

# Sagamore Hill

National Historic Site  
New York

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



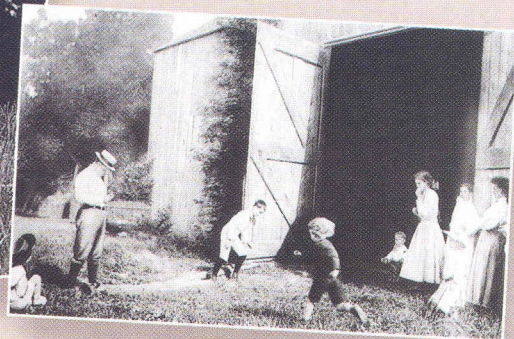
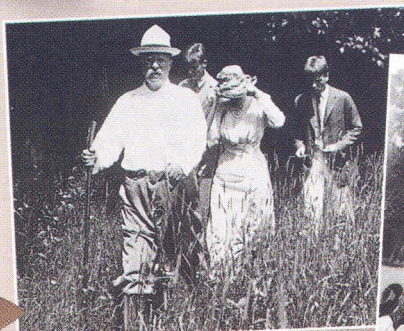
ALL PHOTOS NPS

**Above:** The Roosevelts (left to right): Ethel, TR, Theodore Jr., Archie, Alice, Kermit, Edith Roosevelt, and Quentin. **Below:** TR in his library. **Left to right:** Leading the family on a hike; keeping time as children race. Of his children he

wrote: "They often went barefoot . . . They swam, they tramped, they boated . . . they coasted and skated in winter, they were . . . friends with the cows, chickens, pigs, and other livestock."

*"The house stands right on the top of the hill, separated by fields and belts of woodland from all other houses, and looks out over the bay and the Sound. We see the sun go down beyond long reaches of land and of water. . . . We love all the seasons; the snows and bare woods of winter; the rush of growing things and the blossom-spray of spring; the yellow grain, the ripening fruits and tasselled corn, and the deep, leafy shades that are heralded by 'the green dance of summer'; and the sharp fall winds that tear the brilliant banners with which the trees greet the dying year."*

*Theodore Roosevelt*



TR's Rough Rider hat and sword

# Refuge for a Public Man



When Theodore Roosevelt was 15, his father established the family's summer residence at Oyster Bay, where the boy spent vacations exploring the nearby fields and woodlands of Cove Neck. Ten years later in 1880 young Roosevelt and his fiancée Alice Hathaway Lee bought the hill on Cove Neck where his home now stands. The hill had no trees then, with a barn its only building. For this property he put down \$10,000, assuming a 20-year mortgage for the \$20,000 balance. Of the property's 155 acres he kept 95 and sold the rest to relatives.

The New York architectural firm of Lamb and Rich drew up house plans, but before the construction agreement was signed Roosevelt's wife and his mother died in the family's New York home on the same

day in 1884. His wife died of Bright's disease less than 48 hours after their first child, named Alice after her, was born. Wanting a suitable home for his daughter, Roosevelt contracted with John A. Wood & Son, Lawrence, Long Island, to build for \$16,975 the house he and his wife had planned. Roosevelt's sister Anna moved into it with baby Alice in 1885, while he divided his time between the new house and his North Dakota ranch.

Roosevelt had planned to name the house and property "Leeholm" to honor his first wife Alice Lee. But he began seeing Edith Kermit Carow, a childhood playmate, and decided to call the estate "Sagamore Hill . . . from the old Sagamore Mohannis, who as Chief of his little tribe, signed away his rights to the land." Roosevelt remarried in December 1886, and in the spring the couple moved into Sagamore Hill. Here the Roosevelts spent the rest of their lives except for absences imposed by his public career. Three of their children, Theodore Jr., Kermit, and Ethel, were born here at Sagamore Hill.

Not only was Sagamore Hill the center of day-to-day administration of the nation's affairs in summer from 1902 to 1909, but it witnessed dramatic national and inter-

national events. On one August day in 1905 Roosevelt separately met envoys of warring Russia and Japan in the Sagamore Hill library and then brought them face-to-face. There they inaugurated the conference resulting in the September 5, 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth (New Hampshire) that ended the conflict and earned TR the Nobel peace prize.

The doings of the Roosevelts and their kin filled reams of copy filed by correspondents who kept watch at this Summer White House. As an ardent advocate of what he called "the strenuous life," the President frequently could be seen joining the children in their games and taking them for a hike or swim, chopping wood, riding horseback, or striding across the fields and through the woods he loved. Occasionally there would be a mournful procession of children, accompanied by President and Mrs. Roosevelt, to the small animal cemetery to bury a family pet.

"I wonder if you will ever know how I love Sagamore Hill," Roosevelt said to his wife as he lay ill on January 5, 1919. The next day he died in his sleep at the age of 60. Edith Roosevelt lived on here until her death in 1948 at the age of 87.

# Exploring Sagamore Hill



Library



Dining Room



North Room

Sagamore Hill is a rambling 23-room Victorian structure of wood frame and brick, little changed from when it was the home of a distinguished American and his family. Most of the furnishings are original pieces that were used and loved by the Roosevelt family. On the first floor are a large center hall, the library that served as TR's private office, the dining room, kitchen, and drawing room. The drawing room was Mrs. Roosevelt's domain, the one place she could demand privacy.

The spacious north room, added in 1905, was designed by C. Grant LaFarge, Roosevelt's friend and the son of the artist John LaFarge. The 30- by 40-foot room was built with Philippine and American woods—mahogany, black walnut, swamp cypress, and hazel—and filled with hunting trophies, books, paintings, flags, and furniture. The north room vividly reflects the spirit of Theodore Roosevelt.

On the second floor are bedrooms, the nursery, guest rooms, and the room with a great porcelain bathtub. Theodore Roosevelt Jr. recalled the tub's wastepipe making "the most astonishing series of gurgles" as the water ran out. "We were told by our Irish nurse that these were the outcries of the 'faucet lady' and we watched with care to see if we could catch a glimpse of her head in the pipe."

The Gun Room, housing Roosevelt's collection of hunting arms, is on the top floor. Here he sometimes entertained friends, away from the household's bustle. Here too he wrote many of his books, articles, and speeches. Other rooms on this floor include quarters for the household staff of six, a sewing room, and Theodore Roosevelt Jr.'s bedroom as it was in his pre-college days. On the house's south and west sides is the spacious piazza from which Roosevelt looked out over Oyster Bay Harbor and Long Island Sound. On the grounds are landscaped gardens and, nearby, the Theodore Roosevelt Museum (at Old Orchard), formerly Gen. Theodore Roosevelt Jr.'s home.

In 1948, after Mrs. Roosevelt died, Sagamore Hill, its contents, and 83 acres of land were bought by the Theodore Roosevelt Association, a nonprofit corporation founded in 1919 for recalling "to the American people Mr. Roosevelt's personality and achievements, and the ideals of individual and national life that he preached and practiced." In 1963 the association presented the house and property at Sagamore Hill, the house in which Roosevelt was born in New York City, and a \$500,000 endowment to the American people as a gift. The New York City home, at 28 East 20th Street in Manhattan, was designated Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site.

## TR: The Strenuous Life

For many people Theodore Roosevelt was the most fascinating man ever to lead the nation. An appealing mix of high moral purpose and humorous enthusiasm for life, he was an irresistible subject for both scholars and a popular press that often portrayed "Teddy" as more outlandish than his actions warranted. His activities and achievements can only be hinted at here.

**1858:** Born October 27 in New York City to Theodore Roosevelt Sr. and Martha Bulloch Roosevelt.

**1880:** Graduated Harvard College; married Alice Hathaway Lee.

**1882–84:** Served in New York State Assembly.

**1884:** Death of TR's mother and wife Alice Lee.

**1884–86:** Cattle rancher in Dakota Territory.

**1886:** Married Edith Kermit Carow.

**1889–95:** Member, U.S. Civil Service Commission.

**1895–97:** President, Board of Police Commissioners of New York City.

**1897–98:** Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

**1898:** Colonel, 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry Regiment ("Rough Riders") in Spanish-American War.

**1898–1900:** Governor of New York.

**1900:** Elected Vice-President of United States.

**1901–09:** President of the United States (sworn in after assassination of William McKinley).

**1909–10:** African hunting and exploring expedition; toured Europe.

**1912:** Ran unsuccessfully for President as National Progressive ("Bullmoose") Party candidate.

**1913–14:** South American expedition.

**1917–18:** Supported U.S. role in World War I.

**1918:** Son Quentin shot down, killed over France.

**1919:** Died in sleep January 6 at Sagamore Hill.

Roosevelt was an extraordinary combination of bluff, exuberant man of action and bookish, reflective man of letters. Reading was his solace and refuge. TR's spirit here is evoked by the house's more than 6,000 books. Biography, the classics, history, poetry, fiction, science—his reading was both broad and deep.

Somehow, in a life crowded with enormous public and family responsibilities, he also found time to write more than 30 volumes: histories, biographies, social and political commentary, natural science, memoirs, travel writing, adventure tales, and countless editorials, essays, and articles. He was not, he once said, an original thinker, but he was an excellent writer whose incisive thoughts on a wide range of topics still command our interest.



## Visiting Sagamore Hill

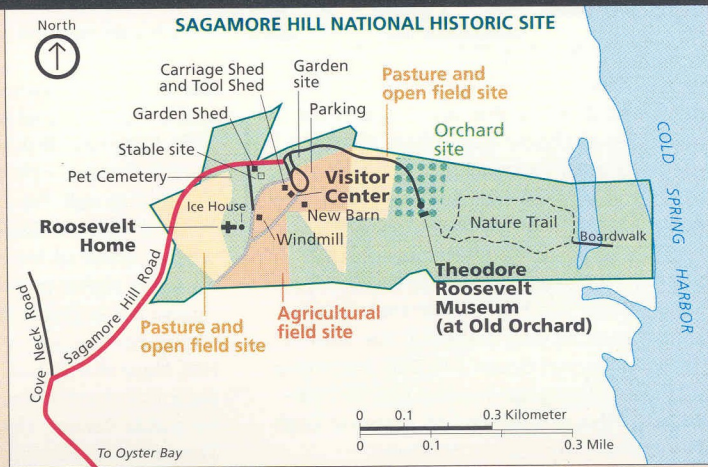
Access to the Theodore Roosevelt Home is by guided tour (fee). Tours fill early in spring and summer, so arrive early in the day. In summer guided nature walks are offered. Tour tickets and publications are offered at the visitor center. The site is closed Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1. Contact the park for hours of operation. Sagamore Hill is at the end of Cove Neck Road, Oyster Bay, Long Island, N.Y. Taxis meet all Long Island Railroad trains at Pennsylvania Station, Seventh Ave. and 33d St., New York City. By car take the Long Island Expressway to exit 41 North (N.Y. 106 North). Take N.Y. 106 toward Oyster Bay and follow the signs to Sagamore Hill.

**Theodore Roosevelt Museum (at Old Orchard):** Built in 1937 for Gen. Theodore Roosevelt Jr., this Georgian home was part of the Theodore Roosevelt Association's 1963 gift. The exhibits and films portray TR's political career, family life at Sagamore Hill, and his children's lives.

**Safety and Accessibility:** Stay on the paths to avoid poison ivy and ticks. Beware of heat exhaustion in summer. Many park fences are historic and not safe to climb. Carry or keep pets leashed. Respect the rights of property owners around the site; do not climb fences or trees or walk beyond the bounds of the site. The grounds, first floor of the Theodore Roosevelt Home, and the museum are accessible, and the museum's audiovisual program is closed-captioned.

**For More Information**  
Sagamore Hill National Historic Site  
20 Sagamore Hill Road  
Oyster Bay, NY 11771  
516-922-4788 [www.nps.gov/sahi](http://www.nps.gov/sahi)

There are more than 380 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. Learn more about parks and national park programs at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).



## The Roosevelt Farm

Roosevelt's Sagamore Hill was a working farm. He grew wheat, corn, hay, timothy, barley, and rye and raised cattle and hogs.

A three-acre garden provided vegetables and flowers. The farm was a family project: children tended their sections in the garden,

Mrs. Roosevelt kept the farm's books, and Roosevelt would often help with the haying and other chores.