

Tudor Place Manuscript Collection
Custis-Lee Family Papers
MS-5

Introduction

Includes correspondence, literary productions, bills, and receipts of George Washington Parke Custis (1781-1857), correspondence to his wife Mary Lee (Fitzhugh) Custis (1788-1853), to his daughter Mary Anna Randolph (Custis) Lee (1808-1873), and of his son-in-law Robert E. Lee (1807-1870). George Washington Parke Custis was the brother of Martha (Custis) Peter (1777-1854). These documents entered the collection under the aegis of Martha (Williams) Carter (1827-1899), George Washington Parke Custis' great niece, who spent much time at Arlington House caring for him.

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

The youngest child of John Parke Custis (1754-1781) and Eleanor Calvert (ca.1757/8-1811), George Washington Parke Custis (1781-1857) was born in 1781 at Mount Airy, Maryland, the home of his maternal grandfather, Benedict Calvert. He was a few months old when his father died of camp fever at Yorktown in 1781. When his mother remarried Dr. David Stuart (1753-1814), he was adopted by his grandparents, Martha Washington (1731-1802) and General George Washington (1732-1799), and remained with them at Mount Vernon. His first tutor was Gideon Snow (1815-1889) and then Tobias Lear (1762-1816). Later he was a student at the Alexandria Academy in Alexandria, Virginia; his further schooling career was checkered. In 1802-1803 he built his home, Arlington House, and married Mary Lee Fitzhugh (1788-1853) in 1804. Their only daughter, Mary Anna Randolph Custis (1808-1873), married Robert E. Lee (1807-1870) in 1831. He was an industrious painter, a gentleman farmer, and an active disciple of and advocate for General George Washington all his life. But as one author has noted, "George Washington Parke Custis was possessed of more than usual abilities, but he was always handicapped with habitual indolence."

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Series Description

CORRESPONDENCE

Series

CORRESPONDENCE: GEORGE WASHINGTON PARKE CUSTIS
1806-1810

Incoming, arranged chronologically

Includes nine letters mostly concerning sheep breeding. The correspondents include James Mease, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, and James Madison. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney and James Madison comment on the potential importance of sheep breeding to the economy of the United States.

CORRESPONDENCE: GEORGE WASHINGTON PARKE CUSTIS
1813-1828

Incoming, arranged chronologically

Includes seven letters. Two letters from Marques de Monserrate discuss his financial difficulties. One letter from Benjamin Silliman concerns the gift of a Washington relic. A letter from George Washington Lafayette discusses plans to visit Woodlawn. Josiah Quincy refers to the Bunker Hill Monument Association.

CORRESPONDENCE: GEORGE WASHINGTON PARKE CUSTIS
1838-1848

Incoming, arranged chronologically

Includes five letters. One letter from Peter Anderson thanks George Washington Parke Custis for his hospitality, discusses plans for another visit to Washington, and describes Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A letter from Captain William George Williams recounts personal and family news and asks Custis to send a portrait to him. Benjamin Hallowell describes the use of bone as fertilizer. Two letters from Robert Bolton present information gathered on a trip to England about the Washington family; one letter includes a copy of the Washington family crest.

CORRESPONDENCE: GEORGE WASHINGTON PARKE CUSTIS
1854-1855

Incoming, arranged chronologically

Includes eleven letters, most of which concern Washington relics. Three of the letters are from Franklin Pierce and one is from historian Jared Sparks.

CORRESPONDENCE: GEORGE WASHINGTON PARKE CUSTIS
1856-1857; ND

Incoming, arranged chronologically

Includes ten letters, most of which concern Custis' knowledge of General George Washington and the Revolutionary War. Among the authors are Benson J. Lossing, Hamilton Fish, and Rembrandt Peale.

CORRESPONDENCE: GEORGE WASHINGTON PARKE CUSTIS
1838; 1839

George Washington Parke Custis writes to his daughter and Robert E. Lee in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1838; he writes to his wife and daughter in Clarke County, Virginia, in 1839.

CORRESPONDENCE: MARY (CUSTIS) LEE
1857

One letter of condolence from Benson Lossing to Mary Custis Lee on the death of her father, George Washington Parke Custis.

CORRESPONDENCE: ROBERT E. LEE
1850

One letter from Robert E. Lee in Baltimore to his mother-in-law Mary (Fitzhugh) Custis.

LITERARY PRODUCTIONS

Series

ACCOUNT OF LA FAYETTE'S VISIT TO ARLINGTON HOUSE

Ca.1824

An account of the visit of La Fayette to Arlington House in an unknown hand.

MOTTO

ND

Several Latin mottos, presumably written by George Washington Parke Custis.

BILLS AND RECEIPTS

1801; 1802

Three receipts for items purchased by George Washington Parke Custis found in the billfold Dr. Armistead Peter took with him on a trip to England.

SCRAPBOOK MATERIAL

Series

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

1857

Handwritten resolution issued by the Philodemic Society of Georgetown College upon the death of George Washington Parke Custis.

SPEECH: JOHN BYRNE

ND

A handwritten copy of a speech by John Byrne entitled *Honour to Whom Honour Is Due*.

MS-5
Box 1

Folder

1	Correspondence: James Mease	Jul 17, 1806; Aug 12, 1806; Aug 26, 1806; Oct 6, 1806
2	Correspondence: Charles Cotesworth Pinckney	Sep 17, 1807; Sep 24, 1807
3	Correspondence: John Hand, Samuel Howell	___ 30, 1809
4	Correspondence: George W. Logan	Feb 17, 1809
5	Correspondence: James Madison	Jun 3, 1810
6	Correspondence: El Marquise de Monserrate	Aug 5, 1813; Aug 8, 1813
7	Correspondence: Benjamin Silliman	Aug 13, 1824
8	Correspondence: George Washington La Fayette	Dec 8, 1824
9	Correspondence: Josiah Quincy	Jun 22, 1825
10	Correspondence: P. Anderson	May 17, 1838
11	Correspondence: Captain William George Williams	Oct 24, 1838
12	Correspondence: Benjamin Hallowell	Apr 10, 1847
13	Correspondence: Robert Bolton	Oct 30, 1848; Dec 25, 1848
14	Correspondence: Charles W. Upham	May 8, 1854
15	Correspondence: Franklin Pierce	Mar 17, 1854; Apr 5, 1854; Apr 6, 1854
16	Correspondence: Lyman C. Draper	May 6, 1854
17	Correspondence: George Livermore	Nov 6, 1854
18	Correspondence: Joseph Henry	Nov 21, 1854
19	Correspondence: Edward Duffield Neill	Apr 3, 1855
20	Correspondence: Edmund Law Rogers	Apr 7, 1855

21	Correspondence: Jared Sparks	Jan 11, 1855
22	Correspondence: James G. Berret	Sep 3, 1855
23	Correspondence: W. Meade	May 7, Mar 7, ND
24	Correspondence: Henry Lunt	Jan 3, 1856
25	Correspondence: M.C. Meigs	Jan 19, 1856
26	Correspondence: Benson J. Lossing	Dec 7, 1856
27	Correspondence: Hamilton Fish	Dec 27, 1856
28	Correspondence: Robert Weir	Apr 9, 1857
29	Correspondence: J. Augustus Johnson	Apr 29, 1857
30	Correspondence: Rembrandt Peale	Aug 20, 1857
31	Correspondence: Joel Tyler Headley	Dec 21, ND
32	Correspondence: Robert E. Lee to Mary (Fitzhugh) Custis	Jun 22, 1850
33	Correspondence: Benson J. Lossing to Mary Custis Lee	Oct 12, 1857
34	Correspondence: George Washington Parke Custis	Aug 4, 1838; Sep 10, 1839
35	<i>Account of La Fayette's Visit to Arlington House</i>	ND [Ca.1824]
36	Motto: Donum.Libertatis	ND
37	Bills and Receipts	Jan 6, 1801; Jan 28, 1802; Jan 26, 1802
38	Resolution: The Philodemic Society of Georgetown College	Oct 12, 1857
39	Draft: John Byrne, <i>Honour to Whom Honour is Due</i>	ND

MS-5
Oversized

Archival Cabinet B

1. Broadside: *Paint Branch Woolen Factory*

1856