

This newsletter is produced by Milton Elis and the Volunteer Advisory Board for the volunteers and staff of the Sagamore Hill National Historic Site.

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U.S. Department of the Interior

Sagamore Hill National Historic Site
20 Sagamore Hill Road
Oyster Bay, New York 11771

The Volunteers of Sagamore Hill
20 Sagamore Hill Road
Oyster Bay, New York 11771

TRIVIA



Answer: This picture hangs in the foyer above the doorway as you go from the main hall to the back hall.

FRIENDS GABLE LECTURE SERIES A SUCCESS

The three lectures in this year's series were excellent. Thanks go to the **Friends of Sagamore Hill** for offering this type of event. This year's event was coordinated by *Gerard "Gerry" Alfani* and it proved to be a good learning experience. Gerry is also in line to succeed *Walter Fish* as Chairman of the Friends.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT: HIS LIFE, HEALTH AND DEATH



Mark Koziol was the second speaker in the **John A. Gable Lecture Series** and his presentation reminded this writer of the movie where the hero gets knocked down and bounces right back. TR would take a blow (the trolley accident in Pittsfield), go down and back on his feet he came. He lost the sight in his eye in a boxing match and switched to Ju Jitsu. TR took punishment in the Brazilian jungle that would have killed a lesser man. To me, the highlight of the evening was Mark's powerpoint presentation of the Pittsfield accident which made it very

clear exactly what had happened. The numerous stories of TR's health would make a good magazine article and that might be Mark's next step in telling the TR story.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, PANAMA AND THE PANAMA CANAL COMMISSION



The last **Gable Lecture** of the year was given by *Robert McMillan* (pictured with Gerry Alfani) the last Chairman of the *Panama Canal Commission*. Mr. McMillan gave insight into the history of the Isthmus, including the railroad that crossed the isthmus and permitted vessels to trans-ship material from boats on the Atlantic to boats on the Pacific. He covered the economic importance of the canal and the efforts necessary to complete the building of the Panama Canal. Inadvertently, he also gave clues as to how the sacrificial political lamb is rewarded for lying on the altar of an election against a strong opposition candidate. McMillan lost the NY Senatorial election against *Pat Moynihan* and President *George H.W. Bush* appointed him to a seat on the *Canal Commission*. The introduction to his talk involved *Ronald Reagan* endorsing him for the US Senate. And that is how a loser becomes a winner.



The Rough Writer

The News of the Volunteers at Sagamore Hill

Volume 12, Issue 5

May 2010



Clockmaker Jacques Chalikian assembling and setting the Grandfather's clock in the Roosevelt Home.

THE MAN IN THE ARENA

Love him or hate him, *Theodore Roosevelt* is currently the man in the spotlight or to use his own words, "the man in the arena." On Long Island, National Library Week was celebrated by **Long Island Reads**. During the month of April all the libraries on the island promoted



the same book, "*The River of Doubt*" by *Candice Millard* (pictured with Milton Elis). Ms. Millard spoke at a number of libraries. TR impersonators, including our own *Jim Foote*, made appearances. Actor *David Huston* put on dramatic readings combining passages from the *River of Doubt*, *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* and TR's autobiography. *Howard Ehrlich* of the TRA made a presentation. Professor *Joseph Kenner* gave a retrospective of TR and how Roosevelt's later life was shaped by his early experiences. Book discussions were held all over the Island. So much for the **LOVE**.

At the other end of the spectrum are two new biographies, *The Imperial Cruise: A Secret History of Empire and War* by *James Bradley*. The other book is *The War Lovers: Roosevelt, Lodge, Hearst, and the Rush to Emp-*

ire, 1898 by *Evan Thomas*. Neither of these books paint TR in a favorable light and Bradley's book has a great deal of revisionist history. *The Rough Writer* is looking for someone who has read either book and would write a review for publication. So much for the **HATE**.

TR RECEIVED ODD PRESENTS

There is miniature portrait of *King Alexander of Serbia* in the archives. The picture has a bullet-hole in it from where an assassin shot at the picture just before he pushed the King out of the castle window to his death. This took place in front of *Queen Mother Natalie* who presented the miniature to *Theodore Roosevelt*.

Annual Staff/Friends/Volunteer Picnic

The annual picnic will be held Friday, July 16th, at 6pm. Watch the mail for the flyer with details.

Annual Independence Day Celebration

Our traditional Fourth of July celebration at Sagamore Hill will be a two day event this year (Sunday, July 4th and Monday, July 5th). If you are interested in volunteering to help either day contact Volunteer Coordinator Josh Reyes at 922-4271 x26.

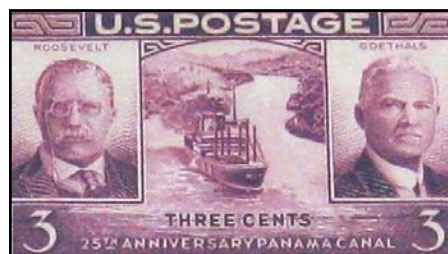
PANAMA FEVER

A book review by *Scott Gurney*

The book by *Matthew Parker* is the epic story of one of the greatest human achievements of all times, the building of the Panama Canal.

TR considered the building of the Panama Canal to be one of his greatest achievements as president. His main interest in a water link between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans was the ability to move warships quickly without the long and dangerous journey around the tip of South America. The utility of such a route was demonstrated in 1898 when the United States sent warships from the West Coast to the Caribbean to meet the Spanish fleet sheltered at Cuba. The most famous voyage was by the newly constructed battleship *U.S.S. Oregon*.

The *Oregon* was ordered to leave San Francisco for Florida to protect the East Coast of the U.S. against Spanish attack. The arduous journey of 14,000 miles was completed in sixty-six days, considered a remarkable achievement at that time. The news of this journey was closely followed by the American public and resulted in an interest in a canal through Central America.



The extraordinary engineering challenges of a canal were matched by complex political realities. The French engineer, *Ferdinand DeLessops*, hailed in France as a

national hero for building the Suez Canal, undertook the task of building a canal through the State of Panama. This French effort became a nightmare of disease, labor problems, and the eventual collapse of the company financing the effort.

The American effort began with a coup in the State of Panama against the Columbian government. The political intrigue and controversy became a national fixation and resulted in significant friction between President *Theodore Roosevelt* and Congress.

This volume covers the political and engineering challenges in the building of the canal. What sets this effort apart from other books about the Panama Canal is the use of primary documents to tell the stories of the people

who worked on the Canal, the majority of whom were from Jamaica and Barbados. The racial and national discrimination institutionalized in the Canal Zone was a microcosm of the conditions in the United States and the European-dominated cultures of the Caribbean. Drawing on letters and memoirs of the people that actually worked on the canal or lived in the Canal Zone, you get an idea of the dread of disease, the hard work, and the constant drive to “make the dirt fly.”

THE LONGEST PALINDROME

This may or may not be the longest palindrome, a sentence that reads the same from the right as it does from the left, but it describes *Theodore Roosevelt*. A recent visitor on one of my tours shared this with me:

“A MAN A PLAN A CANAL PANAMA”



FRIENDS ACADEMY SENIORS VOLUNTEER

The site is the recipient of assistance from four Friends Academy seniors. As part of the senior’s requirement for participation in community service, *Jasmine Wang*, *Chris Crowley*, *Brandon Leeds*, and *Chris Maierle* have worked under the direction of *Josh Reyes* with help from staff from all divisions.

TR QUOTED AGAIN

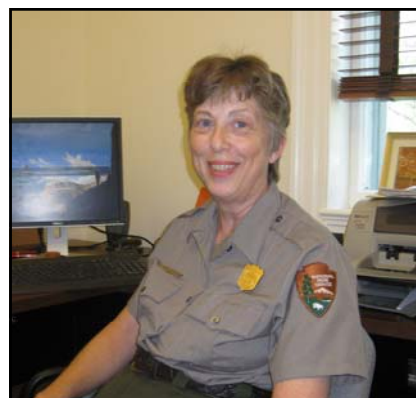
The *New York Times*, on April 18, had an article concerning *President Obama* and his struggle with Chief Justice *John Roberts*. After citing examples of *Thomas Jefferson* dealing with *John Marshall* and *Abraham Lincoln*’s disagreement with *Roger Taney*, the author of the article quotes *Theodore Roosevelt*, who was angry with his own appointee, *Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.* TR snapped, “I could carve out of a banana a judge with more backbone than that.”

TRIVIA



Question: Where is this picture of an American Bison displayed?

OUR NEW CHIEF OF INTERPRETATION



Sherry Justus has joined the Sagamore Hill staff as Chief of Interpretation, Visitor Services and Natural Resources. Sherry has a unique perspective on her new position. She started as a volunteer at *Edison National Historic Site*

while working for Paramount Pictures in New York City. A graduate of *Chatham College*, Sherry earned a Master of Fine Arts in film from *Columbia University*. While working in the sales department at Paramount, then a division of Gulf and Western, volunteering offered a change of pace from her work. In a career changing move, Sherry joined the National Park Service as a ranger at Edison and then at the *Statue of Liberty*.

Prior to her move to Sagamore Hill, Sherry was Supervisory Park Ranger and held various other positions at *Lyndon B. Johnson National Park* in Texas. After twenty years of service with NPS, she was looking for an opportunity to return to the east coast. Her husband *Steve Handzo*, a native of Brooklyn, is retired from the film industry and currently works seasonally with the Internal Revenue Service.

Sherry’s hobby is photography and she maintains her own web site. An avid gardener, she will have to rely on house plants while living on the site. However, Sherry might take the lead in helping to reestablish *Edith Roosevelt’s* garden. When asked what special talents she brings to Sagamore Hill, Sherry replied, “Having been both a volunteer and a ranger, I understand the interests and concerns of the volunteers.”

SHANNON FAMILY SETTLES

The family of former Seasonal Tour Guide *Joe Shannon* has settled with the City of Long Beach, the Long Beach School District, the Long Beach Board of Education and the bus driver all of whom contributed to Joe’s untimely death when he was hit by a school bus as he was bicycling. Joe was a mentor to staff and volunteers and a week does not pass by when his name is not mentioned in the staff room at the TRH.

CHIEF OF INTERPRETATION’S CORNER

Now that the summer season is upon us, it is important to keep tours of the Roosevelt Home to the standard 45 minutes or less. Be aware of the condition of visitors who may be suffering from the heat or the stress of climbing stairs in the house.

A new designation, “House Ranger,” will be assigned to one ranger per shift assigned to the TRH. This person will be responsible for all operations at the house for that shift including the handling of any emergencies or security issues, tour schedules, etc.

Additional info. is contained in the “Volunteer Training Roundtable” and “Training” articles in this issue.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING ROUNDTABLE

The first session of the Volunteer Training Roundtable held on April 13 was very well attended and a great deal of valuable information was disseminated. Situational Awareness and Security Basics were stressed by *Kris Veljak* and *Josh Reyes* respectively. Don’t let the visitors wander; keep everyone within your eye range; place yourself in the most advantageous position; see that all cell phones are off; if need be, call the staff room for back-up; all back-packs should be left in the car, none in the house, should someone balk because there are valuables that can’t be left outside only then have them left under the clothes rack in the foyer.

Bo Stein spoke on safety and *Amy Verone* on Cultural Resources. *Noreen Hancock* introduced an Interpretive Development Program from NPS and how it will affect the volunteers. *Scott Gurney* explained all the Natural Resource objectives and inventories that are being carried on of animals, plants and the land by the University of Rhode Island. The guest speaker was *Adam Grohman* (pictured) author of the “*Presidential Plunge*.” He spoke on TR and the U.S. Navy and highlighted TR’s August 25, 1905 spontaneous boarding of the submarine *Plunger*. Once on board, TR took the helm of the sub when it submerged. If his book is as good as his presentation, it should be a fabulous read.



SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS

Andrew Dunbar has joined us in the Interpretation Division. Currently a resident of Garden City, Andrew, 29, is working on a BA Degree at C.W. Post where he is majoring in history. A native of San Clemente, California, Andrew is enrolled under a military program called *Green to Gold*. Married to Melissa, they have four children, ranging in age from eight to one. A twelve year veteran of military service with the US Army Special Forces he holds the rank of Staff Sergeant. Upon graduation from Post, he will be commissioned a Second Lieutenant. Andrew has had a long interest in history and TR is his favorite president. When asked what his hobbies were, like sky diving? Andrew replied, "No, I do that at work." One of his pleasures is traveling and Uncle Sam has seen that he got plenty of that; six years in Germany, then Iraq, Afghanistan and North Africa. Andrew is being groomed to give walking tours of Oyster Bay.



Amanda Noon is a student working in Interpretation.



Returning as a member of the paid staff, *Isai Badaraco*, a junior at Johns Hopkins University, has returned to work in maintenance.



IF IT WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR TR, IT IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR ROSE

Long-time volunteer *Rose White* is a world traveler. If you were there, Rose was probably there before you. She finally caught up with TR who had traveled to Egypt as a boy and with his family sailed on the Nile River. Rose and her sister recently returned from Egypt and she hasn't stopped talking about her wonderful adventure. The pyramids and the sphinx at the Giza plateau, were just a very small part of their sightseeing experience. The hieroglyphics, paintings, and inscriptions were really mind-boggling. They visited the first (oldest) pyramid, the "**Step Pyramid**" which was designed and built by *Imhotep*, at Sakkara. They saw the "**Solar Boat**" which had been buried in a deep pit under the sand. This was for *Ramses II* to use in his after life. They sailed on the Nile River for five days visiting Alexandria, Luxor, the ancient city of Aswan, the Aswan high Dam and Abu Simbel, which had the most magnificent temple, dedicated to *Ramses II*.

The Egyptian people were friendly and very happy to have Americans visit their country. Rose now puts her Egyptian trip at the top of her list of wonderful places to visit. She recommends the trip to everyone.

NEW VOLUNTEERS



Joe Niczky of Bethpage is a sophomore history major at Cornell University.



Deborah Wertheim of Greenlawn is an educator and also volunteers at Cornell Coop Ext.



Danielle Drasser just graduated SUNY Binghamton and is entering St. John's Law.

TRAINING

The second session of the **Volunteer Training Roundtable** was held on May 25 and it drew many new volunteers. After the Superintendent's welcome, *Amy Verone* gave some insight into how we can improve the interpretative process by highlighting some of the less heroic actions of TR; his relationship with his children, wife and family. Don't just stress the milestones of his career. *Josh Reyes* discussed the use of radios and the importance of always carrying one. *Sherry Justus* reported on increasing our supply of radios and procedures for their use. A new procedure will be implemented soon on having a "House Ranger" at the TRH.

Ms. *Emilia Baer* (pictured) spoke on women's fashions during 1890-1940 and how the Roosevelt women interpreted those fashions.



After lunch, *Sue Sarna* detailed changes in the security system enhancement and the importance of not allowing visitors to point into the room. This has already caused the alarms to sound on a number of tours.

Bo Stein (pictured right, demonstrating use of a fire extinguisher to Toby Selda) then took the group into the field to

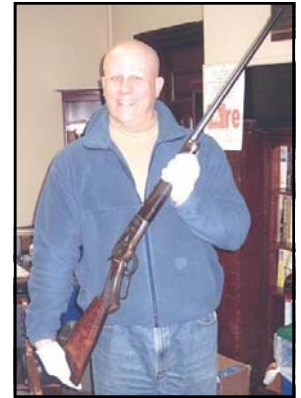


practice the use of fire extinguishers. He finished his remarks describing how to evacuate the TRH and where to go with visitors who are on your tour.



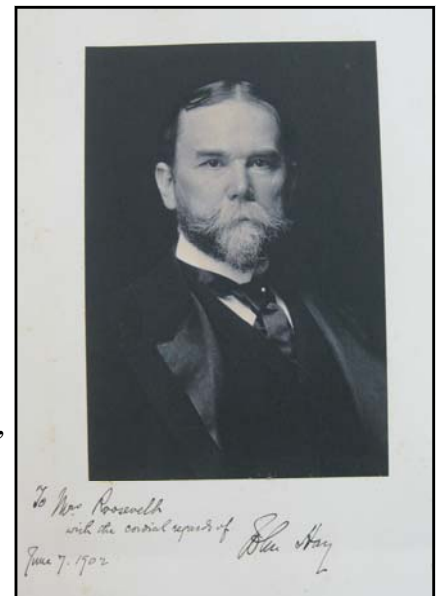
NO MORE THEFTS

There will be no more thefts from the TRH. The security system has been upgraded and our security is armed and dangerous. When *Mark Koziol* is on duty, watch-out.



HISTORIES MYSTERIES

It seemed as if everyone was involved in uncovering this mystery. *Rita Onorato* has led the re-housing of site archives in the basement. From a drawer, *Alexis Barr* pulled a framed picture of *John Hay*, TR's Secretary of State, and asked the disposition of it. Rita noticed the deteriorating frame and gave it to *Mark Koziol*. Mark tried to separate the autographed picture from its frame. The picture, which had been framed at the Washington, DC department store, *Woodward & Lothrop*, had an inscription dedicated to Edith and signed by *John Hay*. In order to transfer the photo to the archives at Old Orchard, *Sue Sarna* suggested that the backing be removed from the frame. Between the backing and the photo was a letter from *John Hay* to Edith dated June 7, 1902. *Shaun Roche* attempted to decipher Hay's words: "Mrs. Hay tells me you have done me the honor of asking for one of *Hollingin's* photographs, and it gives me great pleasure to send you this copy which arrived this morning. Wishing you a pleasant journey to Oyster Bay, I am always, Sincerely Yours, *John Hay*."



So what is the mystery? Who put the letter with the picture? Was it Edith? Was it the person who did the framing? Is anyone really interested?