

Brickyard Hill House
3134 South Street, N.W.
Washington (Georgetown)
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-158

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
801 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

BRICKYARD HILL HOUSE

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Location: 3134-3136 South Street, N.W., (Georgetown) Washington, D.C., south side of street opposite Grace Episcopal Church. (South Street possibly was created on the division of Robert Peter's land between his sons about 1806.) This data book deals only with 3134 South St., the eastern half of the two family house.

Present Owner: Richard N. Tetlie

Present Occupant: Richard N. Tetlie

Present Use: Private residence.

Statement of Significance: A well preserved detached frame house of early date (ca. 1800) now very rare in the Waterfront district. Owned and probably built by the Peter family.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The building is located in Square 1189 lot 827 (formerly 806) in the old Peter's Square (old Square 19 lot 52). The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the house was built. N.B.: 3136 South St. is lot 826 (old lot 57).

1806 Will of Robert Peter Sr. dated May 10, 1802 (codicile in 1804 and 1805) recorded November 29, 1806 in Will Book 1, folio 140 (#280 and 293 O. S.)

1811 Will of Robert Peter (Jr.) dated June 23, 1809 letters testamentary February 13, 1811 in Will Book 1, folio 169.

"Item: I give and devise to my Brother David Peter In fee simple the house and the ground thereto attached being the East House of the two now under rent to Mr. David M. Erskine and which fell to me in a late division of my Father's real estate and was valued at \$6000. It is my wish that if William the son of the said David shall attain to the age of 21 yrs. that the said David give it to him, or if he may think it best to sell the said property and vest the proceeds thereof to other funds or lay it out in lands for the use of the said William to do so, but of this he is to exercise his own judgement. It being my more particular desire that the said David may either keep it or dispose of

of it as he may think best." (This may be the house in question.) David and Thomas were executors of the Robert Peter, Jr. will. Other property was also conveyed to George Peter and Thomas Peter.

- 1812 Deed of Partition June 14, 1812 recorded October 17, 1812 in Liber AD folio 319
Thomas Peter et ux Martha
David Peter et ux Sarah
George Peter et ux Anna
Margaret Dick
(sister of Robert Peter Jr.)
This deed is torn and much is missing; lot 52 is not found but lot 57 on Fishing lane goes to Thomas Peter.
(Made on the death of Robert Peter.)
- 1829 Deed in Trust September 16, 1829 recorded December 9, 1829 in Liber WB 28 folio 181
Thomas Peter
To
Richard Smith
Bank of U. S.
Among 20 lots in Georgetown and other property lot 52 ("fronting on S. Street in Peter's Sq.") Deed of Liber WB folio 139 of June 28, 1830 confirms the above and gives him further power to sell.
- 1831 Deed May 2, 1832 recorded November 3, 1831 in Liber WB 41 folio 20
Richard Smith, trustee (Bank of U. S.)
To
Clement Smith
"Lot 52 in Peter's Square, fronting 37'8 1/4" on South St., and running back 120' to 12' alley." Sold under trust from Thomas Peter, of September 16, 1829.
- 1832 Deed May 1, 1832 recorded June 4, 1832 in Liber WB 41 folio 165
Clement Smith
To
Peter Vonessen (also Von Essen)
- 1833 Deed May 16, 1833 recorded May 24, 1833 in Liber WB 46 folio 119
Peter Vonessen
To
William Vanscuyver
West 1/2 of lot 52 in Peters Square in Georgetown, said lot fronting 37 ft. 8 1/4 inches. Consideration \$500.

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- 1866 Will dated January 30, 1866, probated September 1, 1866
Will Book 10 page 230.
Peter Vonessen
To
Francis Vonessen Essex et ux Mary
Conveys "my house on South Street, or what was known as
Brickyard Hill, between Congress and High Streets..."
- 1898 Deed June 27, 1898 recorded July 13, 1898 in
Liber 3216 folio 435
Hattie C. Rubenacker et vir George
To
Stephen E. Essex
Hattie Rubenacker and Francis B. Essex were heirs of
Francis Vonessen Essex. Conveys all their rights,
title and interest etc. in "Premises known as 22 South
Street, lot 52."
- 1898 Deed January 18, 1896 recorded December 28, 1898 in
Liber 2374 folio 81
District of Columbia
To
James E. Padgett (trustee)
(1892, 1893 and 1896 - tax sales)
- 1898 Deed of December 27, 1898 recorded December 28, 1898 in
Liber 2374 folio 83
James E. Padgett (trustee)
To
Stephen E. Essex
"The east 18.83' front of lot 52 by full depth."
- 1902 Deed November 17, 1902 recorded November 21, 1902 in
Liber 2689 folio 264
Francis B. Essex et ux Ida M.
To
Stephen E. Essex
East half of lot 52.
- 1921 Deed January 29, 1921 recorded February 4, 1921 in
Liber 4494 folio 210
Stephen E. Essex
To
Charles H. A. and Dona A. V. Montgomery (joint tenants)
- 1946 Deed February 18, 1946 recorded February 26, 1946 in
Liber 8224 folio 467
Charles H. A. Montgomery et ux Dora A. V.
To
Milo H. Brinkley
Mary Brinkley Reid, daughter (joint tenants)

- 1950 Deed September 8, 1950 recorded September 13, 1950 in
Liber 9294 folio 540
Milo H. Brinkley, Mary Brinkley Reid,
Daughter, joint tenants
To
Russell M. Thornton et ux Bernice C.
Tenants by Entirety
East 1/2 of lot 52, among other property.
- 1951 Deed August 29, 1951 recorded September 14, 1951 in
Liber 9554 folio 566
Russell M. Thornton et ux Bernice C.
Tenants by Entirety
To
Rob Roy McGregor et ux Mary Osburn
Tenants by Entirety
- 1952 Deed March 28, 1952 recorded April 1, 1952 in
Liber 9681 folio 453
Rob Roy McGregor et ux Mary Osburn,
Tenants by Entirety
To
George J. Mishtowt et ux Jacoba R.
Tenants by Entirety
Stamps \$30.25
- 1957 Deed January 31, 1957 recorded February 15, 1957 in
Liber 10806 folio 617
George I. Mishtowt et ux Jacoba R.
To
Richard N. Tetlie
2. Date of erection: About 1800. Although the assessment records do not specify this house, from the wills of Robert Peter Sr. and Jr. it appears to have been in the family since built, since it lies within the original "Peter's Square."
 3. Architect: Unknown.
 4. Original plans, construction, etc.: None known.
 5. Alterations and additions: Few alterations have been made: the wide south windows on the second story are from a later date than the original construction; a modern kitchen is in a one story wing on the southeast corner.
 6. Important old views: The house appears in the civil war photograph taken from Theodore Roosevelt Island, about 1861-62 by George N. Barnard (LC-USZ62-4571). Examination of the view from the same site today confirms this.

B. Historical events connected with the structure:

1. Biographical notes on the Peter family:

No account of Georgetown can omit reference to the Peter family, among the earliest families to settle in the area, and who were--and still are--continually active in the life of the town. Two of the most illustrious members were Robert Peter (Sr.) and Thomas Peter, one of his sons.

Robert Peter, born in Scotland about 1726, at Crossbasket, near Glasgow, came to Georgetown to set up business as a tobacco merchant. In 1752 he was "the agent of the famous firm of John Glassford and Co. of North Britain, which monopolized in large part the Potomac river Tobacco Trade." (Records of the Columbia Historical Society, v. 33-34, p. 139). This firm had a good market in England and Scotland. "A careful, thrifty Scot, he prospered and soon acquired considerable property in George-Town and also extensive land holdings elsewhere in the neighborhood. He was very much to the fore in public matters and in 1757, became one of the George-Town Commissioners." (Harold Donaldson Eberlein, and Cortland Van Dyke Hubbard, Historic Houses of George-Town & Washington City, Richmond, The Dietz Press, 1958, p. 324.) Other sources say that he was commissioner from 1759 to 1789. He became the first mayor of Georgetown on January 5, 1790. "At the age of forty [i.e. about 1766], he married Elizabeth Scott, daughter of George Scott, High Sheriff of Prince George's County." (Eberlein and Hubbard, p. 342.) Robert Peter, together with Charles Beatty and John Threlkeld made the "Peter, Beatty, and Threlkeld Addition" to the west of Georgetown in 1784.

Robert Peter owned much land around Rock Creek and throughout Georgetown, and was one of the "original proprietors" of land that was taken for the Federal City. He was one of the active participants in encouraging the land opposite Georgetown be chosen as the site of the Capital. He was one of the signers of an influential letter sent to George Washington on October 13, 1790. The leading merchants of Georgetown suggested that the site of the proposed Federal City be on the land opposite Georgetown across Rock Creek, for Georgetown was already an established port, with people and money, and the landscape on the proposed site was varied, with both flat and hilly terrain, and being so close to Georgetown could not help but sell well.

"We the subscribers, do hereby agree...to sell and make over by sufficient Deeds, in any manner which shall be directed by General Washington, or any person acting under him, and on such terms as he shall determine to be reasonable and just;

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and of the Lands which we possess in the vicinity of George Town, for the uses of the Federal City, provided the same shall be erected in the said vicinity."

It was signed by the following: Robert Peter "for one hundred acres should so much of mine be that necessary"; Tho. Beall of Geo.; Benj Stoddert; Uriah Forrest; Will Deakins, Junr; John Threlkeld "any land on the north side of my meadow"; J M Ligan; George Beall; and Anthony Holmead. ("Origin of the Federal City," by Allen C. Clark, CHS, v. 35-36, p. 26).

A letter from George Washington (in Philadelphia) to Robert Peter on July 24th, 1791 shows his active spirit of commercial progress:

"Sir, I have received your favor of the 20th. Inst. proposing the building of warves at the new City, between Rock Creek and Hamburgh; the proposition certainly is worthy of consideration, and as the transaction of what may concern the public at that place in future is now turned over to the Commissioners, I enclose your letter to them, to do thereon, what they shall think best. To them therefore I take the liberty of referring you for an answer." (CHS, v. 17, pp. 28-29.)

Much of this land along Rock Creek belonged to Robert Peter, and included land bounded by the Potomac River, New Hampshire Avenue, H and K Streets. In the colored engraving by T. Cartwright, London, after the drawing by George Beck of Philadelphia entitled "George Town and Federal City, or City of Washington," the buildings at the mouth of Rock Creek, facing the Georgetown shore, are said to be his house and tobacco shed. (Print published by Atkins & Nightengale, London and Philadelphia, 1801)

About 1795 Robert Peter built a row of 6 houses on K Street, and gave the house now No. 2618 K Street to his eldest son Thomas upon his marriage.

Georgetown assessments records of 1800 to 1807 give a good picture of Robert Peter's holdings about 1800 (National Archives Microcopy 605, Group 351, roll 7).

Square bound by Water and Bridge Street and	
Fishing lain with improvements	25,000
1 lot with improvements	800
3 lots in Beatty and Hawkins addition	400
14 negroes	1,200
3 horses	160
5 cows	60
furniture	300
	<u>\$28,420</u>

A second assessment during this same period of 1800-1807 shows that his property holdings were extensive, and that he apparently leased or rented many of the buildings he owned.

1 lot on Water Street	800
1 lot improved on Jefferson St.	1,000
3 lots on Jefferson St.	1,000
1 improved lot on Beall St. [O St.]	600
1 improved lot on Water St.--stable	3,260
1 improved lot on Water St.--tavern	2,864
1/2 lot on Water St. [K St.]	528
1 lot improved on Water St. your dwelling	5,088
1 lot improved on Water St. Cromwells	1,500
1 lot on Bridge (M) St.	1,340
1 improved lot on Bridge St. Daniels	1,940
1 improved lot on Bridge St. Longs	2,260
1 lot improved on Fishing Lane, Allans	1,119
1 lot on Fishing Lane	445
1 lot on Wapping improved--stone house	4,380

In addition to this, 'various negroes' and other property brought it to a grand total of \$29,809.

Robert Peter died on November 15, 1806, "aged 80 years" (CHS v. 21, p. 146.)

Thomas Peter, eldest son of Robert Peter, was born in 1768. In 1793 he was one of the incorporators of the Bank of Columbia that was chartered by the Maryland legislature to handle the financial affairs of the Federal City Commissioners, and also of those people buying lots in the new capital.

In 1795 Thomas Peter received the house at 2618 K Street N.W. from his father upon his marriage to Martha Parke Custis. "There the young couple went to housekeeping, and there it was that General Washington often spent the night when he came up from Mount Vernon. In fact, the last time he spent the night in Washington City before his death, he stayed with the Peters." (Eberlein and Hubbard, p. 343.) In 1799 his wife, one of the grand-daughters of Martha Washington inherited a considerable legacy upon the death of George Washington. With the aid of this, in 1805 the Thomas Peters bought "Tudor Place" at 31st and Q Streets in Georgetown, a fine estate begun in 1794 by the wealthy shipping merchant Francis Lowndes. The completion of the estate was entrusted to Dr. Thornton, their friend, who was the first architect of the Capitol.

It was during this period that he was one of the Stewards of the Washington Jockey Club, and he is listed as such in an

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advertisement in the National Intelligencer of Sept. 17th, 1808 which gave "notice of the races to be held on October 28th and the two following days." (Eberlein and Hubbard, p. 55)

In 1815 Tudor Place was completed, and was one of the finest estates of the period. A letter of George Ticknor of February 1815 gives a glimpse of life with the Peters:

"This evening, Mr. Sullivan, Colonel Perkins, and myself passed delightfully at Mr. Thomas Peters, who married Miss [Martha] Custis.... They are both of the Boston stamp in politics; and while Mr. Peter, as an extraordinary treat for an extraordinary occasion, regaled the 'delegates' with a bottle of wine from General Washington's cellar, Mrs. Peter gave me an account of her grandfather's mode of life and intercourse with his family....

"Mrs. Peter also gave us, with a good deal of vivacity, the best account I ever heard of the proceedings of the British at the capture of Washington; for, as she said, she was too much of a Tory to run, and therefore was an eye-witness of what happened." (Eberlein and Hubbard, p. 126)

During the burning of the Capitol, Mrs. Peter and Mrs. Thornton, at whose house (according to Mrs. Thornton's diary) Mr. Thomas Peter often dined when in Washington, watched the conflagration from the windows of Tudor Place.

"Thomas Peter was no less staunch a Federalist than his wife. From time to time his name appears along with others of those, of the same political convictions, who sponsored one or another public undertaking or social duty. He was keenly interested in the Washington Jockey Club, and, under the presidency of Colonel John Tayloe, he acted as one of the stewards at the races on the Meridian Hill Track." (Eberlein and Hubbard, p. 131)

2. Biographical notes on Richard and Clement Smith:

Richard Smith held 3134 South St. in trust from 1830 to 1832, at which time he deeded it to his brother Clement Smith, who held it for only a few months. We can assume that this was all part of the process of transaction, for both Smiths were bankers. Richard Smith was a cashier (1848) of the Bank of the Metropolis. Clement Smith was the president of the Farmers and Mechanics Bank of Georgetown for some period of time, until 1844. This bank had greatly assisted the U.S. Government during the war of 1812 by a loan of several hundred thousand dollars, before it was incorporated. Clement Smith is recorded as a member of Christ Episcopal Church of Georgetown and important in founding

the building in 1817. In the first part of the 19th century (no more specific date is given) Richard Jackson in his Chronicles of Georgetown, D.C., 1751-1878 (Washington, D.C., R. O. Polkinhorn, 1878) notes that the military company of Independent Grays, Infantry, was commanded for a time by Clement Smith (p. 87.)

3. The 1834 directory listing for Peter Vonessen reads: "grocer and tavern keeper, near canal Bridge and Congress Streets, east side."
4. Washington directories provide the following information on tenants of 3134-3136 South Street:

1915	3134 vacant
	3136 William E. Barnes
1917-21	David Curtis
	William E. Barnes
1925	3134 not listed
	3136 vacant
1927	3134 David H. Curtis
	3136 William E. Barnes
1929-31	David H. Curtis
	Andrew Thomas
1933	3134 no entry
	3136 Mrs. Anna Harris
1935	Albert Thomas
	Anna Harris
1937	Edgar H. Butler
	Anna Harris
1939	Albert Thomas
	Anna Harris
1941	Anna Mickey
	William Mills
1943	Harry West
	William Mills
1948	Harry F. West
	Mrs. Anna M. Harris
1954-56	George I. Mishtowt (owner)
	John J. Dwyer (owner)
1960	Fraser L. Hunter
	James F. Durston (owner)
1962	James T. Hall
	James F. Durston
1965-67	Richard N. Tetlie
	James F. Durston (owner)

Prepared by Daniel D. Reiff
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
September, 1967

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A fine example of the early settlers' adaptation of elements of the Georgian style for interior decoration. Considered one of the oldest buildings in the Georgetown Waterfront area, it has been altered very little and has been well maintained. The interior is small and intimate in scale.
2. Condition of fabric: Well maintained. Interior in excellent condition with the exterior suffering from warping caused by the expansion and contraction of the siding.

B. Detailed Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The entire house is rectangular, with 313⁴ South St. forming the eastern half, under the east slope of the gable roof. Overall dimensions of this half are 14' 6" by 33' 7" not counting the small kitchen addition at the southeast corner. Two stories with a sunken basement exposed at the rear; two bays on the gable ends, three bays on the east-west sides.
2. Foundations: Rubble
3. Wall construction: The house is wood frame with beveled and dished clapboarding painted white. The west wall of 313⁴ is the party wall.
4. Framing: Wood framing. Joists measuring 2 1/2" x 9 1/4" are exposed in the basement.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc: A brick retaining wall encloses the small front yard. It is in common bond red brick with headers every 6 courses.
6. Chimneys: Two large rectangular brick chimneys shared by the two halves of the house are located about 8 feet from each gable end. They are of different sizes and are slightly truncated at the tops; this consists of three courses stepped back from the face of the chimney, and the slope coated with concrete.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The front entrance, no longer used, is located on the north side near the east corner. It is

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wood framed, with a three light rectangular transom. The door is of wood and contains twelve panes. Flanking it are double panel fixed louver shutters of wood, painted dark green. A four panel wooden door on the east side is now used as the main entrance above which is a 3 light transom. French doors, 15 panes each leaf, and two others (modern) enter the basement.

- b. Windows and shutters: Six over six wooden double hung windows with white wooden framing flanked by dark green double panel fixed louver shutters are evident on the north and east sides. In the rear (south) two different types of casement windows are flanked by similar shutters. Between the two casement windows at the second floor, there is a fixed mullioned panel containing twenty-four lights. There is a square louvered opening for ventilation near the apex on the north wall.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with a north-south ridge covered in metal painted red. The east slope covers 3134.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The north gable has a parapet base and a narrow wooden coping which runs along the edge. The eave on the east has a projecting rounded metal gutter.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: A small square wooden louvered tower ventilates the attic. It is located in the center of the slope toward the north gable and is covered with a north-south gable roof. A cast iron vent pipe runs up the partition wall in the rear and is capped with a louvered metal cover.

C. Description of the Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: The first floor has a front living room with added toilet in a northeast corner closet; the rear living room into which the side door comes also contains the stairs. The second floor has a central stair hall, with bedrooms at each end of the house. The basement contains one room, the size of the main living room above it, and the entrance to the small kitchen wing attached.
- 2. Stairways: Located between the chimneys is a dog-leg stair leading to the second floor and a straight one descending to the basement. They are wooden and 2' 8" wide.

The risers are 8" high, and the treads 10" wide. Thirteen steps ascend to the second floor, nine descend to the basement. The simple wooden balustrades have square newels (no caps), oval hand rails, and rectangular balusters.

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3. Flooring: Wide wooden flooring of 6 and 8 inches is used throughout the top floors. The basement has a tile floor.
4. Walls and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are plastered throughout except for some paneling, and the ceiling in the basement, which has the original exposed wood: 2 1/2" x 9 1/4" joists and 6" and 8" flooring. Twelve and thirteen inch wide wood paneling appears in the basement. Walls are rough plastered here.
5. Doorways and doors: Three and five panel wooden doors painted white.
6. Decorative features and trim: The walls have been painted white thereby making the fine natural woodwork stand out. The wooden mantels are finely handled and simple. Only the one in the south living room has fluted pilasters. The others are smooth. The area inclosed by the wooden mantels is common bond red brick with flat arches. A molded projecting mantel ledge crowns all fireplaces with a wooden molded cyma recta strip occurring just above the interior opening. Simple rectangular wooden base moldings are the only other trim.
7. Notable hardware: Early H, and H and L hinges plus strap hinges are seen throughout. Old door latches are still in use.
8. Lighting: Modern.
9. Heating: Fireplaces were the original means of heating, with five located on the party wall. Now gas heated hot water in radiators is used.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Brickyard Hill House, located on the south side of South Street, faces north toward Grace Episcopal Church. On the east side is a garbage disposal plant, on the south auto repair shops, and on the west an office building. The noise and odors of the waterfront area are barely noticeable.
2. Enclosures: The rear patio is enclosed in a vertical wood and brick fence. On the north side of the house is a modern brick retaining wall with a wrought iron fence attached to

the top.

3. Outbuildings: None.
4. Walks: On the east side of the house is a concrete walk.
5. Landscaping: Behind the retaining wall on the north side are vines, bushes, and an elm tree. In the rear is a patio of flat basket-weave brick, with rose bushes, vines, and a small fountain.

Prepared by William R. Gwin
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National Park Service
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