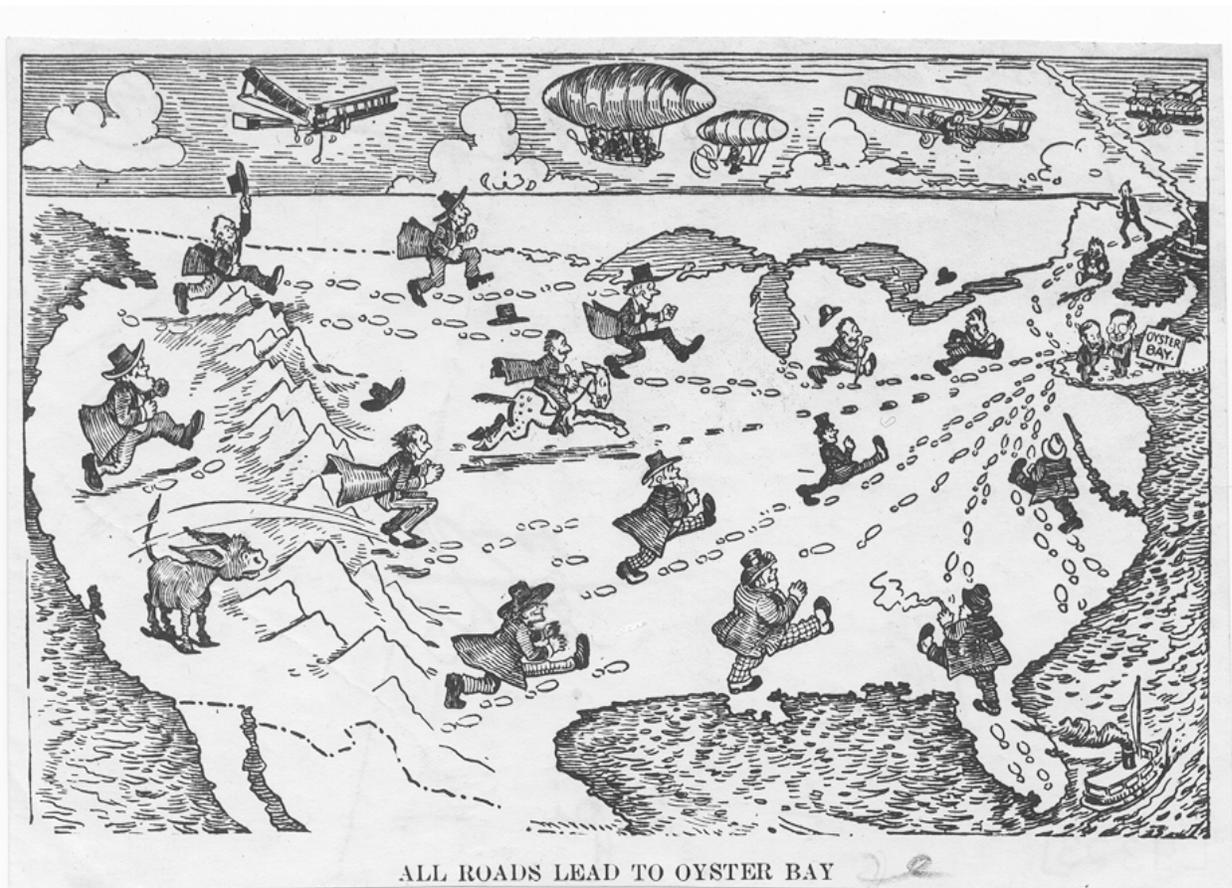


National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sagamore Hill National Historic Site
Oyster Bay, New York



A Handbook of Information for Group Leaders Preparing to Visit Sagamore Hill National Historic Site Home of Theodore Roosevelt, 26th US President



*Note: This document contains an introduction and background information on Theodore Roosevelt and Sagamore Hill. Presented in the manner of a teacher's manual, we have prepared this in response to the many requests we have received from group leaders who are preparing to come to visit the home of the 26th president.
Aug. 2006*

**A Handbook of Information for Group Leaders
for Sagamore Hill National Historic Site
Home of Theodore Roosevelt, 26th US President**

Introduction

We are pleased that you will soon be visiting Sagamore Hill. The information and materials presented here are designed to help you to plan and prepare your group for your trip.

How to use this information:

We suggest that you, as group leader, review these materials carefully, and then use this information to prepare for your visit. Some leaders may wish to give this manual to all those who will be coming to visit. Others may use this manual to help focus on certain areas of interest for a particular group for discussion or investigation. Oftentimes there are opportunities in preparation or during travel time when topics and themes for discussion are appropriate and desired. This material is not copyrighted and you may duplicate and distribute this information as you wish.

Note that the understanding of the Ground Rules is mandatory for all visitors prior to their visit here. While most people are familiar with these rules, we have stated them here so that there can be no misunderstanding of what behavior we expect of our visitors.

**A Visit to the Home of a President; Stepping Back in Time:
Life at Sagamore Hill 100 Years Ago.**

Your visit to Sagamore Hill is based on the following four main themes that will be used as the basis for interpretation. We have stated as well the goals and objectives that we as interpreters have in place for our providing information during our tours.

Primary Themes

Sagamore Hill as Family Home: A Private Place for a Public Man

Interpretive Theme Statement

Sagamore Hill was Theodore Roosevelt's primary residence and the place where he lived his married life and reared his children. The property was his personal center and reflects his way of life and great love for family and home.

Content

This theme interprets the constants in Roosevelt's life and the ideals that he tried to nurture and preserve as the world evolved around him. It discusses the tension between public and private facets of life at Sagamore Hill, and explores the ways that public figures and their families adjust to official responsibilities while providing their need for private time.

Sagamore Hill was first and foremost a home for Roosevelt's family and staff, nestled among the homes of his relatives, in a community comfortable with friends. In Roosevelt's own words it was the house "on the top of the hill, separated by fields and belts of woodland from all other houses"...looking "out over the bay and the Sound." Filled with tangible expressions of his interests—his collections and mementos—it is a reflection of his robust, enthusi-

astic, and adventurous life and this nation’s exuberant confidence as they entered the 20th century together.

While the presidential years are significant in the exploration of this theme, it also interprets the many years when the Roosevelts lived at Sagamore Hill without official obligations. Sagamore Hill remained an influence in the Roosevelts’ lives from its inception to their deaths, and Roosevelt himself used Sagamore Hill as a sanctuary for the work of literary expression.

As Roosevelt suggests, Sagamore Hill is much more than a single building and its contents. It is a property with gardens, fields and woods, beachfront and bay, wild and domestic animals, sunsets and thunderstorms. It is the progression of 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 tasseled corn,...and the sharp fall winds that tear the brilliant banners with which the trees greet the dying year.” For Roosevelt and his family, Sagamore Hill, represents the “strenuous life,” —the activities that drew the family outside and entertained them inside.

Life at Sagamore Hill expressed Roosevelt’s character, rekindled his mind, re-centered his spirit and, in his own words, occupied his heart. “I wonder,” he asked his wife the day before he died, “if you will ever know how I love Sagamore Hill.”

The Presidency in a Changing World—Sagamore Hill as the Summer White House

Interpretive Theme Statement

During the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909), the world, the United States, and the community of Oyster Bay all changed rapidly, and life at Sagamore Hill, as the Roosevelt residence outside Washington, D.C., reflects how change affected society and how Roosevelt harnessed change to redefine the office of president.

Content

This theme focuses on society and the presidency, and how both changed during Roosevelt’s time as president. Sagamore Hill becomes a lens through which change can be illustrated, studied, and placed into context.

It provides an introduction to stories of Roosevelt’s activist approach to the presidency and leadership. On an international level, it highlights events that preceded the emergence of the United States as a world power. On a local level, it traces the impact of a modern presidency superimposed on a small community. It explores the technologies that made a portable presidency possible complete with increased news coverage and media attention.

Theodore Roosevelt’s Legacy and Relevance—Sagamore Hill as Catalyst

Interpretive Theme Statement

Theodore Roosevelt’s leadership had far reaching impact on many facets of national and international life including government, diplomacy, conservation and literature and Sagamore Hill offers opportunities to focus on his career and his legacies, examining the meaning and relevance of his contributions over time.

Content

This theme focuses on Roosevelt's achievements and legacies. It examines the ways that he redefined the presidency and raised the stature of the United States and the impact that he had on national and international history. It dissects the myths that have emerged in search of a balanced view of his influence. It traces the evolution of public policies that he embraced (conservation and public welfare, for example) as well as those that he refused to champion (racial equality, for example). It examines his concept of citizenship and participation in the responsibility of civic duty.

To adequately interpret this theme, programming must encourage use of the park as a forum for the responsibility of civic duty as well as Roosevelt's example of public leadership. It should invite public attention and dialogue on- and off-site.

rev. 3-21-05

Goals

Assist visitors in beginning to understand life at the turn of the 20th century as experienced by the Roosevelts; daily life of the family from the point of view of a visitor to the president's home during a typical summer while Theodore Roosevelt was president.

Assist visitors in beginning to understand how Sagamore Hill served as the "Summer White House" (1902-1908) for President Theodore Roosevelt and his family during a time period of advancement in technologies utilized in the house and making it possible to move the seat of executive power from Washington DC to Oyster Bay.

Objectives

At the end of the program, visitors will be able to:

Identify when Theodore Roosevelt was president and when he lived at Sagamore Hill.

Be introduced to some typical daily activities of the president and his family at Sagamore Hill and will become familiar with the general setting of Sagamore Hill and what affect it had on the family's lifestyle

Examine some of the achievements TR made as President of the United States such as conservation and foreign policy, as relating to TR's work as conservationist, peacemaker, presidential innovator, builder of the Panama Canal, etc. Examples of TR's accomplishments that affect our life today are usually cited during tours.

Understand some of the technologies and inventions available and used by the Roosevelt family and to understand some of the technology that made it possible to move the "White House" to Oyster Bay.

Overview

Why visit a site such as Sagamore Hill? We visit museums to see how people have lived and to have a basis for understanding who we are and how we live. We can learn about such things as inventions and technology, especially in communications and understand that there are certain things (regarding much of family life, for example) that are pretty much constant and have not changed much in one hundred years.

We gain a better knowledge of history by making a connection with the past through visiting historic sites. We understand people, daily life, and their actions as a result of seeing how they lived. And in the end, it is the "how they lived" that is fascinating to us since our life is based on similar experiences.

Discussion of Ground Rules for Visitors

There is one important concept that is mandatory for all visitors planning to come to Sagamore Hill and that is a basic understanding of the Ground Rules for visiting a site such as a house museum. We state these rules here and ask you to remind the members of your group so that each person is fully prepared for the visit. The Tour Guide customarily reviews these prior to entering the historic site:

Ground Rules

No touching. Please help preserve our national treasure by not touching any of the wood work, walls, or objects. Visitors may not lean or reach into rooms or sit on any furniture. Alarms will sound in many places if this rule is not followed. (Even freshly washed hands have oils that are damaging to the collections.)

Follow directions of the Tour Guide, stay together as a group and pay attention. Questions are permitted after the Guide has presented information regarding each area. Groups must stay together with the Tour Guide. Any disruptive individuals will be escorted out of Theodore Roosevelt's home.

No photography is permitted inside the historic structures.

No food, beverage or chewing gum is permitted in the site.

To sum up, No touching; Follow directions; No photography; No food, beverage or gum

Background Information on Theodore Roosevelt and Sagamore Hill

Theodore Roosevelt (TR) was a public servant for most of his life, and served largely as an elected or appointed official, including: New York State Assemblyman, New York City Police Commissioner, US Civil Service Commissioner, Governor of New York State, Assistant Secretary of the US Navy, an Officer in the United States Army, Vice President and President of the US. During this life-long period of service to our country he demonstrated many traits of a good citizen and attention to civic duty and encouraged others to do this as well.

For further thought:

What concepts of good citizenship and civic duty do you have? Who are the leaders of our day who provide role models of this kind of activity.

TR came from Dutch ancestors who settled in New York City in the 1640's. The family became one of the wealthiest in New York City. Roosevelt chose life as public servant because he felt that he had a responsibility to do so and could make a difference in the life of those less fortunate.

Early on, he demonstrated concern for factions of society who, at that time, were held in low regard: These include women (he appointed the first woman to an administrative position in the New York City Police Department), African-Americans, (he invited Booker T. Washington to dine as his guest in the White House, the first black person to be entertained as a presidential guest; he appointed blacks as judges in the South). He championed a good life for all Americans, regardless of their social background or employment situation.

During his presidency, one of his chief accomplishments was his emphasis on conservation and preservation, particularly of natural resources. To that end he used the Antiquities Act, (1906) and other means to more than double the amount of land held for preservation and conservation by the federal government (as National Parks or Monuments, National Forests, wildlife preserves, and the preservation of archaeological sites throughout the land, especially in the Southwest). His record for conservation and preservation of public lands is practically unmatched by any other president before or since.

While working in these various capacities, and writing some thirty books, he was a devoted husband and father, who reared an energetic family of six children here at Sagamore Hill.

The construction of his home here in Oyster Bay, which he planned for his first wife (who died of complications of the birth of his first daughter, Alice), was put on hold when his mother died of typhoid on the same day in the same house. He later married his second wife, a childhood friend, and together they had five children who loved their rich and varied life here at Sagamore Hill.

The house was altered after he became president, with the addition of the North Room, where many moments of his presidency and public life are displayed. TR used his library as his office and was the first president to move the seat of power from Washington, DC. This move of operations to Oyster Bay was made possible by the development of the telephone and improved transportation, enabling staff and secret service to travel and set up activities here.

While Sagamore Hill was one of the first homes in the area to have the telephone, it was not wired for electricity until 1918, so kerosene lamps and acetylene gas were used as lighting devices. There being no electricity, ice from the ice house was used for refrigeration, and the windmill pumped water from the well to the holding tank in the attic space of the house.

Sagamore Hill is unique for several reasons; not only is it the home of a president, with most of the house preserved and shown, as it was a century ago, but toilets, bathrooms, and showers are shown, as well as areas of food preparation and storage. The servants' rooms are shown on the third floor. For many years it was thought improper to show bathrooms and service areas such as kitchens, pantries and servants' quarters, but of course, these are areas that really show how people lived in days gone by.

Conservation, Preservation, Taxidermy, Hunting Trophies, (Dead Animal Parts on display in Sagamore Hill)

TR is often held up as the first conservation president, and indeed his record of conservation and preservation is almost unmatched. But, how does one explain all the taxidermy on display in his house? It is one of the paradoxes about this complicated man that needs examination and explanation in order to come to an understanding.

First of all, it is a general rule of examining history, that we cannot use the standards of today to judge the standards of another time. Today we think of preservation and conservation in very rigid terms. The only thought of going on a safari in Africa today would be to collect photographs and film footage, but TR was hired by the Smithsonian and the American Museum of Natural History to collect samples for display in these museums. In TR's youth and even during his presidency there was a general feeling that the natural resources were almost inexhaustible.

During TR's youth, there was a huge wave of exploration and investigation of uncharted lands and the emphasis was on identification and documentation (maps, charts, etc.) and, by extension, the species of flora and fauna that lived there. The motivation of documentation required the collection of the life forms, so samples were taken for later classification. Plant samples were collected, pressed and dried, and animal species were killed and preserved in various ways for later cataloging and documentation.

TR had come from a well-to-do family who lived in bustling Manhattan. The earliest mention of his fascination of wildlife forms was after he visited a market where a dead seal (yes, seals used to live in the waters surrounding New York City) was displayed. The sight of this dead seal prompted a life-long curiosity, fascination with and study of natural history fauna life forms. Indeed he began collecting specimens as a youth which he displayed in a closet in his boyhood home and called the "Roosevelt Museum." We are not sure if this coincided with his father's founding of the American Museum of Natural History.

But TR, a sickly child troubled by asthma, who often suffered greatly as a result of its effects, was granted two rather unusual wishes as a youth: Boxing lessons (as a form of exercise suggested by his father to help build up his strength); and taxidermy lessons. TR began his collection, classification and display of taxidermy samples early in his life, and this collection continued throughout his life. Many of these (75 objects) are displayed at Sagamore Hill in various forms: Rugs, trophy mounts, three are fashioned into decorative or "useful" objects (elephant tusks, an elephant foot as waste receptacle and rhino foot as an ink well).

In addition it was very much the fashion to display and decorate with animal trophies. The curiosity that drove the exploration of strange lands was tangibly shown by using these trophies as decorative objects, and they were very much status symbols. In the same way we join certain organization or clubs, drive particular makes and models of cars, and wear certain shoes or garments, these items were a way of stating to all a certain status level.

For further thought:

What are the status symbols of today, --what watches, shoes, jackets, cars or trips to far-off lands do we regard as marks of status?

How about collections?

Does anyone collect sea shells? Do people realize that a shell is actually a dead animal part, that the shell was the outer protective covering of an animal.?

Note: Shells are a good way to bring collecting animal trophies into discussion. There are few people that have the same reaction to a shell collection as to animal trophies, yet for all of them the animal had to die to permit display of the item, whether head, skin antlers or shell. While shells may be collected at the shore where the animals presumably have died of natural causes, most serious collections result from collecting the live animal, so that the shell or shells are pristine and not buffed by the waves.

But how about leather shoes? How about fur coats? Animals die for these common items in our life today.

Conservation and preservation and TR

TR is often regarded as the first "conservation president" because he saw and began actions to conserve natural resources and preserve sites of archaeological significance, particularly in the Southwest.

Conservation is the term usually used for the act of preserving and saving natural resources, (forests, wildlife-preserves, lands, etc.). America had gone through a period of growth and development during which the use of these natural reserves, originally seen as inexhaustible, began to become depleted. The move to limit this usage and development was not at all popular because merchant developers saw this activity as a limitation of their income-producing ability. Forestry and logging for example, especially in the Northwest, threatened the destruction of the vast reserves of trees that had taken centuries to develop. The naturalists John Muir and Gifford Pinchot, though their individual goals differed considerably, were among those who encouraged Roosevelt to develop his conservation ethic as they saw these reserves being depleted. In addition to the conservation efforts of TR, the development of the science of forestry by Pinchot (who endowed a Chair at Yale), and the establishment the Sierra Club, (Muir) and the Boone and Crockett Club were direct outgrowths of this conservation effort.

Further investigation:

Those wishing to investigate this area further may wish to look up the following items: Gifford Pinchot; US Forestry Service; John Muir; Sierra Club; Boone and Crockett Club

Preservation is the term usually connected with saving sites of cultural importance. During the exploration and settlement of the Southwest many sites of antiquity and archaeology were discovered, the cities built by earlier indigenous peoples in the form of cliff dwellings or pueblos. The Antiquities Act passed by Congress in 1906 was designed specifically to save archaeology threatened by development.

Sagamore Hill is a good example of preservation. TR died in 1919; his widow lived on for almost thirty years and died in 1948. Upon her death the process of creating Sagamore Hill as an historic site began with the purchase of the property by the Theodore Roosevelt Association. The family removed personal momentos and the house was opened in 1953 as a museum and was given to the National Park Service in 1963. The house is filled with more than 90% of the original furnishings, including the souvenirs and memorabilia collected by TR as president. Seeing the house with its furnishings pretty much intact gives us a very good idea of how people lived then.

For further thought:

What is your fascination with historic residences? What aspect of a house do you find the most interesting? What do you think you might learn by visiting Sagamore Hill? What do you think a person might find out about you by looking around your house? Or in your yard?

Conservation quotes of Theodore Roosevelt

"We have become great because of the lavish use of our resources and we have just reason to be proud of our growth. But the time has come to inquire seriously what will happen when our forests are gone, when the coal, the iron, the oil and the gas are exhausted, when the soils have still further impoverished and washed into the streams, polluting the rivers, denuding the fields, and obstructing navigation. These questions do not relate only to the next century or to the next generation. It is time for us now as a nation to exercise the same reasonable foresight in dealing with our great natural resources that would be shown by any prudent man in conserving and widely using the property which contains the assurance of well-being for himself and his children." (Conference on the Conservation of Natural Resources, Washington, May 13, 1908)-TRC

"There can be no greater issue than that of conservation in this country. Just as we must conserve our men, women and children, so we must conserve the resources of the land on which they live. We must conserve the soil so that our children shall have a land that is more and not less fertile than that our fathers dwelt in. We must conserve the forests, not by disuse but by use, making them more valuable at the same time that we use them. We must conserve the mines. Moreover, we must insure so far as possible for the use of certain types of great natural resources for the benefit of the people as a whole." Speech, Progressive National Convention, August 6, 1912--TRC

"Now there is a considerable body of public opinion in favor of keeping for our children's children, as a priceless heritage, all the delicate beauty of the lesser and all the burly majesty of the mightier forms of wild life. We are fast learning that trees must not be cut down more rapidly than they are replaced; we have taken forward steps in learning that wild beasts and birds are by right not the property merely of the people alive today, but the property of unborn generations, whose belongings we have no right to squander; and there are even faint signs of our growing to understand that wildflowers should be enjoyed unplucked where they grow, and that it is barbarism to ravage the woods and fields, rooting out the mayflower and breaking branches of dogwood as ornaments for automobiles filled with jovial but ignorant picnickers from cities." Outlook, January 20, 1915--TRC

The Antiquities Act of 1906

The National Monuments Act was passed on June 8, 1906 in order to give the president the power to save by decree or proclamation such monuments and antiquities deemed to have scientific, prehistory and historical significance. The act was used by TR to establish the first eighteen National Monuments including Devil's Tower (1906), Muir Woods (1908), Grand Canyon (1908), Mount Olympus (1908).

Grand Canyon Quotation

In the Grand Canyon, Arizona has a natural wonder which, so far as I know, is in kind absolutely unparalleled throughout the rest of the world. I want to ask you to do one thing in connection with it in your own interest and in the interest of the country--to keep this great wonder of nature as it now is. I was delighted to learn of the wisdom of the Santa Fe Railroad people in deciding not to build their hotel on the brink of the canyon. I hope you will not have a building of any kind to mar the wonderful grandeur, the sublimity, the great loneliness and beauty of the canyon. Leave it as it is. You can not improve on it. The ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it. What you can do is keep it for your children, your children's children, and for all who come after you, as one of the great sights which every American, if he can travel at all, should see. We have gotten past the stage, my fellow-citizens, when we are to be pardoned if we treat any part of our country as something to be skinned for two or three years for the use of the present generation, whether it is the forest, the water, the scenery. Whatever it is, handle it so that your children's children will get the benefit of it. --at the Grand Canyon, Arizona, May 6, 1903--
Presidential Addresses and State Papers.

Invention and technology

We are so surrounded by technology and inventions today that it is hard to realize what life must have been like without such marvels. And, it is hard to imagine that in what we regard today as the Roosevelt family era a very limited in technology was actually held in wonder and awe by the people of a century ago. The lesson is, that, for the most part, each generation has lived in a time of technical development and achievement far higher than the previous one.

The two developments in communications technology of the 19th century were the telegraph (1856) and the telephone (1872). Each of these made instantaneous and direct communication over great distances possible. While the telegraph required specialized equipment and training to send and receive messages in Morse Code, the telephone, as it was adopted and installed in the US, made it possible for anyone to communicate with anyone who shared access to the equipment.

Letter writing and the mail: Communication

The customary method of communication with friends and family was the use of letters and the post office mail. People often sent notes of just a few lines or letters of many pages to their circle of family and friends. As the telephone was installed over wider areas it gradually replaced letter writing as the communication method of choice. But the prevalence of letter writing and exchange was an area that was more than simple communication and really entered into a leisure time activity to be enjoyed. For example, people took great pride in writing of their experiences when travelling, to share with family and friends. Descriptive letters so vivid that they were like movies were highly prized.

TR himself was a great letter writer leaving a record of some 150,000 missives, ranging from a few brief lines to many pages, some even illustrated with his drawings.

In fact, the mail was so important that most large cities had both morning and afternoon deliveries. While necessary communications, arrangements for appointments and dates, bills and invoices, formed the bulk of the mail, letters describing travel and life events were shared with family and friends often as an evening's activity.

It has become harder for people to comprehend the importance of letter writing and the mail, but the emergence of email has made that immediate kind of gratification more understandable. And that kind of immediate expression a century ago--jotting down a quick note to send off--was often rewarded by a similar quick reply.

Travel and transportation fostered much of this communication. Development of rail travel with frequent trains (based on the adoption of standard time) made the delivery of letters and packages to far and distant lands possible. There was a tremendous development of mail order from catalogs, such as Sears and Roebuck, perhaps

rivalled only by today's mail order frenzy. These catalogs depicted the modern inventions and technology and made them available to practically anyone on a mail delivery route. The Roosevelts would probably not have ordered much from catalogs, but their desire for and acquisition of the latest labor-saving devices and inventions is well documented. The windmill pumping water to the pressure tank in the house thus providing for flush toilets, the water heating coil on the kitchen stove, the shower for the "splash closet" were labor saving devices. The victrolas, or record players (North Room and Boys' Room) were as popular and modern and "in" as a CD player today.

Father and family man; family life: Strenuous Life and Leisure Time at Sagamore Hill

Theodore Roosevelt was a devoted father and family man, but Mrs. Roosevelt, acting as "operations manager," ran Sagamore Hill as a working farm, providing many opportunities for participation by all in the "Strenuous Life." In addition to assisting in the regular chores of any farm there were plenty of opportunities for outdoor activity which, in addition to providing exercise, were also a lot of fun. Gardening and making hay were probably regarded as necessary chores. The animals, especially the riding and work horses, provided opportunities to learn and assume the responsibility of caring for them.

TR, himself, was enamored of the strenuous life and enjoyed participating in haying, cutting wood, riding and rowing. He was a good horseman who shared his love of riding frequently with family and friends. Riding jaunts were highly prized and were frequently done on Thanksgiving and Christmas mornings, perhaps to sharpen the appetite for the forthcoming family feast.

The tennis court was located below the main grounds and provided opportunities for exercise with family and friends. A hike from the main grounds to the beach provided opportunities for swimming and boating.

TR loved to read and loved literature; he also very much liked his "strenuous life" of outdoor activity and exercise. It is perhaps not surprising that one of his favored activities was to take his wife, Edith rowing. She would read aloud as he pulled the oars thus combining two of his favorite activities, reading and rowing.

Four o'clock appointment

One of the most telling anecdotes about TR was his daily four o'clock appointment. He cut off his business day and took leave of congressmen, ministers, and diplomats wherever he was to keep this important daily date. Many high officials were perhaps surprised to find that the appointment was with his children. The sight of the president playing football with his children might have shocked them but TR thought it was the high point of his day. On days that he was not with his family and traveling or far away, he would use that time to write letters (often illustrated with his drawings) to his children. Many of these have been collected in a book, (*Theodore Roosevelt's Letters to His Children*), which reveal his family life.

In addition to these outdoor activities, TR (himself a voracious reader, left about 5,000 books at Sagamore Hill) encouraged his children to read and to write letters. TR introduced reading to his family early on and quite liked the B'r'er Rabbit Stories of Joel Chandler Harris.

Reading and sharing conversations about books were very popular activities engaged by family and friends. Books on travel and exploration and magazine articles on the same topics were discussed by all.

Many Hats: Theodore Roosevelt's Roles

Theodore Roosevelt performed many diverse jobs during his lifetime, (and he had a number of interesting hobbies.) His positions include: New York State Assemblyman, rancher/cowboy, Police Commissioner, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Rough Rider (soldier), Governor of New York, Vice President and President of the US. Other appellations include: student (Harvard), naturalist, taxidermist, scientist, conservationist, outdoorsman, sportsman, hunter, author, reader, traveler, statesman, social reformer, canal builder, and Progressive.

Further in depth investigation:

Any of these topics or roles is suitable for further research. Some of these areas overlap, but each represents an interesting facet of Roosevelt's life and career. There is not space here to go into each area, but there are many serious biographies on TR with sections devoted to each of these areas. Check works of David McCullough, Edmund Morris, H.W. Brands, and others for further information.

Presidential Legacy of Theodore Roosevelt

We remember TR because he was a president, of course, and because he was the youngest president ever to have served, having been catapulted into the public arena as hero of the Spanish-American War to become William McKinley's Vice President. TR took office as president, upon the death of McKinley, who died as a result of a gunshot fired by a deranged anarchist, barely six months into his second term. TR served the remaining three and one half years, and was elected by a landslide victory for a full term following, for a total of seven and one half years. During that time he accomplished much as president and he is credited with strengthening the executive office. His additional achievements include the conservation of millions of acres of land for public use; establishing TR as the first "conservation" president; the US involvement in the construction and subsequent operation of the Panama Canal; and brokering the peace treaty to settle the Russo-Japanese War, (for which he received the Nobel Peace Prize).

But some background information is necessary to understand TR's achievements as public servant.

TR began life as a public servant with a career in politics just out of college elected as the youngest ever New York State Assemblyman when he was only twenty three. In addition to his assemblyman period, TR served as Civil Service Commissioner for the US, the New York City Police Commissioner, New York State Governor, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Colonel in the US Army, Vice President and President. He not only filled these positions, he left his mark or even changed the way the jobs were done. Many books have been written about TR's accomplishments and we can find many examples of his work surviving today.

For the purposes of a group visit, we are going to focus on some of the most important aspects of TR's accomplishments and life achievements which are documented in the home in some way by what visitors may see upon their visit.

TR's Rise: United States Navy; Spanish-American War;

While TR enjoyed being New York City Police Commissioner, he missed the national attention he had received in Washington, DC as Civil Service Commissioner. When he was named Assistant Secretary of the Navy he was thrilled to be back in the national and international spotlight. The year of 1898 was filled with brewing world problems (much like today) and TR thought that a strong Navy, ready for any action was tremendously important. He felt that the navy was the "nation's best insurance policy."

He took the opportunity to give orders to have all the ships well fueled and well armed so that they could respond to any emergency. It was at this time that he realized the necessity of a way to get from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans without sailing all the way around South America thus planting the seeds for what eventually became the Panama Canal.

The trouble on the world horizon at that time was with colonies settled across the globe by Spain, in the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Cuba. When the US battleship Maine blew up in February, 1898 in Havana harbor, everyone assumed that Spain had attacked the US, and the result was the beginning of what we know today as the Spanish-American War. TR was proud that he had readied the US fleet and the navy was able to respond immediately. This idea of naval readiness continues to this day, and TR is credited with setting that as a priority.

For further thought:

What examples do we see today of naval involvement? Do you think that a strong standing navy is as important today as it was a century ago? Where has the navy been recently to provide an American presence?

**Spanish-American War:
TR as Colonel of the US 1st Volunteer Cavalry, the "Rough Riders"**

However, TR was not satisfied with having established naval readiness, and wanted to do more to fight the war and he had the idea to form a volunteer unit of cavalry raised across the land. TR had no military background but wanted to do something to help with the war effort and collaborated with General Leonard Wood, an army surgeon, to create the 1st US Volunteer Cavalry.

It was an odd collection of men; TR talked his east-coast classmates and society friends into signing up. TR wanted men who could already ride and shoot and had the idea of getting "cowboys" to join the effort. Many of the enlistees came from the southwest, and the unit soon became known as the "Rough Riders."

After their training, the unit was dispatched to Cuba from Florida. Unfortunately there was not space on the ships for the horses of the regular soldiers, so they were forced to leave them behind, thus rendering the mounted cavalry unit mere foot soldiers. The horses of the officers, however, were shipped.

Arriving in Cuba, the US soldiers began their attack fighting against the Spaniards. There was a bloody and terrible battle with TR as one of the important men leading the charge up San Juan Hill as a mounted officer, an easy target. Bullets whizzed by and one even grazed TR's uniform. He was seen as hero on that day; several officers were nominated for and eventually received our nation's highest military honor, the Medal of Honor. TR, though nominated was not granted that award during his life time. (A century later the government finally acted to present the honor posthumously. The award was received by family members on TR's behalf.)

TR was regarded as a military hero, however, and his involvement in the Spanish-American War leading, his troops to victory, brought TR into the public eye in a dramatic way.

For further thought:

What other presidents have served as military leaders?

George Washington, Ulysses S. Grant, for example; who would you add to this list?

Technology, wire services, the press, newspapers

While the Spanish-American War today is not regarded as a major event, it was the first "modern war" and the first war covered and reported on a daily basis by reporters. Technology had improved so that almost every city had daily papers with the ability to receive articles and photos via "wire services" thus making these images available across the land in a way never before possible. A reporter was now able to send an article across the nation so that daily events could be reported immediately in many newspapers. As today, with our fascination for immediate reporting of world events via 24 hour-a-day TV news programs, the people of a century ago grabbed up the papers as soon as they hit the streets.

TR became aware of this media responsiveness during the war period and used this knowledge to his advantage through out the remainder of his career.

For further thought:

The response of the media is carefully calculated and used today by presidents and world leaders. Do you think that the leaders of today understand the fully the media reactions in regard to major announcements and events?

What examples can you cite where the media and press have been used advantageously for major announcements; or, on the other hand, not well used?

The Nobel Peace Prize

The Russo-Japanese War does not rank today as a major world event, but it was tremendously important to the people of that day. Probably one of the most meaningful things to come out of the war between Russia and Japan was TR's involvement as peacemaker. He was able as mediator to get representatives of both parties to meet on neutral ground and come to a peaceable settlement. TR received gifts from both the Czar of Russia and the Emperor of Japan in thanks for his efforts, and most notably, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. It was the first time it was given to an American and it was official ratification that his work had been fruitful, perhaps the first time that a neutral world leader had interceded in such a manner. TR's work created an example for other presidents and world leaders to act as peacemakers. Today we often find world leaders, especially the US president, getting quarrelling nations to come to peaceful agreements or important realizations.

What examples of world leaders interceding in quarrels between nations and factions in difficult situations can you name?

The Modern Presidency: TR's legacy

TR is often credited with changing the presidency, making the executive office stronger, more responsible and responsive to and certainly more involved with, day-to-day activity of the nation. Seen as the father of the "modern presidency," TR's "stewardship theory" of the office envisioned a powerful chief executive, "bound actively and affirmatively to do all that he could for the people. . ." the center of a strong national government.

TR officially named the executive mansion the White House, and he gave us the presidential residence we see today. The alterations by the Roosevelts were further refined by the Kennedys.

One very real example of TR's involvement with daily activity was the creation of the Summer White House in Oyster Bay. The nation's government has followed by custom, the agrarian lifestyle of the founding fathers: The government functioned during the fall and winter months and every one pretty much left Washington DC during the summers, except for the president.

In addition to this, communications had not been developed well enough to keep everyone informed of what was going on should the president move from Washington. The invention of the telegraph (1856) and telephone (1872), as significant and available communication devices enabled everyday transactions of business to take place, thus making it possible to set up the "White House," the seat of executive power, wherever the president wished to go. The installation of a single telephone line at Sagamore Hill, frequent and regular train service, and of course, the responsiveness of the press, created the "Summer White House" at Sagamore Hill.

For further thought:

What are some of the other examples of the White House being moved with the president?

The Panama Canal: A Path Between the Seas

TR was not the first person to wish for a "path between the seas," a canal connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. This glaring need became more apparent with the Spanish-American War. (Look at a world map for this discussion.) Indeed there were attempts to build this water route that would cut weeks off the journey from the east to the west coast of the USA. Several starts by the French were unsuccessful. TR analyzed their progress and realized that it was not technology that thwarted their efforts, but disease. Technology in the form of giant earth moving equipment, and designs by the Army Corps of Engineers were unable to solve the problem of the tropical illness plaguing the workers. TR was successful in getting US doctors to work on the problem of yellow fever and

malaria so that the workers could carry out the plans and use the equipment.

The Panama Canal is certainly one of the wonders of the modern world but it was the vision of TR of having this path between the seas and the management of tropical illness that made the completion and operation of the canal possible.

For further thought:

What other major technological achievements have Americans accomplished as a result of presidential charge or direction?

Further investigation:

The life and times of Theodore Roosevelt are well documented in print and other media. Those wishing further information may delve further and deeper by researching via libraries and internet catalogs and directories for the numerous books and articles available. The web site for Sagamore Hill (www.nps.gov/sahi) and the Theodore Roosevelt Association (<http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org/>) are linked with many other sites pertaining to TR's public and private life.

A good bookstore always has titles available; check works by David McCullough, Edmund Morris, H.W. Brands, Kathleen Dalton, and others for further information.

Further Research

For further information regarding Theodore Roosevelt and His Sagmore Hill Home you may wish to consult some of the following websites:

TR at America's Story

<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa/roosevelt>

TR at the White House

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/kids/presidents/theodoreroosevelt.html>

TR at Yahoo!igans

http://yahooligans.yahoo.com/reference/wak/presidents/roosevelt_theodore.html

TR at Time For Kids

<http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/specials/articles/0,6709,735134,00.html>

The Theodore Roosevelt Association

<http://www.theodoreroosevelt.org>

TR – "The Great New Yorker"

<http://www.trthegreatnewyorker.com>

White House Biography

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/tr26.html>

National Portrait Gallery Exhibit

<http://www.npg.si.edu/exh/roosevelt>

<http://www.npg.si.edu/exh/travpres/theorooos.htm>

Library of Congress Collections

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/trfhtml>

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/trhtml/trhome.html>

TR from the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art

<http://archivesofamericanart.si.edu/exhibits/presidents/rooseveltt.htm>

American Museum of Natural History – Permanent TR Exhibit

<http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent/other/roosevelt.html>

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