

"It was furnished," Roosevelt later wrote of the house, "in the canonical taste of the New York which George William Curtis described in the *Potiphar Papers*," a period in which men of substance liked to have their homes reflect the dignity and solidity of their traditions and lives. "The black haircloth furniture in the dining-room scratched the bare legs of the children as they sat on it. The middle room was a library, with tables, chairs, and bookcases of gloomy respectability."

A feature of the house was the arrangement of the yard in back. Both houses had wide porches overlooking their yards and the gardens of the Robert Goelet estate on 19th Street. These provided spacious and airy places for the children to play.

In the reconstructed house the living rooms and two bedrooms have been restored to the period of Teedie's boyhood. The drawing room with its high ceiling, magnificent mirrors, crystal chandelier, and blue satin hangings has the characteristic elegance of the period. To the children, this room was "a room of much splendor . . . open for general use only on Sunday evening or on rare occasions when there were parties." The front bedroom, in which Theodore was born in 1858, contains the original furniture and a portrait of his mother. Next to it is the nursery, and beyond that is the open porch which was used as a gymnasium.

**ABOUT YOUR VISIT:** The site can be reached by the IRT (Lexington Avenue) Subway on 23d Street, or by Madison Avenue bus. Parking space in the vicinity is scarce. Please check with the site's staff for days and hours of operation.

**ADMINISTRATION:** Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, in cooperation with the Theodore Roosevelt Association. A superintendent, whose address is 26 Wall Street, New York, NY 10005, is in charge of the site.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, 1858-1919, 26th President of the United States, son of Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., a New York merchant of Dutch ancestry, and Martha Bulloch, a Southerner of Scotch birth; graduated from Harvard in 1880; married Alice Lee; took up ranching in Dakota Territory from 1884 to 1887, where he lost much of his investment but profited from the rugged life; turned out six volumes of travel and history from 1885 to 1889, among them *The Winning of the West*; married Edith Carow in 1886, three years after his first wife died; won national attention for implementing civil service reform during 6 years as U.S. Civil Service Commissioner; fought against an alliance of graft, politics, and crime as the head of the New York Police Board; became Assistant Secretary of the Navy during President McKinley's first administration; advocated an aggressive policy toward Spain; resigned post in 1898 to help organize the Rough Riders; saw only minor action but received wide credit; elected Vice President on McKinley's ticket in 1900; assumed the Presidency a year later upon the assassination of McKinley; brought a forceful executive style to the office, which delighted his friends and outraged his critics; initiated the Panama Canal; successfully settled the old Alaskan boundary dispute with England in 1903; elected in 1904 to a full term; reaffirmed the Monroe Doctrine in the face of challenge; brought warring Russia and Japan to the peace table in 1905; sent the American fleet around the world during 1907-9 in a demonstration of preparedness; urged on Congress and the courts a variety of reform measures to harness the industrial revolution then remaking American society; vigorously continued his programs against the opposition of the Old Guard; sought to bring trusts under control and was an effective advocate of the conservation of natural resources; instituted significant administrative reforms within the National Government; withdrew to Sagamore Hill in 1909, after leaving office, and resumed his writing; sailed for Africa for a hunt; visited the German Kaiser; lectured at the Sorbonne, Oxford, and Christiana, where he received the Nobel Prize; reentered politics as the leader of the Progressive Party but was defeated by Woodrow Wilson in 1912; explored the dark jungles of Brazil in 1913-14; returned to a world at war and saw his four sons go off to the front; led the attack on Wilson's policies in his last years; considered reentering the political wars but infirmities intervened; died peacefully at Sagamore Hill on January 6, 1919.

U.S. Department of the Interior

National Park Service

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Theodore Roosevelt  
Birthplace

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National Historic Site

On this site, where he was born and lived until 15 years old, is commemorated the boyhood of the many-sided man who became his country's 26th President. Here, in a 4-story brownstone standing in a now-lost residential setting, Theodore Roosevelt passed some of his most formative years. After bouts with childhood ailments, early passions for nature and books, and the shaping influences of family and travel, he grew into the man whose character, vigorous personality, and momentous deeds made him a dynamic force in American life from his earliest political years to the day of his death.

Theodore Roosevelt was born at 28 East 20th Street, New York City, on October 27, 1858. Four years earlier his father, Theodore, Sr., had brought his Southern bride, Martha Bulloch Roosevelt, to live in the house on 20th Street after their marriage in Georgia. Though the dwelling was neither large nor lavish by the standards of the day, it was adequate for a young couple of moderate means. For the next 20 years it was the family's home, and it was here that the other three Roosevelt children were born: Anna in 1855, Elliott in 1860, and Corinne in 1861.

**A STRUGGLE FOR HEALTH:** Poor health plagued "Teedie"—as the boy was called by the family—almost from the start. One of his earliest recollections was of his father walking up and down the room at night, holding him in his arms. The Roosevelt children spent their summers in the New Jersey highlands or along the Hudson, but the change did little to help the youngster's condition. When he was 12 years old and his health was beginning to improve, his father spurred him along by installing a gymnasium on the porch off the nursery. "You have the mind," his father told him, "but you haven't got the body. To do all you can with your mind, you must make a body to match it." The boy responded by doggedly working out on the apparatus, along with the rest of the neighborhood youngsters. Within a year he improved so much that asthma never again seriously interfered with his activities.

If "Teedie" missed out on the rough-and-tumble of boyhood, he found solace in books and natural history. He learned to read at an early age, and his keen intelligence and surging energy sought a range of outlets. Physically



unable to attend school, he extended his uneven tutoring by wide reading. Heroic tales, science, and biography were his first tastes. By the age of 8, he was a budding naturalist, and by 14 had grasped the main tenets of Darwin. His curiosity left him little time for brooding.

**THE EUROPEAN ADVENTURES:** When Theodore was 10, the Roosevelts went off to Europe for their first Grand Tour. Often homesick, ill, or exhausted, Theodore later remembered the trip with distaste. But for a boy so observant, the experience must have been something more than an ordeal in endurance. Four years later, in 1872-73, the family returned to Europe. For Theodore, equipped now with better health, added years, and new resolve, this trip was more profitable. He found the Continent, Egypt,

and Syria as interesting for their birds as for their monuments. His diary revealed a fascination with nature and a talent for description. Altogether, his travels in Europe were a broadening influence that more than offset his lack of systematic schooling before college.

**RECONSTRUCTION OF THE BIRTHPLACE HOUSE:** When Mrs. Roosevelt and the four children returned to New York in late 1873, they moved into a new home at 6 West 57th Street. The house on 20th Street remained in the Roosevelt family until 1896. As the neighborhood passed from residential to commercial use, the house underwent a series of commercial alterations that destroyed the original fabric. In 1919, encouraged by Roosevelt's two sisters, the Women's Roosevelt Memorial Association (which merged with the Theodore Roosevelt Association) raised funds to buy the site and reconstruct the house. They also bought the adjoining property, the house of Robert Roosevelt, uncle of Theodore. The father of Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., had originally built the two houses for his sons.

The house was originally entered by climbing the stoop over the English basement. On the first floor were a parlor and a library, both opening onto a hall, with a dining room running across the full width of the house at the rear. On the second floor were three bedrooms, and on the third floor, three more, with servants' quarters on the fourth. A door on the second floor porches connected the two original houses.

