

Tudor Place Manuscript Collection
Major George Peter Papers
MS-4

Introduction

The Major George Peter Papers include material dating from 1800 to 1856, consisting of correspondence, legal documents, financial documents, lists and inventories, and printed material. The correspondence and financial documents represent the activities of the life of Major George Peter (1779-1861): his roles as soldier, congressman, commissioner for the Maryland Board of Public Works, and family man. The collection also includes second party correspondence received by several of Major George Peter's children. It holds letters written to his daughter Sarah Agnes Peter (1827-1865) concerning the execution of his son Walter Gibson Peter (1842-1863). The subject files in the collection contain the military records of Major George Peter, and materials relating to the settlement of the estate of David Peter (1778-1812), his brother.

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.

Tudor Place Manuscript Collection
Major George Peter Papers
MS-4

Biographical Sketch

Major George Peter (1779-1861) was the seventh child of Robert Peter (1726-1806) and Elizabeth (Scott) Peter (1744-1821). Robert Peter was one of Georgetown's most important businessmen and the village's first mayor. Major George Peter was a graduate of Georgetown College and pursued military and political careers.

At fifteen years old, George Peter tried to join Maryland troops fighting to put down the Whiskey Rebellion, but his parents disapproved and General George Washington had him sent home. In July 1799 he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Ninth Infantry of the United States Army; the appointment coming from President Adams was presented to Major George Peter by General George Washington at Mount Vernon. He was transferred to Artillery and Engineering in 1801; in 1807 he was made a Captain of Artillery, and in 1808 designated a Major in Artillery, organizing the first Flying [Light] Artillery at Fort McHenry, Maryland, during the administration of Thomas Jefferson. His career as a commissioned officer under the command of General James Wilkinson included: participating in the establishment of the territorial government of Missouri; firing the first salute in honor of the return of the Lewis and Clark expedition; service at New Orleans; and service at Fort Niagara, and Fort Columbus, New York. He was part of the troops detailed to reconnaissance work observing Aaron Burr.

Major George Peter resigned his commission in 1809 and turned his attention to private life. He inherited a large amount of money from the estate of his father and married Ann Plater (1791-1814) on December 5, 1809. Initially the couple lived in one of the houses in Georgetown that Robert Peter had built for his six sons, but in 1811 he purchased a house at 3017 N Street from Thomas Bell. This house was located next door to the house of his mother and sister, and it was here that his sons George, Jr. (1811-1893) and Thomas Plater (1813-1814) were born. By 1812 Major George Peter and his family were living at Montanverde in Montgomery County, Maryland, a house he had constructed which would remain his residence for the rest of his life.

Major George Peter was offered a commission which he did not accept as Brigadier General by President Madison at the beginning of the War of 1812. He did, however, volunteer in 1813 and was a major in command of volunteers who fought at the battle of Bladensburg. Major George Peter's political career began in earnest in 1814 when he became the first Democrat to be elected to Congress from the 6th District of Maryland as a Federalist to the 14th Congress in March 1815; he was reelected to the 15th Congress, serving from October 1816-March 1819. He served also in the State House of Delegates 1819-1823. He was elected to the 19th Congress March 1825-March 1827, but was an unsuccessful candidate for reelection to the 20th Congress. In addition, he served as Commissioner of Public Works for the State of Maryland from 1855 to 1857.

In 1814 his wife Ann Plater died. He then married Agnes Buchanan Freeland (1797-1823) in 1815, by whom he had two sons who lived to maturity. Agnes (Freeland) Peter died in 1823 and Major George Peter married her sister Sarah Norfleet Freeland (1805-1846) in 1825, by whom he had six children that lived to maturity. Among these was Dr. Armistead Peter, who would marry Britannia Kennon's daughter, Martha Custis Kennon, and father Armistead Peter, Jr., Tudor Place's third owner.

Major George Peter died June 22, 1861 at the age of 82 at Montanverde, his home near Darnestown, Maryland. He is buried at Oak Hill Cemetery, where a monument to him stands at the rear of the Chapel.

Tudor Place Manuscript Collection
Major George Peter Papers
MS-4

Scope and Content

The Major George Peter Papers include correspondence, subject files, legal documents, financial documents, and printed material ranging in date from 1800 to 1854. The range of material and the time span present a clear record of his activities. No literary productions or notes are present.

The correspondence files cover most of Major George Peter's adult life and describe his activities. There are letters dealing with business affairs, including the construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, from which he benefitted substantially as it went through his lands. In addition, there are letters he received as an army officer which note where he was stationed and what his responsibilities were. Letters written during the time he was a politician give insight into local and national political issues, although they are not detailed. There is very little personal correspondence in the collection, and almost all of it is from his children. There is a small amount of second party correspondence received by Major George Peter's children; this material dates from after the time of his death but was apparently kept with his papers, containing a letter written to his daughter Sarah Agnes Peter by her brother Walter Gibson Peter.

The subject files contain items related to his military careers. There is also material related to the settling of the estate of his brother David Peter. The financial documents span almost all of Major George Peter's adult life, consisting of bills and receipts that detail household expenditures. Other documents, such as promissory notes and stocks, relate to his business activities.

Tudor Place Manuscript Collection
Major George Peter Papers
MS-4

Series Description

CORRESPONDENCE

Series

CORRESPONDENCE

1805-1865; ND

Arranged chronologically

The earliest correspondence deals with military matters and contains letters from General James Wilkinson and General John Peter Van Ness. This material includes letters about camp conditions sent by soldiers he had commanded who were then stationed in New Orleans, while he was back in Georgetown. Correspondence received by Major George Peter when he was a Congressman sometimes include discussions of political matters; one of these is from Francis Scott Key or Key's clerk. There are letters dealing with business matters throughout the correspondence.

CORRESPONDENCE: FAMILY MEMBERS

Ca.1845-1852; ND

Arranged chronologically

Includes letters from Major George Peter's children and other family members, several letters were written from boarding school. Correspondents include Elizabeth Peter, James Freeland Peter, Elizabeth (Henderson) Peter, Sarah Agnes Peter, and George Peter, Jr.

CORRESPONDENCE: BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS

1855-1857

Arranged chronologically

Correspondence written to Major George Peter in his capacity as Commissioner of the Board of Public Works for the State of Maryland, letters of congratulation upon his appointment to the Board, and nominations for posts on the boards of directors of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company.

CORRESPONDENCE: OUTGOING DRAFTS

1829; 1849

Arranged chronologically

Two letters dealing with political matters. In a letter of 1829, Major George Peter denies having made statements about a post office appointment; a letter of 1849 addressed to Zachary Taylor shortly after his election to the presidency, discusses Peter's political differences with Taylor, but ends by proposing James Anderson for a clerkship.

SECOND PARTY CORRESPONDENCE: DAVID PETER
1812

One letter written by James Freeland announcing the death of Mrs. Alexander Peter of Glasgow five years earlier and expressing surprise that neither the trustees or legatees of the estate have yet been contacted.

SECOND PARTY CORRESPONDENCE: GEORGE PETER, JR.
1865

Arranged chronologically

A letter from Francis Scott Key or his clerk, dealing with business matters.

SECOND PARTY CORRESPONDENCE: SARAH AGNES PETER
1864-1865

Arranged chronologically

Includes letters from her sister, from an imprisoned soldier, from Walter Henderson noting enclosure of letters written by Walter Gibson Peter, and from General William S. Rosecrans denying knowledge of the matters she had written him about, presumably the execution of Walter Gibson Peter.

SECOND PARTY CORRESPONDENCE: SARAH AGNES PETER FROM
WALTER GIBSON PETER

1862-1863

Arranged chronologically

Includes a poem; several letters written from Lynchburg, Tennessee, where Walter Gibson Peter was apparently ill in a military hospital; a letter written before he began the expedition from which he did not return and a letter written just before his execution in 1863.

SUBJECT FILES

Series

MILITARY RECORDS

1806-1813; ND

Arranged chronologically

Includes morning reports, an unofficial commendation, and Major George Peter's captain commission.

DAVID PETER ESTATE

1821-1848

Arranged chronologically

Includes depositions, bills and receipts.

JOHN PETER: MILITARY RECORDS

1814

Arranged chronologically

Includes reports and orders.

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Series

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

1811-1834; ND

Arranged alphabetically by type and then chronologically

Includes deeds, a lease, legal testimony, a property transfer, and a resolution.

FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS

Series

FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS

1805-1858; ND

Arranged by type and then chronologically

Includes a bankbook from the Union Bank of Georgetown, account statements, a bond, promissory notes, stock certificates of the Georgetown and Leesburg Turnpike Company, canceled checks, and bills and receipts.

LISTS, MAPS, TALLIES, ETC.

Series

LISTS, MAPS, TALLIES, ETC.

1819, 1824; ND

Arranged alphabetically by type and then chronologically

Includes a household inventory, shopping lists, election tallies, a recipe, a plat, and a survey excerpt.

PRINTED MATERIAL

Series

PRINTED MATERIAL

1808-1851; ND

Arranged alphabetically

Includes blank appointment calendars, political pamphlets, and religious pamphlets.

ENVELOPES

Series

ENVELOPES

ND

Envelopes unmatched to correspondence.

MS-4
Box 1

Folder		
1	Correspondence	1805-1808
2	Correspondence	1809-1814
3	Correspondence	1815-1819
4	Correspondence	1822-1828
5	Correspondence	1830-1839
6	Correspondence	1840-1843
7	Correspondence	1850-1856; ND
8	Correspondence: Family Members	1845-1852
9	Correspondence: Board of Public Works	1855
10	Correspondence: Board of Public Works	Jan-Apr 1856
11	Correspondence: Board of Public Works	May 1856; 1857
12	Correspondence: Outgoing Drafts	1829; 1849
13	Second Party Correspondence: James Freeland	1812
14	Second Party Correspondence: F.S. Key [Hand of Clerk]	Sep 1865
15	Second Party Correspondence: Sarah Agnes Peter	1864-1865
16	Second Party Correspondence: Walter Gibson Peter to Sarah Agnes Peter	1862-1863
17	Military Records	1799-1813; ND
18	David Peter Estate: Short Copies of Depositions	ND
19	David Peter Estate: Bills and Receipts	1821; 1836; 1848
20	John Peter: Military Records	1814

21	Deed: Divisions of <i>Garnkirk</i> and <i>What You Will</i>	1814
22	Deed: Lot 64, Georgetown	1825
23	Deed: To Elizabeth Linthicum	1814
24	Legal Decision	1825
25	Legal Testimony in Support of Major George Peter	1816
26	Legal Transfer: <i>Garnkirk</i>	1811; 1814; 1820
27	Lease: F. H. Poole	1834
28	Resolution for the Formation of an Import/Export Company	ND
29	Bank Book: Union Bank of Georgetown	1811-1816
30	Account Statements: Leon W. Chandler	1831-1837
31	Account Statements: Leon W. Chandler	1840-1846
32	Account Statements: Leon W. Chandler	1848-1850
33	Account Statements: Leon W. Chandler	1851-1858; ND
34	Second Party Correspondence: [Illegible Signature]	Oct 16, 1868

MS-4
Box 2

Folder		
1	Bond: Thomas C. Lannan	1835
2	Promissory Notes	1809-1811
3	Promissory Notes	1812-1813
4	Promissory Notes	1814-1815
5	Promissory Notes	1816-1819; 1829
6	Stock Certificates: Georgetown and Leesburg Turnpike	1817
7	Canceled Checks	1810-1811
8	Canceled Checks	1812
9	Canceled Checks	1813
10	Canceled Checks	1814
11	Canceled Checks	1815
12	Canceled Checks	1816
13	Bills and Receipts	1805-1820
14	Bills and Receipts	1823-1825
15	Bills and Receipts	1827-1829
16	Bills and Receipts	1831-1833
17	Bills and Receipts	1834-1836
18	Bills and Receipts	1837-1839
19	Bills and Receipts	1840-1841
20	Bills and Receipts	1842
21	Bills and Receipts	1843-1845

22	Bills and Receipts	1846-1848
23	Bills and Receipts	1849-1851
24	Bills and Receipts	1852-1855
25	Bills and Receipts	1856-1858; ND
26	Bills and Receipts	ND
27	Notes: Financial	ND

MS-4
Box 3

Folder		
1	Inventory: Household	ND
2	Lists: Shopping; Agriculture	ND
3	Tallies	1822; 1823
4	Recipe	ND
5	Plat: Lot Sold to the Baptist Society	1819
6	Survey with Courses: <i>Preston's March</i> , Excerpt	ND
7	Agricultural Circular	1851
8	Pocket Remembrancer and Handwritten Calling Card	1808
9	Pocket Remembrancer and Handwritten Calling Card	1823
10	Pocket Remembrancer and Handwritten Calling Card	1824
11	Political Material: Printed	1816; 1823; 1825; 1857
12	Political Material: Printed	1816; 1826; ND
13	Pamphlets: Religious	1829; ND
14	Report: Board of Managers of the Washington City Orphan Asylum	1836
15	Envelopes: Unmatched to Correspondence	Scattered; ND
16	Print: Major George Peter, Profile	ND
17	<i>Constitution of the United States; Standing Rules of the House of Representatives</i>	1824
18	<i>An Act for the Better Regulation of the Militia of the City of Baltimore</i>	1836
19	<i>Skirmish Drill for Mounted Troops</i>	1861
20	Carey, R. Milton. <i>Skirmisher's Drill and Bayonet Exercise</i>	1861
21	Sheet Music: Bayley, Mr. [Thomas Haines]. <i>I'd Be a Butterfly</i>	ND [1820]

- | | | |
|----|--|---------------------|
| 22 | <i>Plan of the Floor of the House of Representatives, 19th Congress</i> | 1825-1827 |
| 23 | Two documents relating to Major George Peter located by Armistead Peter, Jr., for genealogy; MS 14, Box 58, F4, Copies | 1809; 1868;
1869 |
| 24 | Broadside: [Zachary] Taylor Meeting | March 6, 1848 |

MS-4
Map Case

David Peter Estate 1823-1835

MS-4
Oversized

Archival Cabinet B

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1 Correspondence: W. Wooten to Major George Peter | 1830 |
| 2 Broadside: <i>To the Patriotic Voters of Montgomery County</i> [Two Copies] | 1830 |
| 3 Military Records: Articles of Clothing Dispersed | 1809 |
| 4 <i>The Spirit of the Times</i> | March 7, 1846 |
| 5 Plat: [Possibly] <i>Seneca Sandstone Quarry</i> , Darnestown, Maryland | ND |
| 6 List: Committees 19 th Congress, 1 st Session | 1825-1827 |
| Letter of Presentation as Captain and Commission as Captain
[Removed to Commission Box] | 1808 |