

Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace



The scene above shows the neighborhood in which TR grew up, his home is off the picture in the center foreground. His grandfather Cornelius lived in the house just above the large tree at the end of the park. —J. Clarence Davies Collection, Museum of the City of New York

The Roosevelt home, a typical New York brownstone, was located on what was a quiet, tree-lined street in New York's most fashionable residential district. Theodore's grandfather Cornelius purchased both number 28 and number 26 next door as wedding gifts for two of his sons, Theodore, Sr., and Robert. Theodore and his bride Martha Bulloch moved into number 28 in 1854. The family lived there until the fall of 1872 when Theodore, Jr., was fourteen. They then set out on a year's tour of Europe. On their return, they went directly from the ship to their new house at 6 West 57th Street.

Eventually, the former Roosevelt home was taken over for business purposes. In 1916 it was completely demolished to make way for a two-story commercial building. After TR's death in 1919 prominent citizens decided to purchase the site, raze the commercial building and reconstruct Roosevelt's boyhood home as a memorial. They also built museum galleries and other facilities on the adjoining lot where Robert Roosevelt's house once stood. The reconstructed Birthplace was opened to the public in 1923. In 1963 the Theodore Roosevelt Association donated the site to the National Park Service.



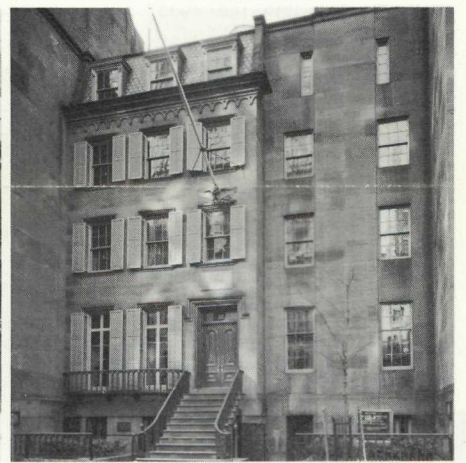
1865



1896



1916



Today

Touring the House

At the heart of Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace are its period rooms, restored to reflect their appearance between 1865 and 1872. In 1865 the Roosevelts had one of New York's leading interior decorators, Leon Marcotte, transform the relatively drab rooms into handsomely appointed chambers. A fourth floor was also added to the original three-story brownstone.

Approximately 40 percent of the Birthplace's furnishings come from the original house. Another 20 percent belonged to cousins or other family members. The rest of the house's contents are simply period pieces. Color schemes, layouts, and other details concerning the rooms' appearance were provided by TR's two sisters and his wife.

According to TR, the parlor was "a room of much splendor . . . open for general use only on Sun-

day evening or on rare occasions when there were parties." As a child he took special delight in a small sculpture of a Russian *moujik* (peasant) that was displayed there. The sculpture still ornaments a marble table that stands between the room's two windows.

The middle room on the parlor floor is the library, which served as the family's living room. Roosevelt remembered it as being filled with "tables, chairs and bookcases of gloomy respectability." Beyond is the dining room where horsehair covered chairs "scratched the bare legs of the children when they sat on them."

The front room on the second floor is the master bedroom furnished with the magnificent rosewood and stainwood veneered furniture original to the house. The children would often troop into this room while their father was dressing,

and "stay there as long as we were permitted, eagerly examining anything which came out of his pockets." To the rear of the second floor is the children's nursery. The crib and rush-seated chair are said to have been TR's. Beyond the nursery is the gymnasium.

Visitor Information Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site can be reached via IRT and BMT subway stops at 23rd and 14th Streets. Tours are conducted through the period rooms. For information on visiting hours, or to arrange for group visits, call (212) 260-1616. There is a small admission fee. The 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 immediate charge of the site.

Two obelisks in the **Library** are mementos of the family's trip to Egypt.

The horsehair chair seats in the **Dining Room** used to scratch TR's legs.

Magnificently furnished in the popular Rococo Revival style, the **Parlor** was the most

elegant room in the house.

Over the mantel in the **Master Bedroom** is a fine portrait of TR's mother.

The children used to scramble through the **Nursery** windows to the gymnasium.



A New York Family

Theodore Roosevelt—apostle of the “strenuous life,” larger-than-life hero to millions of Americans, and 26th President of the United States—was born on October 27, 1858, in the original brownstone on this site.

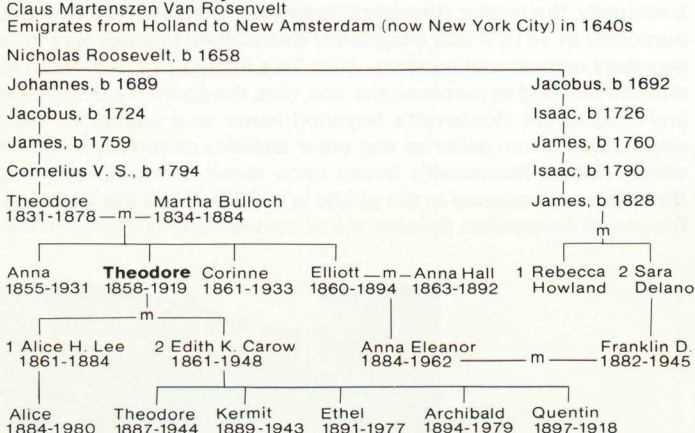
His first ancestor to settle in the New World was Claus Martenszen Van Rosenvelt, who came to the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam (later New York) in the 1640s. Claus’ descendants established themselves in the commercial life of the city and eventually became socially prominent as well. It was into this sophisticated New York world that TR was born just before the outbreak of the Civil War.

“Teedie,” as he was known to his family, was a frail and sickly child, who suffered from severe asthma and other ailments. One of his earliest recollections was of his father walking up and down the room at night, holding him in his arms so that he could breathe. Although unable to attend school on a regular basis, “Teedie” learned to read at an early age and devoured books on nature, adventure, and history. Confined to the family’s home, the boy dreamed of the outdoor life and idolized the heroes of history and literature about whom he read. He learned taxidermy and started what he called the “Roosevelt Museum of Natural History” in his home. His curiosity left him little time for brooding.

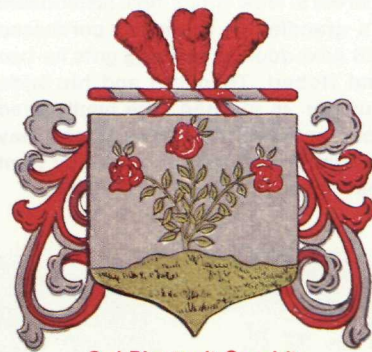
The Roosevelt children, Anna, Theodore, Elliott, and Corinne, spent many of their summers in the New Jersey highlands or along the Hudson. These changes in climate did little to help the youngster’s condition. When he was about 12, however, his health began to improve. To encourage further improvement his father gave him a warning and a challenge: “You have the mind,” he said, “but you haven’t got the body. To do all you can with your mind, you must make your body match it.” Theodore vowed to improve his health. To help him, his father installed a gymnasium on the back piazza of the house. There young Theodore, along with many neighborhood youngsters, exercised daily. Through diligent effort he improved so much that asthma soon ceased to interfere seriously with his activities.

In time the frail boy became a robust man who lived an active life. He was a cowboy in the Dakotas in the 1880s, a colonel of the Rough Riders regiment during the Spanish-American War, and a hunter-naturalist on three continents. His was a life also dedicated to public service. At the age of 23 he was elected to the New York State legislature. For nearly 40 years thereafter TR was a dynamic force in American politics. In 1901, on the death of President William McKinley, Roosevelt became President, the only native of New York City to hold that office. The boy from East 20th Street grew up to be the man of his youthful dreams.

The Roosevelt Family Tree



The Roosevelt Arms



In Dutch Roosevelt means “field of roses.” Thus the family’s coat of arms represents a rose bush in a green field.

The motto translates: He who has planted will preserve.

A Family Portrait

Young Theodore Roosevelt, shown here at the age of 4 years, had vivid memories of his parents. His father, “was the best man I ever knew. He combined strength and courage with gentleness, tenderness, and great unselfishness. . . . I never knew any one who got greater joy out of living than did my father, or any one who more wholeheartedly performed every

duty; . . . He was a big, powerful man, with a leonine face and his heart filled with gentleness for those who needed help or protection.”

Roosevelt recalled that his mother, Martha Bulloch, “was a sweet, gracious, beautiful Southern woman, a delightful companion and beloved by everybody. . . . She was not only a most de-

voted mother, but was also blessed with a strong sense of humor.”

In addition to Theodore, there were three other children in the family. Anna, the eldest, was born in 1855, Elliott in 1860, and Corinne in 1861. Elliott’s daughter, Eleanor, would marry her distant cousin Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Courtesy: Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library



Martha Bulloch Roosevelt



Teedie, about age 4



Theodore Roosevelt, Sr.



Anna 1869 (top)
Corinne 1869



Elliott 1865

Theodore Roosevelt: A Chronology

- 1858**
Born October 27 at 28 East 20th Street
- 1880**
Graduated from Harvard; married Alice Lee on October 27
- 1882-1884**
Member, New York State Assembly
- 1882**
Publishes *Naval War of 1812*, first of many books on history, nature, travel, and public affairs
- 1884**
Death of Alice Lee Roosevelt on February 14
- 1884-1886**
Rancher in Dakota Territory
- 1886**
Unsuccessful candidate for mayor of New York; married Edith Carow on December 2
- 1889-1895**
Member, U.S. Civil Service Commission

- 1895-1897**
President, New York City Police Board
- 1897-1898**
Assistant Secretary of the Navy
- 1898**
Organized Rough Riders
- 1898-1901**
Governor of New York State
- 1901**
Vice President of the United States; becomes President September 14, upon death of McKinley; “trust busting” policy begins October 1901
- 1902**
Begins vigorous conservation program
- 1904**
Elected President of the United States
- 1905**
Brought Russia and Japan to peace table at Portsmouth, New Hampshire

- 1906**
Pure Food and Drug Act passed for consumer protection
- 1909-1910**
Hunted big game in Africa
- 1910**
Received Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway
- 1909-1914**
Contributing editor of *The Outlook* magazine
- 1912**
Unsuccessful Progressive (Bull Moose) Party candidate for President
- 1914**
Explored “River of Doubt” in jungles of Brazil
- 1914-1917**
Prominent advocate of American preparedness and intervention in World War I
- 1919**
Died at home, Sagamore Hill, in Oyster Bay, Long Island, on January 6