, <i>The Widow's Mite</i> , Prince George's County; Certificate and Plot of <i>Orme's Luck</i> , Prince George's County [Archibald Orme]	1760; 1765
7	Land Patents: <i>The Widow's Mite; The Vineyard, Addition to the Vineyard</i> , Prince George's County [Archibald Orme]	1762
8	Courses: <i>Part of Flint's Discovery</i> , Prince George's County [Archibald Orme]	ND
9	Wrapper: "Papers relating to the Land which I bought from Mr. Orme" Miscellaneous Papers: Certificate and Plat of <i>Little Prevention</i> , Prince George's County [Archibald Orme]	1755; 1760; 1765; ND
10	Indentures: Thomas Fletchall's Conveyance to John Abington <i>Part of the Widow's Mite</i> , Prince George's County; Bond: John Abington (sic) and Sarah Needham to Archibald Orme	1722; 1723; 1755
11	Deed: Mary Abbington to Bowels Abbington/ in case of his death before aged twentyone years to Sarah Abbington, <i>The Vineyard, The Widow's Mite</i> , Prince George's County, Copy; Indenture: Sarah Needham and John Abbington to Robert Peter; Courses: <i>The Vineyard</i> from Mrs. Needham and John Abbington; Correspondence: Ebenezer Fisher to Robert Peter [Document reads Abbington (sic)]	1739; 1755; 1765; 1764

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| 12 | Indenture: <i>The Vineyard, Addition to The Vineyard</i> , Prince George's County [Archibald Orme] | 1755 |
| 13 | Deed of Gift: John Peerce to His Sons Edward, William, and Thomas Peerce, <i>Jemecha Portrial</i> , Prince George's County | 1740 |

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Box 4
Oversized

Archival Cabinet B

Folder

1	Courses: <i>Hermitage</i> , Montgomery County	ND
2	Indenture: Lot 47, Georgetown, Federal City	1796
3	Indenture: Lot 58, Georgetown, Federal City	1792
4	Deed: <i>Lucy's Delight</i>	1771
5	Resurvey: <i>Sugar Bottom</i> , Montgomery County	1796
6	Indenture: <i>Strife</i>	1785
7	Indenture: <i>Poplar Spring</i> , Montgomery County	1771
8	Land Patent: Richard Tilghman	1725
9	Land Patent: Joseph Wilfour, <i>The Exchange</i> , Montgomery County	1743
10	Land Patent: Robert Peter, <i>Galilea</i> and <i>Copernaum</i>	1805
11	Land Patent: Arthur Hickman, <i>Sandy Spring</i>	1759
12	Land Patent: Benjamin Burdett, <i>Burdetts Force</i>	1762
13	Indenture: <i>Burdett's Force</i>	1768

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Box 5
Oversized

Archival Cabinet B

Folder

1	Indenture: Legal Precedent for Resolving Erroneous Deeds	1771
2	Legal Transcript: Robert Peter vs. Thomas Mains	1802
3	Resurvey: <i>Blantyre</i> , Montgomery County; Plat and Certificate	1785
4	Survey with Courses: <i>Bradford's Rest</i> , Montgomery County; Plat of <i>Bradford's Rest</i> ; Wrapper	1773; ND
5	Plat and Certificate: <i>The Calf Pasture</i>	1780; 1793
6	Correspondence: William Smith; Plat of Part of <i>Garnkirk</i> ; Plots of <i>Garnkirk</i> Sold	1804; 1804; 1814
7	Correspondence: William Smith; Survey of <i>Italy</i> , Resurvey of <i>Italy</i>	1802; 1802 1799
8	Plats: John Harris' Land	ND
9	Survey with Courses: <i>Mount Pleasant</i> , Montgomery County	1794
10	Part of a Tract of Land Called <i>The Widows Mite</i> , Prince George's County; <i>Holmead</i> and Robert Peter's Part of <i>The Widows Mite</i>	1796
11	Plat: [Unidentified]	ND
12	Indenture: <i>Knave's Disappointment</i>	1780
13	Indenture: <i>Hard to Get</i> , Montgomery County	1789
14	<i>The Maryland Journal & Baltimore Advertiser</i>	1792

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Box 6
Oversized

Archival Cabinet B

1	Resurvey: <i>Brandy; Friendship</i> , Montgomery County	ND
2	Plat: <i>Mexico</i> , Parts I and II	1793/1795
3	Plat: [Unidentified]	ND

Box 7
Oversized

Archival Cabinet B

Robert Peter Ledger	1795
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Map Case

Robert Peter's Will, Photocopy	1792
Plat, Survey with Courses: <i>Mount Pleasant</i> , Montgomery County	1792
Resurvey: The Courses of <i>Forrest; Courses of the Resurvey</i> , Montgomery County	1796
Land Grant, Survey: <i>Cross Basket</i> , Frederick County	1745; 1770
Land Grant: <i>Preston's Marsh</i> , Prince George's County/ Frederick County	1734