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Georgetown's Tudor Place 200 Years of American History Under One Roof

As the new curator of buildings and grounds for Tudor Place Historic House and Garden at 1644 31st St., N.W., in Georgetown, Chris Wilson loves his job.

He has been hired to preserve the fabric of the building, both interior and exterior, and to manage what's known as its "cultural landscape"—the rich story of Tudor Place and how it brings to life American history from the Federal period to the late 20th century.

But a man in Wilson's position has a sworn enemy: Moisture, he says, is the bane of old buildings. So one of his most important responsibilities is keeping the moisture out of Tudor Place—in fact, preventing it from ever occurring. And that means constant monitoring of the roof along with regular maintenance.

Arriving at Tudor Place, Wilson was pleased to find he had "inherited" the services of Wagner Roofing Company, which has maintained the roofing systems since the 1970s, when the estate was occupied by Armistead Peter III, the last in his family to own Tudor Place. Before he died, Peter



TUDOR PLACE ARCHIVES

The south facade of Tudor Place, considered a premier example of American neoclassical architecture. The house was designed by Dr. William Thornton, architect of the U.S. Capitol.

established a charitable foundation to preserve the property and educate the public about American history. Today, Tudor Place Foundation, Inc., and Executive Director Leslie Buhler oversee the historic house, gardens and extensive collection of furniture, silver, porcelain, glass, paintings, drawings, sculpture, textiles, books and photographs.

"One thing that immediately impressed me about Wagner

Roofing is the precision of their work," says Wilson. "The estimator comes out and takes pictures with his digital camera ... when the workmen arrive, they're carrying the photos with the trouble spots circled."

When you manage a house completed in approximately 1816 (a date found on a downspout's conductor head), you expect to see your roof-maintenance people on a regular basis. "My number-one goal

is to protect the building," says Wilson. "It houses many treasures, including a number of objects originally belonging to George and Martha Washington at Mount Vernon. But the house itself is our most important collection item—and it also protects everything else." And the roofing system, he adds, "is integral to preservation and protection."

The property is well worth preserving. A National Historic



Tudor Place's north facade overlooks gardens containing period flowers, shrubs and rare roses.

Daniel Webster and other important figures in American history.

Protecting the historic property's integrity demands vigilance in all roofing-related matters by Foundation staff and Wagner Roofing. Tudor Place is under Wagner's semiannual Roof Maintenance Agreement, so twice yearly all gutters and downspouts are cleaned to keep water flowing away from the building, and a written report is provided detailing the condition, years of useful remaining life and any recommended maintenance.

Landmark, Tudor Place is known nationally and internationally as a prime example of American neoclassical architecture. It was designed by Dr. William Thornton, architect of the U.S. Capitol, for Thomas Peter, son of

the first mayor of Georgetown, and his wife Martha Custis, granddaughter of Martha Washington. The couple purchased the large city lot in 1805 with an \$8,000 legacy from George Washington. Six genera-

“Good care is not cheap in the short view, but over the years it pays for itself over and over in the absence of breakdowns and in a longer life.”

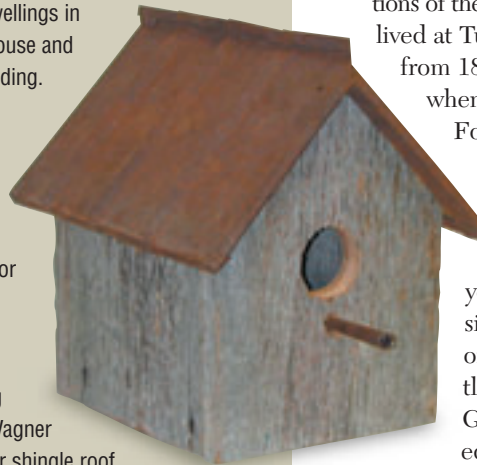
—Armistead Peter III, in his book, *Tudor Place*

Our Birdhouses Are History

Tin salvaged from the roof of Brickyard Hill House, one of the oldest wood frame and brick nogging* dwellings in Georgetown, will soon grace an antique dollhouse and birdhouses constructed of century-old barn siding.

Sheila Wagner is designing the line of collectibles. For more information, contact her at 301/927/9030, sheila@wagnerroofing.com.

Constructed between 1802 and 1806, Brickyard Hill House is a Washington, D.C., landmark located at the Georgetown Incinerator site on Wisconsin Avenue. The two-story twin dwelling, originally owned by the Peter family that built Tudor Place, will serve as the valet office for a new Ritz Hotel. The house is being fully renovated by Kadcon Corporation, and Wagner is installing a new fire-treated Certigrade cedar shingle roof.



*rough brick masonry used to fill in open spaces of a wooden frame

tions of the Peter family lived at Tudor Place from 1805 to 1983, when Tudor Place Foundation took over the property and opened it to the public. Over the years, the expansive urban estate of 5½ acres nestled in residential Georgetown hosted the Marquis de

Lafayette, Robert E. Lee, President Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun,

Wagner also has conducted an assessment of all the roofing systems throughout the grounds. As the Foundation raises money, it can then implement another phase of its long-term repair/replacement program.

“We don’t look at maintenance like an individual homeowner would,” explains Wilson. “We are trying to preserve the house’s historical significance, and the roofing elements are historical in themselves. So we want to repair and replace them ‘in kind.’”

The task is not an easy one. Tudor’s “multiple and complex roofing systems” include slate

roofing on the main house and two wings; standing and flat-seam metal roofs on the “hyphens” between the house and the wings; and a metal roof on the “new” 1876 kitchen addition.

The Foundation also owns 1670 31st St., N.W., a Victorian house that stands on one of the deepest lots in Georgetown. That building, which currently serves as a lecture center, is topped by a complicated slate roof with numerous gables. Wagner did structural repairs to the rafters, which had rotted below the built-in gutters. Wagner recently replaced copper gutters and downspouts at the property. ●

The Tudor Place tour entrance is at 1644 31st St., N.W. For information on house and garden tours, call 202/965/0400 or go to www.tudorplace.org.

Wagner Roofing in Georgetown

Wagner trucks are a familiar sight on Georgetown’s historic streets. Recent residential, commercial and nonprofit clients in the neighborhood include:

- August Georges,
1521-23 Wisconsin Ave., N.W.
- Bowie-Sevier House,
3124 Q St., N.W.
- Commander Salamander,
1420 Wisconsin Ave., N.W.
- Delta Phi Epsilon Fraternity,
3401 Prospect St., N.W.
- Dumbarton Oaks,
1703 32nd St., N.W.
- Encore Construction, Cox Row,
3339 N St., N.W.
- Georgetown Lutheran Church,
1556 Wisconsin Ave., N.W.
- Maureen Littleton Gallery,
1667 Wisconsin Ave., N.W.
- Philips Row,
28th and Olive Sts., N.W.

Our Customers Say ...

“The back of our old house in Georgetown has a flat roof that has leaked probably almost since the building went up ... Wagner Roofing came out this year and took care of it. And it was a lesser job than I’d thought—in fact, Wagner was able to save some of the roof.”

—Susan Jones, President, National Building Museum

Visit Wagner at the Building Arts Festival

Wagner Roofing will return to the annual Festival of the Building Arts at the National Building Museum in 2002.

To coincide with the opening of the museum’s new Do-It-Yourself exhibition, this year’s festival will take place Saturday, Oct. 19 (instead of the customary second week in September). Wagner’s roofing team has been a popular feature at previous events, with demonstrations of slate, copper and shingle roofing techniques. ●



Wagner Story Now on Video

The story of Wagner Roofing Company comes alive in a new 20-minute video produced by the company. The video, which features personal interviews and visits to Wagner projects, shows how the Washington, D.C., sheet metal business started by Otto Wagner and his son Jack (Chuck Wagner’s father) in their basement home-shop in 1914 burgeoned into a roofing firm that today has more than 75 employees and serves clients as far away as the West Indies. The video highlights Wagner’s commitment to promoting the skills of master craftspeople in the building arts, preserving historic properties that reflect such artistry—and educating the public about these subjects. To view the video, contact Chuck or Sheila Wagner at 301/927/9030. ●



In the Works

These Wagner jobs are in progress or recently completed. To discuss or visit these or other projects, call Chuck Wagner or Sheila Wagner at 301/927/9030. (Unless otherwise noted, jobs are in Washington, D.C.)

Cafritz residence, Northwest Washington, D.C.: Paint house; new copper roof

Embassy Camera, 1735 Connecticut Ave., N.W.: New slate roof, lead-coated copper cornice and built-in gutter

Embassy of Gabon, 2034 24th St., N.W.: New tile roof, modified bitumen roofs and structural repairs

Girls & Boys Town USA (American Property Construction), 1308-10-12 Potomac Ave., S.E.: Rubber roof and standing seam Kynar-finished 24-gauge galvanized steel roof and flat seam terne-coated stainless steel roof

National Cathedral School, Gate House, 3609 Woodley Rd., N.W.: Replace tile roof, copper gutters and lead-coated copper cornice and soffit

2500 Massachusetts Ave., N.W. (Co-op) (Lawrence G. Lynn Co.): Facade repairs, lead-coated copper gutters and coping and preventive maintenance on built-up roof

Back When...



J.S. Wagner Company operated from 2024 Rhode Island Avenue, N.E., in Washington, D.C., from 1951 to 1968.

Who We Are

Chuck Wagner
Sheila Wagner
Owners

Bill Barnett
Charlie Isom
Tim Schmitt
Jeff Wooldridge
Estimators

Denise Berti
Project Manager/
General Contracting

Barbara Demarest
Project Manager

Sergio Luise
Purchasing

Colleen Kennedy
Administrative Assistant

Brian Kidwell
Operations Manager

Diane DeCesaris
Controller

Jennifer Rozier
Service Department

Adrienne Whyte
Receptionist