

Tudor Place Manuscript Collection
Martha (Kennon) Peter Papers
MS-10

Introduction

Martha Custis (Kennon) Peter (1843-1886) was the only child of Commodore Beverley Kennon (1793-1844) and Britannia (Peter) Kennon (1815-1911). Her father died in the explosion of the gun "Peacemaker" on board the *U.S.S. Princeton* within a year of her birth. During her childhood and youth, except for her schooling in Maryland and Pennsylvania, she lived almost exclusively at Tudor Place; in 1867 she married her cousin, Dr. Armistead Peter (1840-1902). Initially the couple resided at Tudor Place.

The papers in this collection include a small amount of correspondence, a few literary productions, scrapbook material, and printed material.

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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Bibliographical Sketch

Martha Custis (Kennon) Peter was born to Commodore Beverley Kennon (1793-1844) and Britannia (Peter) Kennon (1815-1911) on October 18, 1843 at Tudor Place. The family resided at the United States Navy Yard in Washington, where her father was Chief of Bureau. Commodore Beverley Kennon was killed by the explosion of the cannon "Peacemaker" in 1844, and her mother Britannia (Peter) Kennon returned to Tudor Place to raise her daughter. Martha (Kennon) Peter attended Ingleside, a school near Catonsville, Maryland, and then the Misses Casey's Boarding School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

When the Civil War commenced, Britannia (Peter) Kennon rented Tudor Place and travelled South with her daughter, but returned when it was rumored that her house might be taken for a Union hospital. Martha (Kennon) Peter was married by the Reverend W.W. Williams to her cousin, Dr. Armistead Peter (1840-1902), on April 23, 1867. The couple lived at Tudor Place for fourteen years, and Dr. Armistead Peter had his office there. Their five children were born at Tudor Place: Walter Gibson Peter (1868-1945), Armistead Peter, Jr., (1870-1960), Beverley Kennon Peter (1872-1922), George Freeland Peter (1875-1953), and Agnes Norfleet Peter (1880-1957). Eventually the family built their own home in Georgetown, 3044 O Street, which still stands. Their summer residence was a farm, Winona, in Bethesda, Maryland; their house remains on the property of the National Institute of Health.

Martha (Kennon) Peter died unexpectedly on September 8, 1886.

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Series Description

CORRESPONDENCE

Series

CORRESPONDENCE: GENERAL

Incoming and outgoing

1859; 1860; 1863; 1867; 1883; ND

Letters from school friends; one letter from Kate (Williams) Upshur.

CORRESPONDENCE; MARY CUSTIS LEE

Incoming

1862; 1867; ND

Two letters from Mary (Custis) Lee. A letter written in May 1862 discusses the confiscation of Arlington House and the White House; she details the contents of Arlington House, particularly the Washington artifacts there, which she is having removed and stored at Tudor Place. The second letter of 1867 congratulates Martha (Kennon) Peter on her marriage to Dr. Armistead Peter and includes a studio card of Robert E. Lee. A short note is undated.

CORRESPONDENCE: JAMES MACKUBIN FAMILY

Incoming

1866; 1886; ND

Includes letters from James Mackubin and his daughter Ella Mackubin of Lynnwood, Ellicott City, Maryland. Ella Macubin sends an undated note of friendship; in 1866 she congratulates Martha Custis Kennon on her engagement to Dr. Armistead Peter; a third undated letter announces the sale of Lynnwood. James Macubin writes a thank you note.

CORRESPONDENCE: MARTHA CUSTIS PETER; WALTER GIBSON PETER

Incoming

ND; 1873

A letter from Martha (Kennon) Peter's grandmother and a letter from her son Walter Gibson Peter to "Nanna" begging her to return home at once. "Nanna" is not identified, but might be Britannia (Peter) Kennon.

CORRESPONDENCE: WHITTLE AND SIMS, COUNSELLORS

Incoming

1874

A letter from lawyers at the United States Court of Danville, Virginia, notifying Martha (Kennon) Peter that she has received a small inheritance from William B. Randolph.

CORRESPONDENCE: BRITANNIA (PETER) KENNON

Incoming

1867-1870; ND

Six letters written to Martha (Kennon) Peter by her mother. One letter of 1867 describes visits her mother is making and discusses problems at Tudor Place with wine-making, a biting dog, and the arrangement of rooms in the house. A letter written circa 1870 describes the details of the removal of Martha (Custis) Peter's possessions from Tudor Place and mentions business transactions with Thomas E. Waggaman, whose bankruptcy would later cause Britannia (Peter) Kennon financial problems. Two undated letters written on a visit to the James and Ella [Gabriella] MacKubin family in Ellicott City, Maryland, recount travels; Britannia (Peter) Kennon asks her daughter to perform certain household tasks.

CORRESPONDENCE: DR. ARMISTEAD PETER

Incoming

1876-1885, scattered

Letters written to Martha (Custis) Peter by her husband. With the exception of one letter written in 1876, this correspondence records the observations of Dr. Armistead Peter while he was traveling in Scotland in 1885; he notes sightseeing, the people he is meeting, and the pleasure he takes in Scotland.

CORRESPONDENCE: ARMISTEAD PETER, JUNIOR

Incoming

1886

Includes letters written in July and August of 1886 by Martha (Kennon) Peter's sons. Two letters were written while Armistead Peter, Jr., and his brother Beverley Kennon Peter were visiting Roberta (Johnson) Peter near Darnestown, Maryland; the others were written to her while she was visiting the James MacKubin family in Ellicott City, Maryland. Armistead Peter, Jr., describes his activities, the health of family pets, and the food he is eating.

CORRESPONDENCE: ROBERTA (JOHNSON) PETER

Outgoing

Ca.1886

Letters written by Martha (Kennon) Peter during the visit of her sons Armistead Peter, Jr., and Beverley Kennon Peter in Darnestown, Maryland. The letters discuss practical arrangements, thank Roberta (Johnson) Peter for her hospitality, and encourage her to make use of the boys to accomplish household tasks.

LITERARY PRODUCTIONS

Series

POEMS

1860; 1862; ND

A poem entitled "For Dear Kate" signed Pattie C. Kennon [Martha (Kennon) Peter] written on her embossed stationery; a poem entitled "To Miss Patty C. Kennon on the receipt of a beautiful Confederate Flag" by J.W.D. [Unidentified]. Handwritten undated assorted poems. Four poems copied in

the hand of Martha (Kennon) Peter.

SCRAPBOOK MATERIAL

Series

SCRAPBOOK/COPYBOOK

1859-1863

Includes copied poems celebrating the Confederate States, Negro Suffrage Tickets, and advertisements clipped from newspapers.

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

1865; ND

Poems clipped from newspapers.

PRESSED FLOWERS

1861

A note identifies these as pressed flowers given to Martha (Kennon) Peter by Cousin Braddy in the American Hotel, Staunton, Virginia.

LISTS

Series

LIST

ND

A list of names including a number of physicians.

PRINTED MATERIAL

Series

STATIONERY AND ENVELOPES

ND

Imprinted stationery and envelopes.

MEMORIAL BOOKLETS AND OBITUARY

1886

These describe Martha (Kennon) Peter's untimely death.

MS-10
Box 1

Folder		
1	Correspondence: Schoolmates, Kate (Williams) Upshur	1859; 1860; 1863; 1867; 1883; ND
2	Correspondence: Mary (Custis) Lee	1862; 1867; ND
3	Correspondence: James MacKubin Family	1866; 1886; ND
4	Correspondence: Martha (Custis) Peter, Walter Gibson Peter	ND; 1873
5	Correspondence: Whittle and Sims, Counsellors	Dec 1874
6	Correspondence: Britannia (Peter) Kennon	1866; 1867; 1870; ND
7	Correspondence: Dr. Armistead Peter	1876; 1885
8	Correspondence: Armistead Peter, Jr.	Jul-Aug 1886
9	Correspondence: Roberta (Johnson) Peter	1885
10	Poems	1860; 1862; ND
11	Newspaper Clippings: <i>White Man's Ticket; Negro Suffrage Ticket</i>	ND
12	Newspaper Clippings: Poems	ND
13	Pressed Flowers	ND
14	List: Doctors	ND
15	Stationary, Calling Cards	ND
16	Note: Crocheted Sleeves; Mexican Work	ND
17	American Sunday-School Union: <i>Going to the Opera</i>	1858
18	American Tract Society: Printed Miscellaneous Pamphlets	ND
19	<i>A Prayer for Peace</i>	Aug 22, 1863
20	Copy Book	1859-1863
21	Recipes: Cream Chocolates, Pumpkin Pie	ND

22	Memorial Booklets: Martha Custis (Kennon) Peter	1886
23	Album: School Autograph Album	1860
24	Album: Album of Friendship	1853-1862