



Old Orchard



“It had always been the family plan for Ted to inherit Sagamore Hill...By 1937 we had been married twenty seven years and were tired of living here and there in rented houses.”

—Eleanor Alexander Roosevelt



L to R: TR III, TR Jr., William McMillan, Grace Roosevelt McMillan, William McMillan, Jr., Eleanor A. Roosevelt, Cornelius, Quentin II

Old Orchard

Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. (Ted) and his wife Eleanor Alexander Roosevelt built the house they called “Old Orchard” in 1937-1938 on four acres of land purchased from Ted’s mother in the Sagamore Hill apple orchard. The Georgian style home was designed by their son-in-law, Baltimore architect William G. McMillan, Jr. to Ted and Eleanor Roosevelt’s satisfaction. The Old Orchard compound also included a multi-bay garage for the family’s automobiles; a cottage for the site foreman and a cold storage all

located within close proximity to the home.

The house was built of brick and intended to be painted white, but left exposed because they found the color to be “so good” wrote Eleanor A. Roosevelt. Instead the doors, shutters and trim of Old Orchard were painted an off-white. The exterior brick would eventually be covered in English ivy, which remained until the National Park Service acquisition in 1962.

Main Floor



View of the entrance hall

The elegant home was filled with mementos of world travel, including Chinese furniture collected by Eleanor in the 1920s as well as reminders of Ted’s service in the infantry during World War I. The large eighteenth-century front door was found in the backyard of a parish in Dublin by Ted and Eleanor.

The entrance hall to the home was lined with family portraits dating back four generations, and some of Ted’s flags, including those from his governorships and of other prominent positions he held. Ted shared his father’s love of reading, and Eleanor stated that

“books... have overflowed into every room in the house, both upstairs and down.”

Eleanor referred to the inside of the home as her province and wanted color everywhere. Some rooms had a color theme—the drawing room, “happily combined every shade of red from deep crimson to pale rose”—while others were filled with items from a trip to China, gifts from family and friends and other family treasures.



View of the drawing room

Second Floor

The upstairs was home to the family’s bedrooms—one for Ted and Eleanor and one each for their sons Quentin and Cornelius (their daughter Grace and son Theodore III had moved out years earlier)—as well as one for their maid and two spare rooms. As was typical in some English country houses at the

time, the Roosevelts decided to name some of the bedrooms in their home, with names as exotic as “Chengtu,” after Quentin’s interest in China or as American as “Vermont,” after the state where some of the furniture in Ted and Eleanor’s room was purchased.

Theodore Roosevelt Jr. & Eleanor Butler Alexander



Eleanor A. Roosevelt and Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.

Eleanor Butler Alexander was born in New York's Upper East Side to Henry Addison and Grace Green Alexander in 1888. Although a native New Yorker, Eleanor spent the first years of her life on the move, living in California and Paris, France for a period of six years. She returned to the United States in 1900.

Eleanor and Ted had several encounters at social functions since Eleanor was acquainted with Ted's younger sister Ethel. The two were married in New York City at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church on June 20, 1910. Together Theodore and Eleanor Roosevelt had four children: Grace, Theodore III, Cornelius and Quentin II (named for Ted's baby brother who was killed during the First World War).

The Great War

During the First World War, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. developed a reputation as a successful soldier and leader. Lt. Colonel Roosevelt participated in the Allied offensive at the Somme in 1918. He received the Distinguished Service Cross and the French Croix De Guerre for his valor. Eleanor, determined to be close to her husband, headed to France to work with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).

At the YMCA, Eleanor taught French to officers of

the American Expeditionary Force, redesigned the ladies YMCA uniform to be more practical, and in the Paris Office, she assigned newly arrived women to leave areas. After the war General Pershing issued Eleanor a citation for her work. As the war wound down, Ted and other like-minded American soldiers formed the American Legion to carry forward the camaraderie and spirit of the doughboys into civilian life.

Interwar Period

After the war Ted launched his public career in 1919 as a member of the New York State Assembly in the 2nd Assembly District of Nassau County. His career included the positions of Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Governor of Puerto Rico and Governor General of the Philippines. He wrote books about his experiences in the Great War, his expedition to China, and his family life.

Eleanor was never far behind: she even found her way to Asia during both of his expeditions. Later, Ted worked as a publisher for Doubleday and as chairman of the board of the American Express Company. Eleanor held the post of the president of the Girl Scout Council of Greater New York from 1937-1942.

The Second World War & Afterward

In the emerging crisis of World War II Ted held the position that the United States should stay neutral. However, leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor, Ted regained his old command of the 1st Division's 26th Infantry Regiment, and later was promoted to brigadier general and deputy commander of the 1st Division. He fought throughout the North African campaign and participated in the invasion of Sicily. Eleanor, once again determined to be close to her husband, took a position with the American Red Cross in England.

A seasoned combat veteran, General Roosevelt played a critical role in the D-Day invasion. Due to an unexpected current and the confusion of battle on Utah Beach, the first troops landed nearly a mile away from the planned landing zone. By making the spot decision "We'll start the war from here" and improvising the orders for all successive landing waves, Roosevelt made order from chaos. Five weeks later, on July 11, 1944, Ted Jr. died of heart failure during the Allied drive across France. He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously.

Eleanor was quite active during the remaining years of her life. Following Ted's death, she continued

her involvement with the Women's Auxiliary Corps (WAC). Eleanor succeeded in getting a newly formed WAC company of medical technicians named in honor of her late husband. After returning to the United States, she worked with women's veteran groups and continued to be involved with the Girl Scouts. One of Eleanor's final accomplishments was the completion of her memoir in 1959, *Day Before Yesterday*, which was used as a source for the production of this brochure. Eleanor lived at Old Orchard until her death in May 1960.



Eleanor A. Roosevelt with pet monkey outside of Old Orchard

Theodore Roosevelt Museum at Old Orchard

The Theodore Roosevelt Association purchased the home and donated it to the National Park Service in 1962. First opened to the public as a museum in 1966, the museum features three exhibit areas and a video theater on the first floor. The exhibits can be divided into three themes. The first room focuses on Theodore Roosevelt's early life, beginning with his

childhood and through his time as Governor of New York. The second room is devoted to his presidency, with special attention to his foreign policy and conservation efforts. The third room explores his post-presidential years, including his African safari and his 1912 campaign as a third party candidate.

About Sagamore Hill

Sagamore Hill National Historic Site is a unit of the National Park Service. The site was established by Congress in 1962 to preserve and interpret the structures, landscape, collections and other cultural resources associated with Theodore Roosevelt's home in Oyster Bay, New York, to ensure that future generations understand and appreciate the life and legacy of Theodore Roosevelt, his family and the

significant events associated with him. The 83 acre site also protects significant natural areas including woodlands, pastures marshlands and a beach.

For More Information:

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