

sagamore hill

“There could be no healthier and pleasanter place in which to bring up children than in that nook of old-time America around Sagamore Hill. Certainly I never knew small people to have a better time or a better training for their work in afterlife than . . . at Sagamore Hill.”

Sagamore Hill was built by Theodore Roosevelt during 1884 and 1885 and remained his permanent home the rest of his life. After its completion, the young Roosevelt moved in with his sister, Anna, and his daughter, Alice. His first wife, Alice Lee, had died only hours after their daughter was born. In December 1886 Roosevelt married Edith Kermit Carow, a childhood friend. The following spring they arrived at Sagamore Hill, and here, except for absences imposed by his public career, the Roosevelts spent the rest of their lives. Here were born three of their five children: Theodore, Jr., Kermit, and Ethel. Here to the “Summer White House” came national and international figures from every walk of life. Here on January 6, 1919, Theodore Roosevelt died peacefully in his sleep at the age of 60; and here Edith Roosevelt lived until her death in 1948 at the age of 87.

“I had perfectly definite views what I wished in inside matters, what I desired to live in and with; I arranged all this, so as to get what I desired in so far as my money permitted; [the architects] put on the outside cover with but little help from me. I wished a big piazza . . . where we could sit in rocking chairs and look at the sunset; a library with a shallow bay window looking south, the parlor or drawing room occupying all the western end of the lower floor . . . big fireplaces for logs. . . . I had to live inside and not outside the house, and while I should have liked to express myself in both, as I had to choose, I chose the former.”

THE HOUSE ON COVE NECK: When Roosevelt was 15, his father established the family’s summer residence at Oyster Bay, and the boy spent his vacations exploring the fields and woodlands on Cove Neck. Three years after graduating from Harvard, young Roosevelt purchased the hill on Cove Neck where his home now stands. A barn was the only building on the tree-barren hill. For this property he paid \$10,000 in cash and assumed a 20-year mortgage for the \$20,000 balance. The total area of the property was 63 hectares (155 acres), of which he kept 38 (95), selling the rest to relatives.

The New York architectural firm of Lamb and Rich drew up the plans for the home, but before the final agreement for its construction was signed, Theodore’s wife and mother died on the same day in their New York City home. Determined to have a suitable home for his infant daughter, Roosevelt contracted with John A. Wood & Son of Lawrence, Long Island, to build for \$16,975 the house that was to become known as Sagamore Hill.

Roosevelt had originally planned to name the property “Leeholm,” for his first wife. But within two years he had begun seeing Edith Kermit Carow. He soon called the estate “Sagamore Hill . . . from the old Sagamore Mohannis, who as Chief of his little tribe, signed away his rights to the land.”

“After all, fond as I am of the White House and much though I have appreciated these years in it, there isn’t any place in the world like home—like Sagamore Hill, where things are our own, with our own associations. . . .”

HOME OF A GREAT AMERICAN FAMILY: For more than 30 years Sagamore Hill was one of the most conspicuous homes in America, talked about in crossroad stores and lonely farm kitchens, at church socials and family dinners, on city street corners and beside roundup fires on far-flung Western ranches. People talked about a man never too busy being President to be a devoted father to his four boys and two girls, and a boon companion to countless friends.

“At Sagamore Hill we love a great many things—birds and trees, and books, and all things beautiful, and horses and rifles, and children and hard work and the joy of life.”

The doings of the Roosevelts and their kin filled reams of copy filed by correspondents who maintained a vigil at the “Summer White House.” The President himself was an ardent advocate of the “strenuous life,” and he could frequently be seen joining the children in their games and taking the boys 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, led by President and Mrs. Roosevelt, to the small animal cemetery to lay away a family pet.

“Speaking from the somewhat detached point of view of the masculine parent, I should say there was just the proper mixture of freedom and control in the management of the children. They were never allowed to be disobedient or to shirk lessons or work; and they were encouraged to have all the fun possible. They often went barefoot, especially during the many hours passed in various enthralling pursuits along and in the waters of the bay. They swam,

they tramped, they boated, they coasted and skated in winter, they were intimate friends with the cows, chickens, pigs, and other livestock. . . .”

HOME OF A GREAT AMERICAN: In 1889, after a short two years of writing and playing host to scores of visitors attracted to the young squire of Sagamore Hill, Roosevelt was named a member of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, the first major step in a life of distinguished public service. Through his career—as President of the Police Commission of the City of New York, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, lieutenant colonel of the famed Rough Riders, Governor of New York, Vice President, and Chief Executive—Sagamore Hill was the house to which he always returned. It was on the wide piazza of Sagamore Hill that Roosevelt was formally notified of his nomination as Governor of New York in 1898, as Vice President in 1900, and as President in 1904.

Not only was Sagamore Hill the center of the day-to-day administration of the country's affairs during the summers from 1901 to 1909, but it had an abundance of dramatic events of national and international importance. One occurred on the August day in 1905 when Roosevelt separately met the envoys of warring Russia and Japan in the library at Sagamore Hill, and then brought them face-to-face to inaugurate the conference that resulted in the Treaty of Portsmouth, N.H., on September 5, 1905, ending the conflict.

In 1903 the entire Roosevelt family posed for the camera at Sagamore Hill. From left to right they are: Quentin, age 5; Theodore, 44; Theodore, Jr., 15; Archie, 9; Alice, 19; Kermit, 13; Edith, 41; and Ethel, 11.



North Room



THE HOUSE AND ITS FURNISHINGS:

Sagamore Hill is a rambling, solidly built, 23-room Victorian structure of frame and brick. Today it is little changed from that time, a half-century ago, when it was the home of a distinguished American and his family. On the first floor are a large center hall, the library that served as T.R.'s private office, the dining room, Mrs. Roosevelt's drawing room, the kitchen, and the spacious north room, added in 1905. This room was designed by Roosevelt's friend, C. Grant LaFarge, son of the artist John LaFarge. The 9- by 12-meter (30- by 40-foot) room is built of Philippine and American woods: mahogany, black walnut, swamp cypress, and hazel. Filled with hunting trophies, books, paintings, flags, and furniture, the North Room vividly reflects the spirit of Theodore Roosevelt.

The second floor contains the family bedrooms, the nursery, guest rooms, and the room with the great porcelain bathtub. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., once recalled that the tub's wastepipe made "the most astonishing series of gurgles" when 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, too, he sometimes went to write or to entertain his friends, away from the bustle of the household. Other rooms include quarters for maids and a cook, a sewing room, a school room where some of the children were tutored, and Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.'s, bedroom as it was in his precollege days.

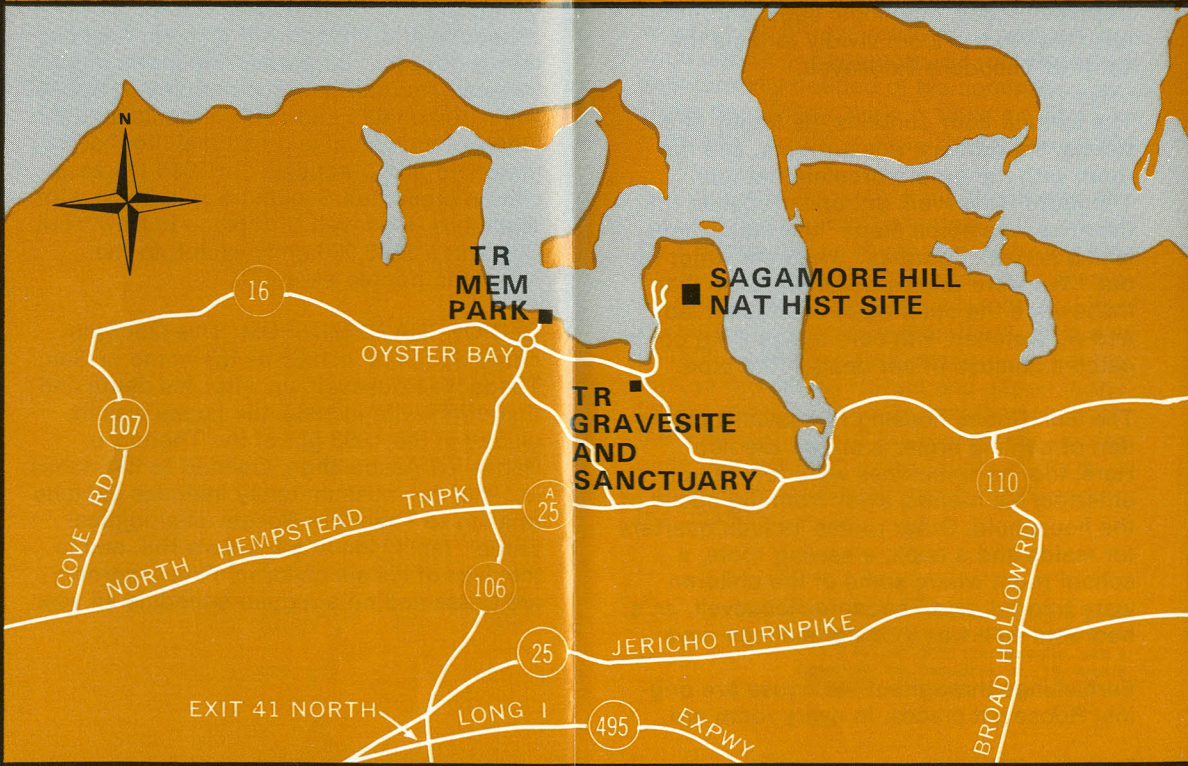
Furnishings throughout the house are original Roosevelt pieces. In every room are

items used and loved by the family. On every hand are crowded bookshelves, the contents revealing the wide range of Roosevelt's interests. Indeed, many were from his own hand.

On the south and west sides of the house 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 Old Orchard Museum, formerly Gen. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.'s, home, containing displays relating to the "Conservation President" and his family.

In 1950, two years after the death of Mrs. Roosevelt, Sagamore Hill, its contents, and 34 hectares (83 acres) of land were purchased by the Theodore Roosevelt Association, a nonprofit corporation founded in 1919 to recall "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 Sagamore Hill, along with Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace in New York City and a \$500,000 endowment, to the American people as a gift.

OLD ORCHARD MUSEUM: This Georgian home was built in 1938 as the home of Gen. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. After his death and that of his wife in 1960, the house was included in the 1963 gift of the Theodore Roosevelt Association. Opened to the public in 1966, the museum today includes exhibits relating to Theodore Roosevelt's political career, family life at Sagamore Hill, and to the lives of his six children. Film programs are presented on a regular schedule all year.



ABOUT YOUR VISIT: Sagamore Hill is at the end of Cove Neck Road, Oyster Bay, Long Island, N.Y., and can be reached by the Long Island Railroad from New York City's Pennsylvania Station at Seventh Ave. and 33d St. Trains meet all trains. If you choose to travel by car, the easiest route is over the Long Island Expressway to exit 41 (N.Y. 106 north). This road leads directly to Oyster Bay. Upon arriving, turn right at the third traffic light and follow the signs to Sagamore Hill. Please check with the park staff for days and hours of operation. The rights of property owners around Sagamore Hill must be respected; please do not climb fences or walk beyond the site boundaries.

A WORD ON SAFETY: Poison ivy is common in the area; please keep to the established paths and walkways. Pets running loose are bothersome to everyone; carry or keep your pet leashed. Heat exhaustion is not uncommon in the summer, so please judge your limits. Many park fences are historic and their age makes them unsafe for climbing. First aid is available at all buildings.

WE'RE JOINING THE METRIC WORLD
The National Park Service is introducing metric measurements in its publications to help Americans become acquainted with the metric system and to make interpretation more meaningful for park visitors from other nations.

SAGAMORE HILL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
The park, which is located in Oyster Bay, Long Island, New York, is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The superintendent's address is Cove Neck Road, Box 304, Oyster Bay, NY 11771.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior