



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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National Park Service  
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# TAKE A LOOK INSIDE >>>

Theodore Roosevelt's Sagamore Hill



TAKE A LOOK

**INSIDE**

Theodore Roosevelt's Sagamore Hill



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## INTRODUCTION

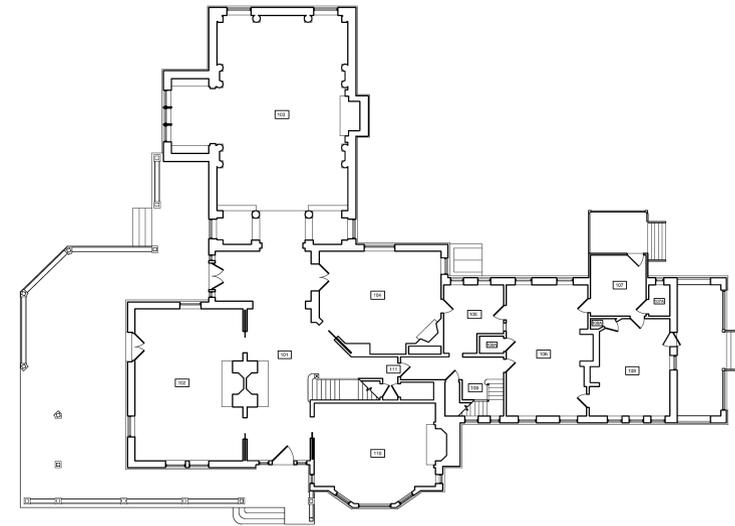
Sagamore Hill was the home of Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the US, from 1885 until his death in 1919.

Theodore Roosevelt started coming to Oyster Bay as a child to visit his grandfather and uncles, who had summer homes in the small fishing community. In 1880, fresh out of Harvard and engaged to be married, TR purchased farmland between properties owned by an uncle and two cousins; and made plans to build a home on top of a hill overlooking Oyster Bay.

His plans were nearly canceled when his wife, Alice, suddenly died on February 14, 1884, two days after giving birth to their daughter. But he needed

to go ahead with the construction and named the home "Sagamore Hill." While TR traveled in the Dakota Territory, his sister Anna cared for Baby Alice and managed the construction of the house in Oyster Bay. TR eventually resumed a friendship with Edith Kermit Carow, a childhood sweetheart; and they were married in December, 1886. In time, they would have another daughter and four sons together, for a total of six children. They would live at Sagamore Hill for the 33 years of their marriage.

## THE FIRST FLOOR

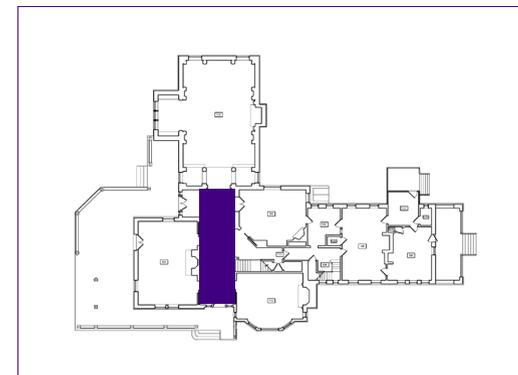




## FRONT HALL

The **Front Hall** is the main entry way into the Roosevelt Home. Visitors were often greeted by TR himself, who watched for new arrivals from his desk in the Library.

Before the North Room was added in 1905, the hall was furnished as a sitting room, with chairs and a small couch in front of the fireplace. In the summers, the Roosevelts would leave their tennis rackets in the fireplace and the tennis balls in the blue jugs on the mantel, to keep them handy for a pickup game. The large statue of a *rhinoceros* was given to TR by his sister Corinne; Edith Roosevelt did not like the statue and used to hang her gardening hat over the horn to hide it.



*The Front Hall is the main entry way into the Roosevelt Home.*

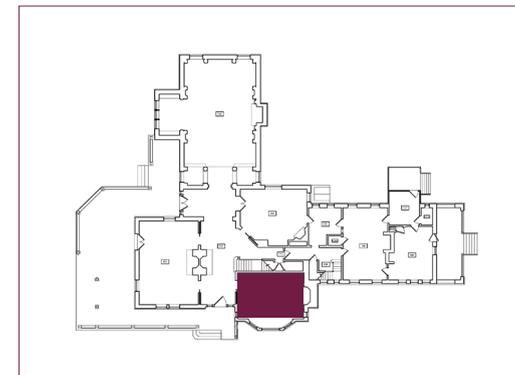




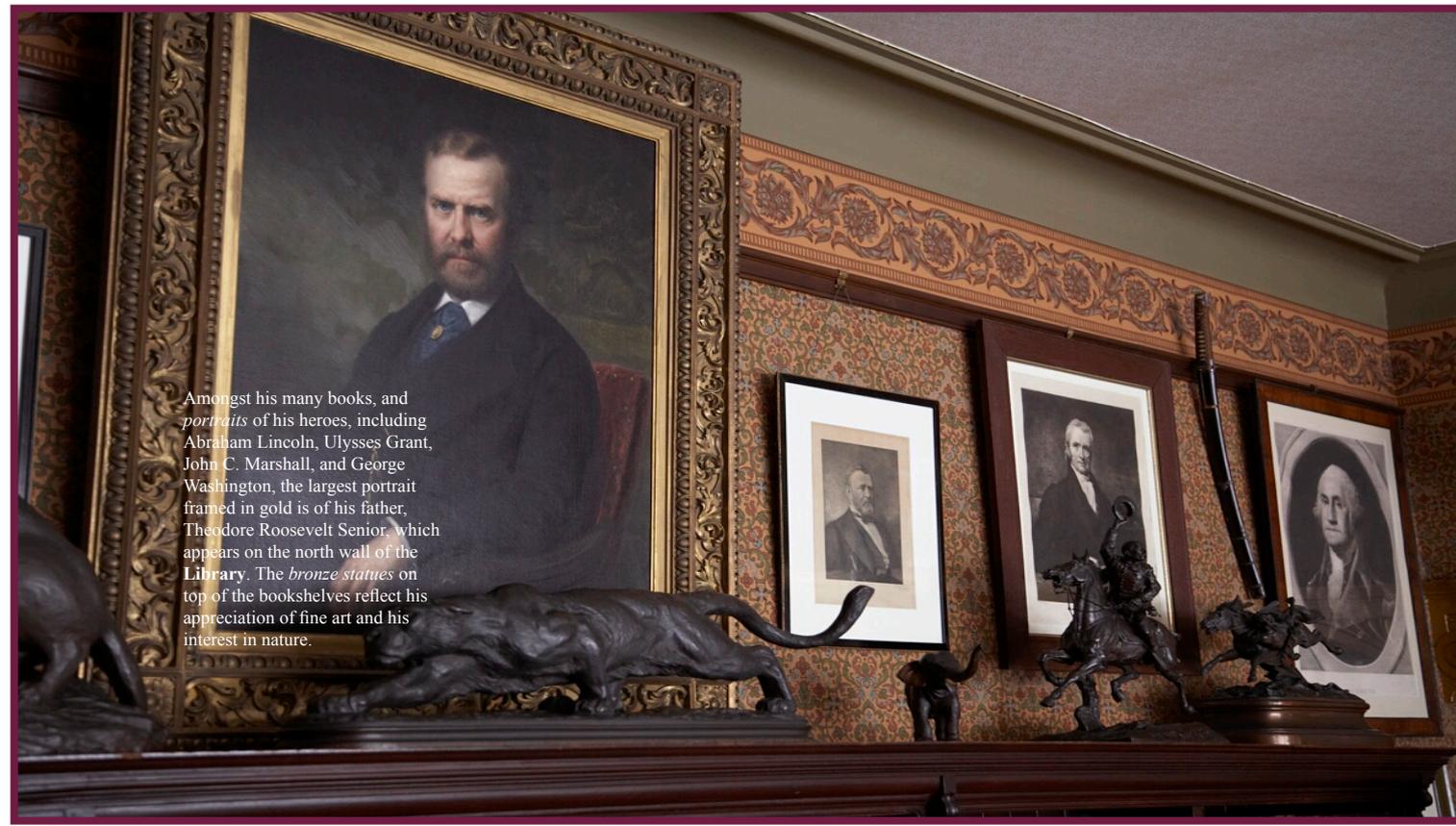
## LIBRARY

TR's younger daughter Ethel described the **Library** as "the heart of the home." The room doubled as TR's study and a family gathering place. In the evenings, TR and Edith would sit in front of the fire, write letters and read aloud to each other and to the children. As the children grew, they memorized poems, songs or hymns and then had to stand and recite them for the rest of the family.

After TR became President in 1901, the **Library** served as the center of the "Summer White House." He met daily with White House staffers to be updated on events in the county, reviewed reports and legislation, dictated speeches or correspondence and met with diplomats and cabinet members.



*"...the heart of the home."*



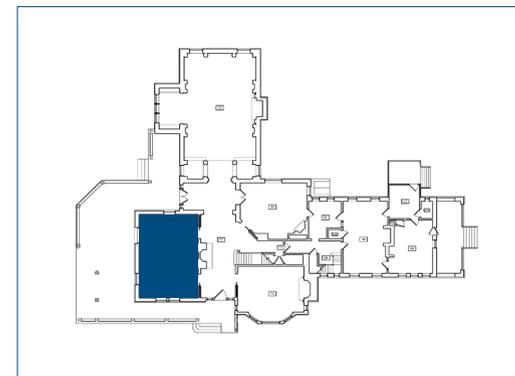
Amongst his many books, and *portraits* of his heroes, including Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses Grant, John C. Marshall, and George Washington, the largest portrait framed in gold is of his father, Theodore Roosevelt Senior, which appears on the north wall of the Library. The *bronze statues* on top of the bookshelves reflect his appreciation of fine art and his interest in nature.



## DRAWING ROOM

Edith Roosevelt kept the **Drawing Room** as her private office, though the room was also used to welcome TR's guests and dignitaries. The room is filled with furniture inherited from the Roosevelt and Carow families. It was Edith who managed the family's finances — tracking the household accounts, paying the bills and overseeing their investments; in addition to keeping the books for the farm operation. Her husband was hopeless with money...TR once confessed to a friend that "Every morning Edie puts twenty dollars in my pocket, and to save my life I never can

tell her afterward what I did with it!" Edith also used the **Drawing Room** to relax, read or knit, write letters and have tea with visiting friends. The *blue bowl* on the floor under her desk was used as a water dish for the family's dogs. The *mountain lion* and *brown bear* rugs were gifts from her husband; but the *polar bear* rug was a gift of Admiral Peary to Mrs. Roosevelt after his

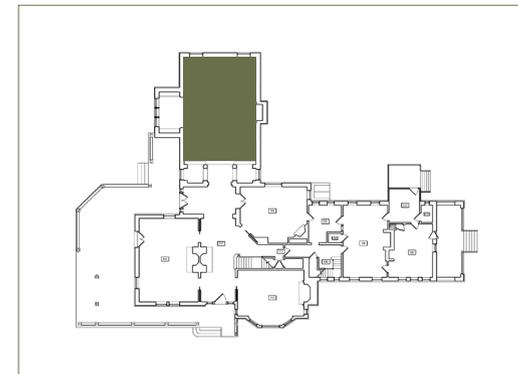




## NORTH ROOM

The **North Room** was added to the house in 1905, after Edith tired of using her drawing room as a waiting room for TR's visitors. The room is furnished with a mixture of family furniture, souvenirs of TR's public life, presidential gifts and hunting trophies. The "*Bronco Buster*" statue on the mantel was a gift from the troopers to their Colonel. The *silver loving cup* was given to Edith by the sailors on the USS Louisiana, after TR's trip to see the construction of the Panama Canal in 1907. The *large elephant tusks* at the entry way were presented to TR by the Emperor of Abyssinia.

The room also proved to be an ideal setting for family activities ranging from informal evenings spent playing cards or listening to music to Christmas celebrations and house parties when the furniture would be moved to the sides and the carpet rolled up for dancing.

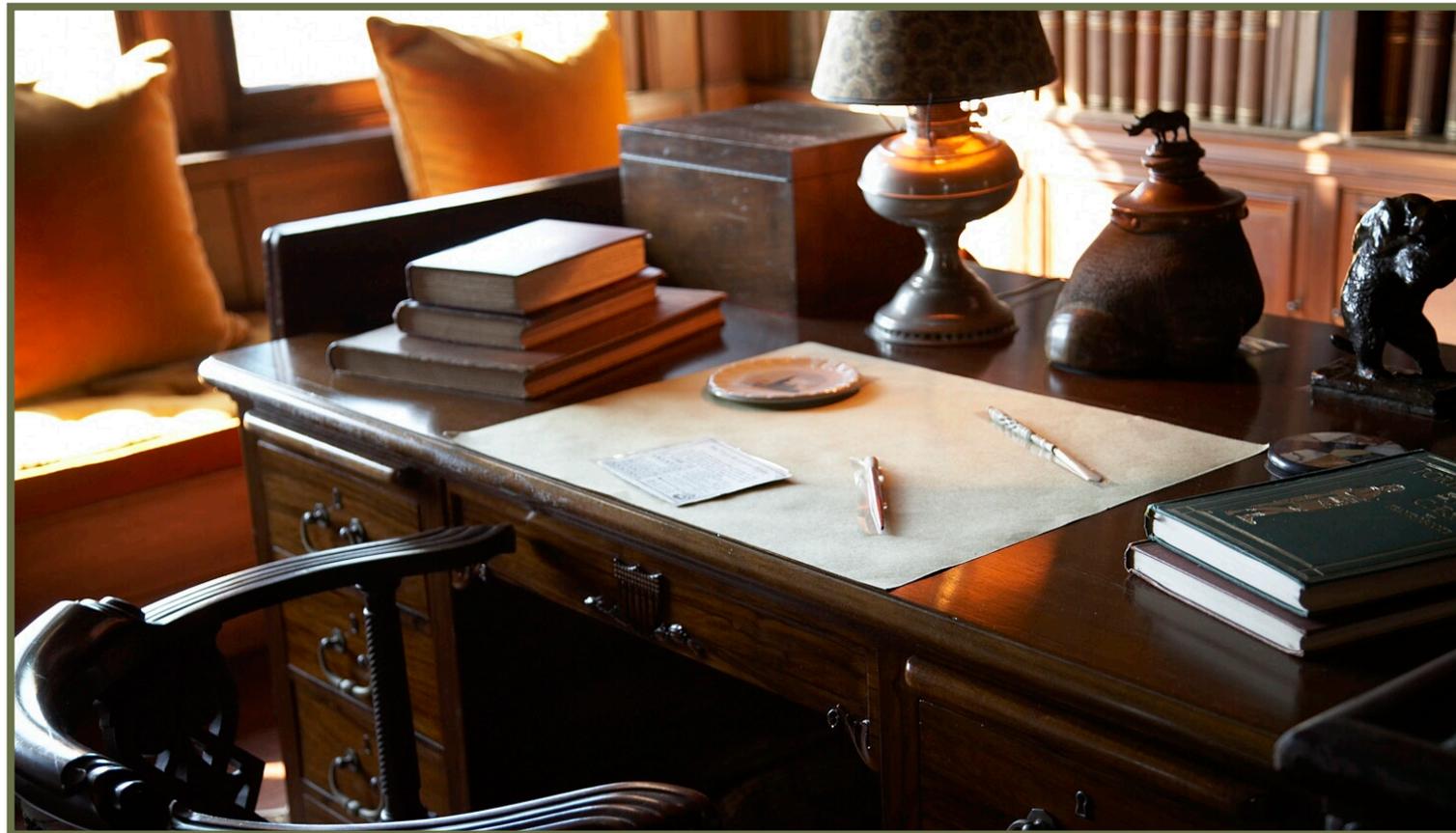




Many mementoes of TR's life fill the **North Room**. The *oil painting* by Fedor Enke, depicts TR as Colonel of the famed Rough Rider regiment.



TR viewed the bison, or *American Buffalo*, as a great and powerful symbol of the United States. He hunted the animal, seen here, as a young rancher in the Dakota Territory. The *saber and hat* (right) resting on the elk horns were carried by TR during his service as a "Rough Rider" in the Spanish American War.



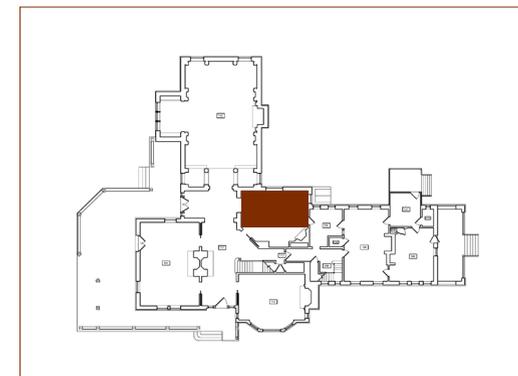
The North Room incorporated a large alcove on its western side with space for hundreds of books. TR loved reading and owned more than ten thousand books while at Sagamore Hill. At certain times of the day, light streaming onto the desk below made it a perfect reading spot.



## DINING ROOM

The furniture in the **Dining Room** was purchased by TR and Edith during their honeymoon in Italy in 1887. The *embroidered screen* hiding the pantry door was a gift to Edith from the Empress of Japan. Meals were formal; Edith sat at the east end of the table so she could communicate with the serving staff waiting behind the screen. The children had to be on time for meals; if they were late, they waited until the family had finished eating and then ate their meal at the little table in the kitchen. Even when dining alone, the family dressed for dinner; and the boys were expected to stand when their

parents or any ladies, including their sisters, entered the room. TR enjoyed entertaining and hosted a myriad of guests. Unusually, the Roosevelts included the children at the table when they had guests. They were expected to display proper manners and to hold up their end of the dinner conversation. The discussions ranged from current events, history and politics to the latest books and poetry to the children's activities. Ted Jr. later remembered that, "mealtimes at Sagamore Hill were the best education I had."



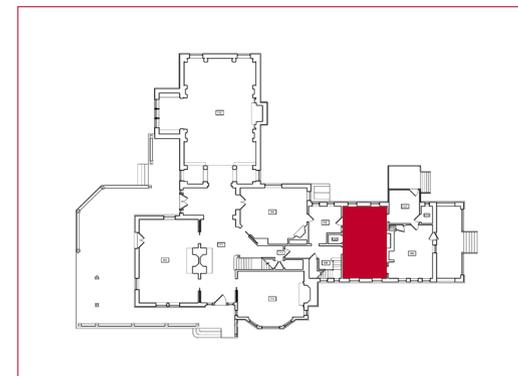
*"...the best education I had."*



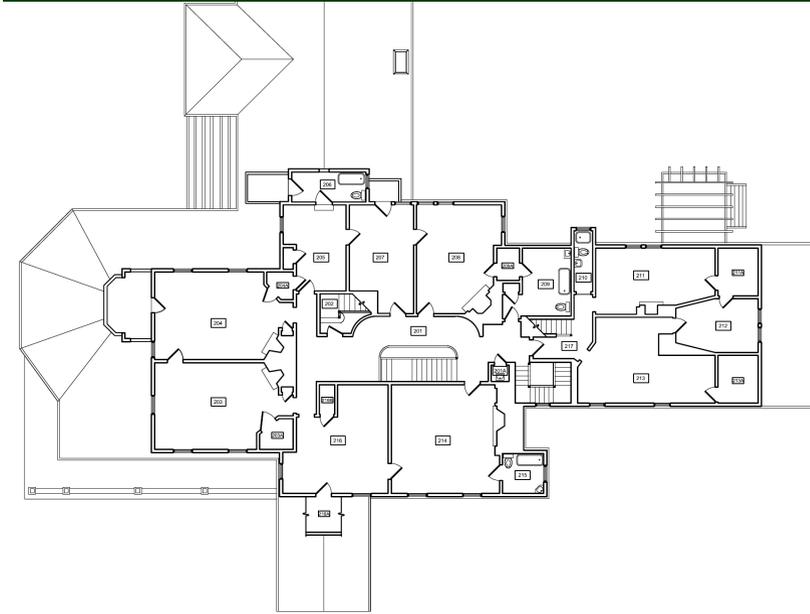
## KITCHEN

Mrs. Roosevelt came to the **Kitchen** every morning to meet with the cook, and review the menus. During TR's presidency, breakfasts and dinners were usually limited to the family and close friends, but lunch times could be frantic. Some days, the kitchen staff would have to provide as many as four sittings at lunch, to accommodate the children, the White House staffers, Mrs. Roosevelt & TR and their guests, and the household servants. Edith once wrote to her sister that she was lucky to have such good-natured servants because she never knew until the last moment who TR would invite to lunch.

Much of the food consumed at Sagamore Hill was produced by the farm operation. There was an apple orchard and a 3-acre vegetable garden that included cherry, peach and pear trees, a strawberry patch, and a grape arbor. A flock of Rhode Island Red chickens provided eggs and meat for the table; while a small dairy herd produced milk and butter. Turkeys and pigs were raised for slaughter. Meat and other supplies were purchased in town and delivered by the local grocer.



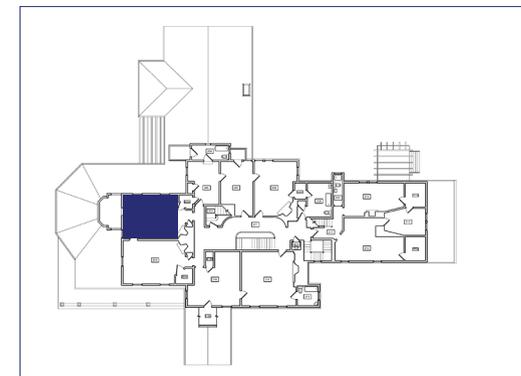
## THE SECOND FLOOR

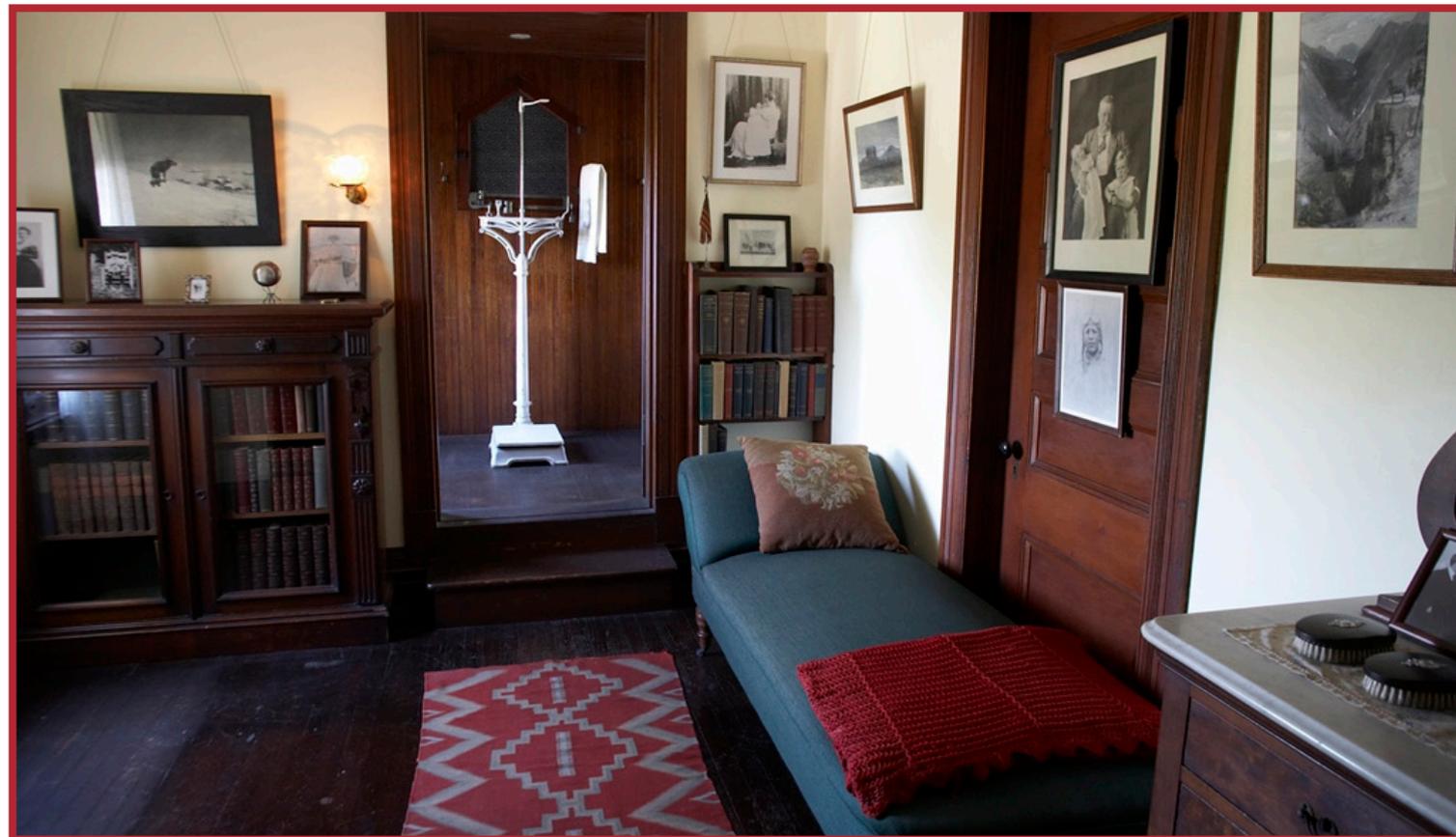




## MOTHER'S ROOM

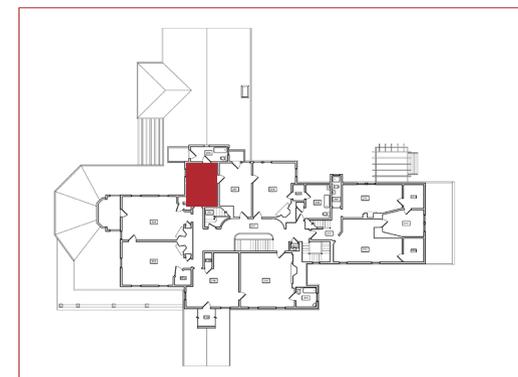
Although Theodore and Edith Roosevelt shared this bedroom, the children always referred to it as “**Mother’s Room.**” Edith often spent summer afternoons on the little porch, napping, reading or writing letters. The view from the porch hardly compensated for the northwest exposure that made it one of the coldest rooms in the house. The mantle and shelves in the room are covered with family photos and knickknacks that the children gave their mother. The *bird’s eye maple* furniture had been used by TR’s parents in the West 57th Street home.

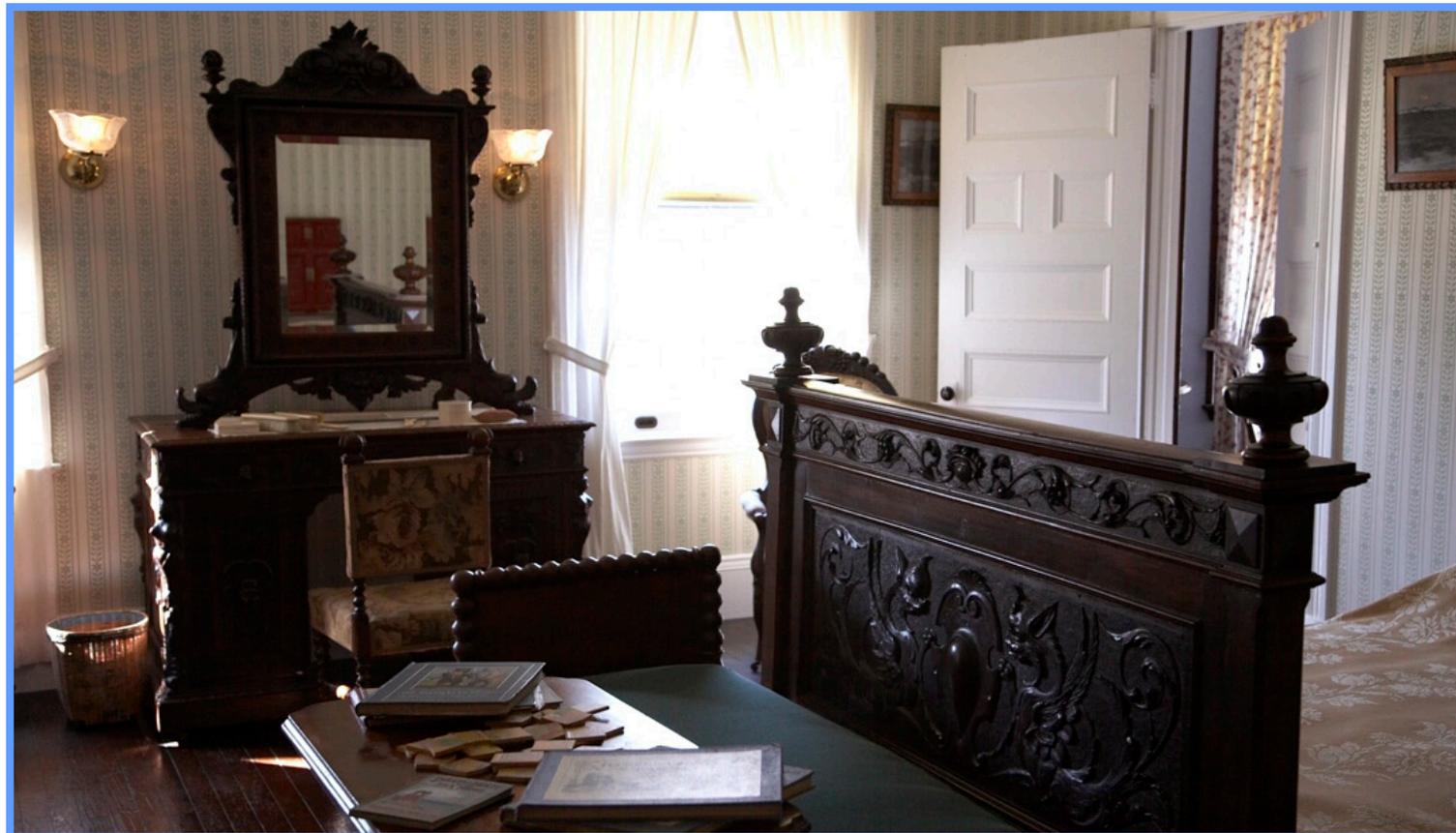




## FATHER'S DRESSING ROOM

**Father's Dressing Room** shares a connecting closet with Mother's Room but was reserved for TR's use. His riding outfit, including gloves, boots and a crop, and the heavy clock he wore when reviewing US Navy ships are here. Ted Jr. remembered an evening when his father was dressing for dinner, but took the time to show him a small .22 rifle that he had purchased to teach the children how to shoot. Ted was delighted when TR loaded the rifle and then fired it into the ceiling; the noise was so slight that Edith, who was in the bedroom, did not hear anything.

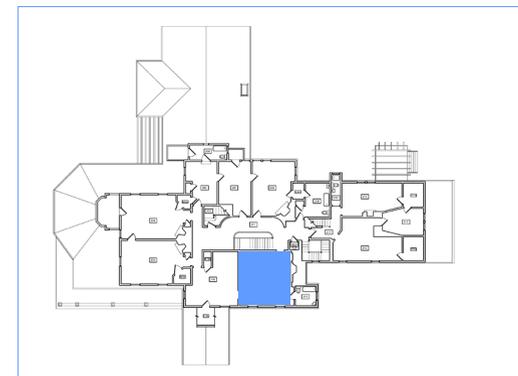




## SOUTH BEDROOM

Through the 1890s, the **South Bedroom, Nursery, and Gate Room** served as a suite dedicated to the care and housing of small children. The **South Bedroom** was the night nursery; the nurse slept here with the youngest children. TR and Edith described the children as their “bunnies”; he once wrote that, “there was just the proper mixture of freedom and control in the management of the children. They were never allowed to shrink lessons or work; and they were encouraged to have all the fun possible.”

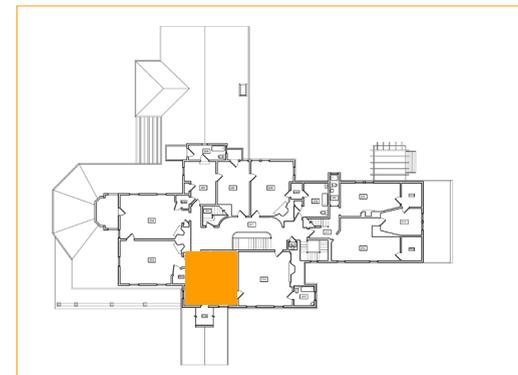
The **South Bedroom** was mainly used as a guest room during TR’s time as president. Shortly after TR’s death in 1919, Edith moved into the room and used it as her private bedroom for the next three decades. She died here in 1948 at age 87.





## NURSERY

The **Nursery** was the “work room” where clothes and supplies were stored, babies were bathed and dressed, and naps were taken. The *drawing of Santa Claus* in the White House was a gift to the family from Thomas Nast, the noted artist and illustrator.



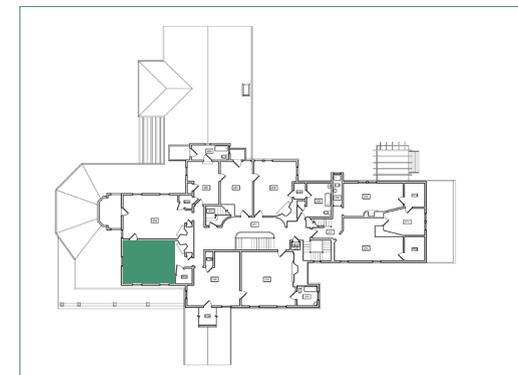


## GATE ROOM

The **Gate Room** was used as a playroom and day nursery; and literally had a wooden gate across the doorway. Ethel remembered that the gate kept the children confined “until they could be trusted not to fall down the stairs.” This room eventually became Ethel’s bedroom.

After the children were old enough to stay on their own, the rooms were used as family bedroom or guest rooms.

During World War I, Ethel and her two children moved back to her parents’ home while her husband was serving in France. She stayed in the South Bedroom while her son Richard and daughter Edith share the Gate Room. Her father was delighted to have grandchildren so close. Ethel had to chide him for sneaking into the nursery and waking them from their naps just so he could pick them up. In a letter to his son Archie, TR bragged that he was “an excellent baby holder.”

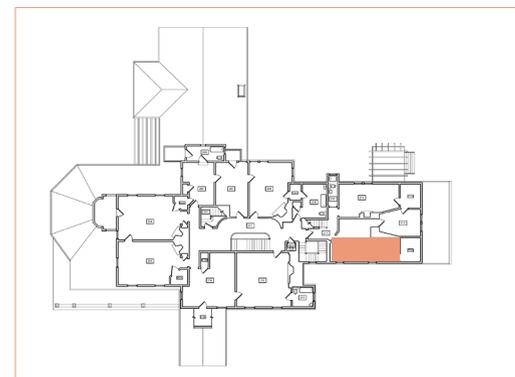




## ALICE'S ROOM

As the eldest child, Alice Lee Roosevelt, always had her own room and did not compete with her siblings for space. Her room is furnished with a bedroom set that had belonged to her mother, Alice Hathaway Lee Roosevelt. The large *portrait* over the desk is a painting of a Spanish Princess, possibly used as a role model by "Princess Alice". The smaller *photograph* is of Alice herself.

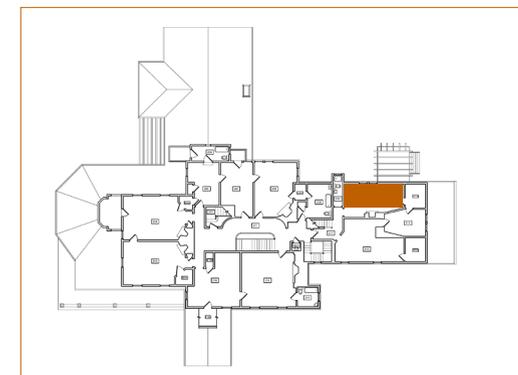
Alice married Congressman Nicolas Longworth in a White House wedding in 1906. Her brother Kermit immediately claimed her room as his own and insisted that his mother purchase new furniture.





## BOYS' ROOM

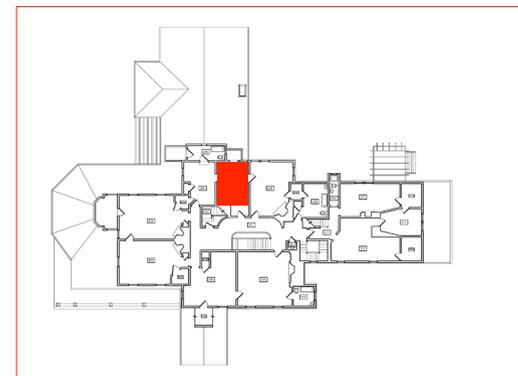
Even after leaving the nursery, the four Roosevelt boys often shared bedrooms. Over time, each of the boys, sharing or alone, occupied this room. The contents reflect their shared interests in sports, games, books and magazines. The door leads to a closet with a window overlooking the roof of a small porch. The children used to leave a ladder leaning on the porch so they could sneak in and out of the house.





## SINGLE GUEST BEDROOM

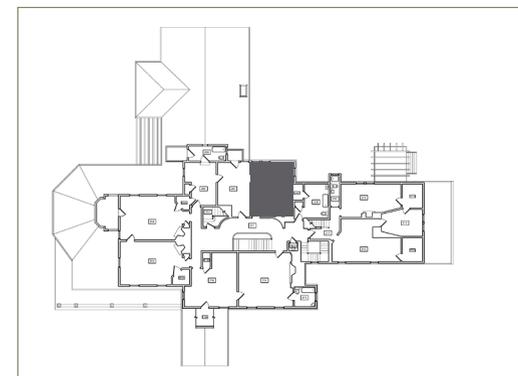
The **Single Guest Bedroom** is a small room that was most likely used by visiting relatives such as Theodore's niece, Eleanor. Edith Roosevelt resisted her children's attempts to take over these rooms and kept them for visiting family and friends.

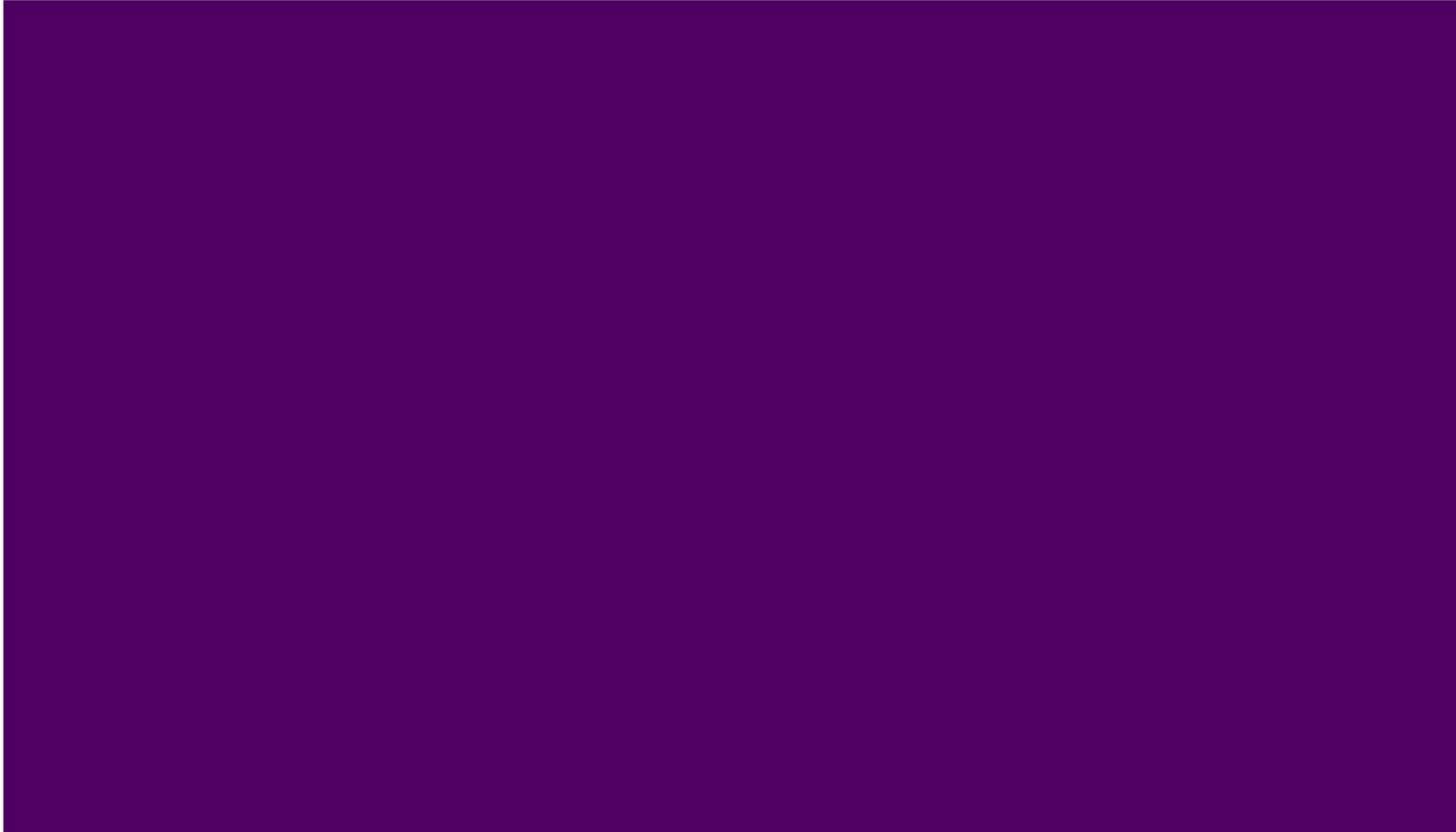




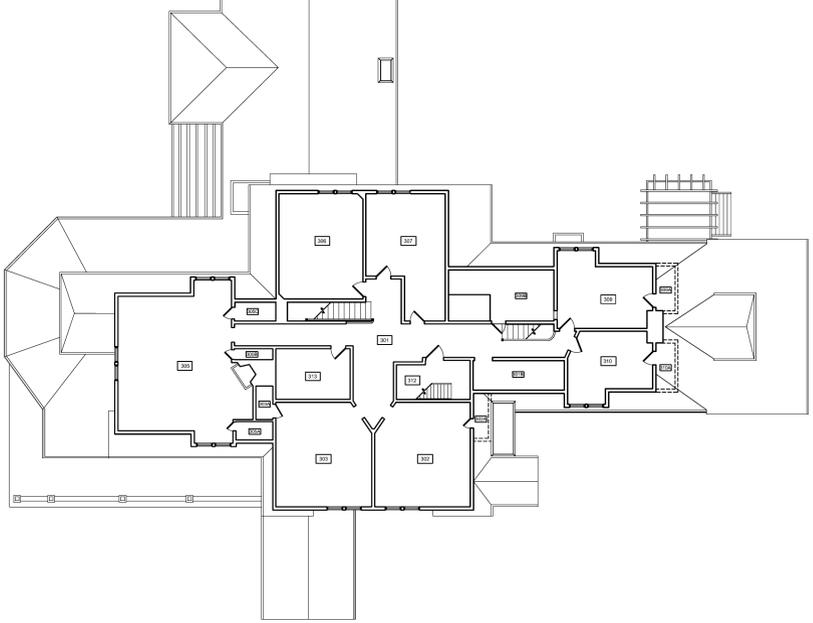
## DOUBLE GUEST BEDROOM

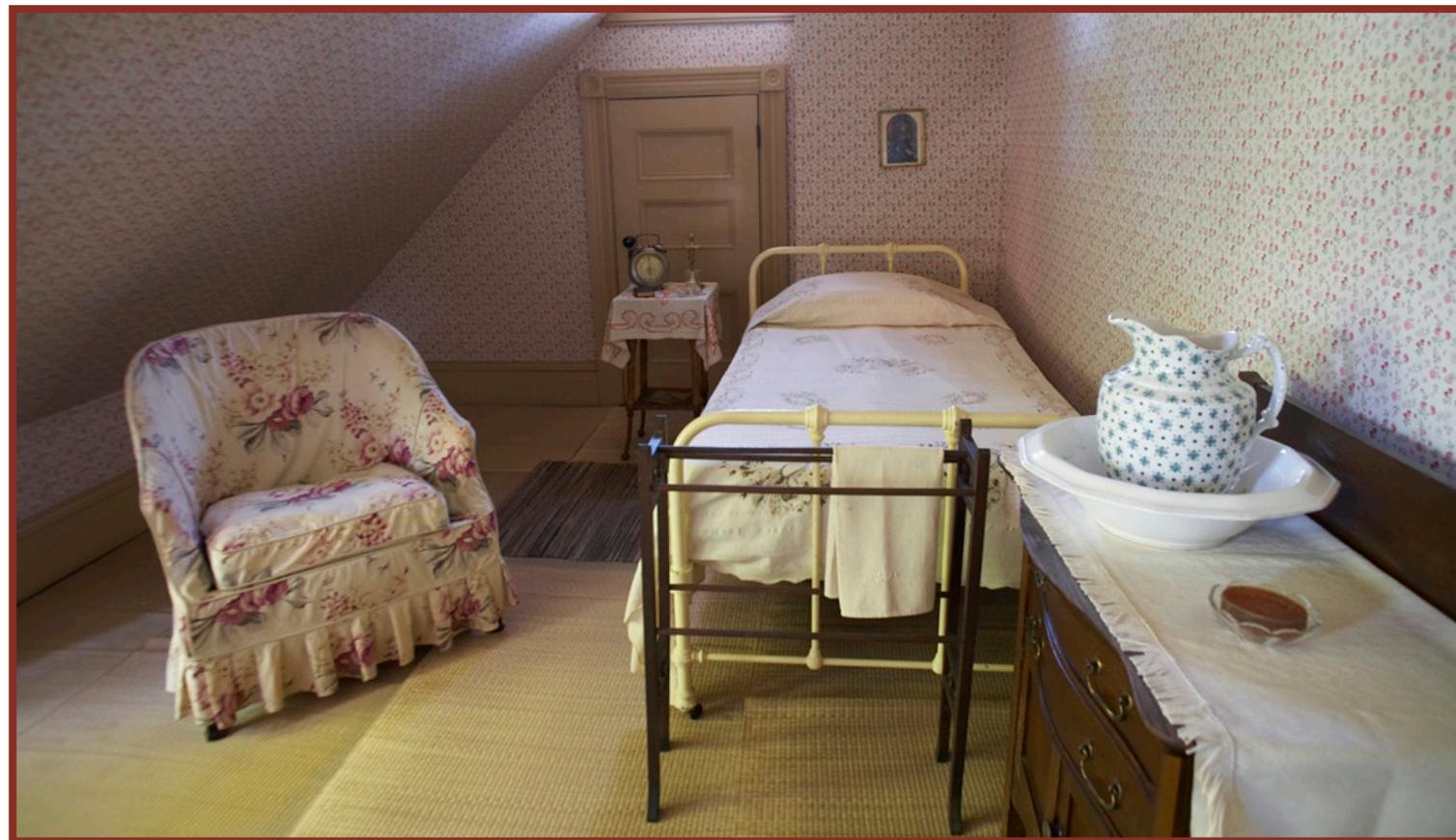
Most of the family and friends who stayed overnight were honored by the invitation. However, TR's close friend Henry Cabot Lodge, did not like staying over at Sagamore Hill. He complained that the Roosevelts stayed up too late, talked too loud and got up too early in the morning.





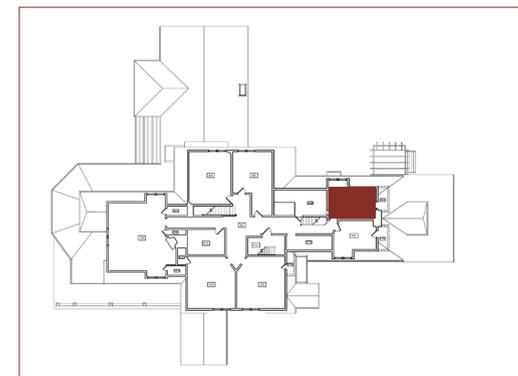
# THE THIRD FLOOR





## COOK'S ROOM

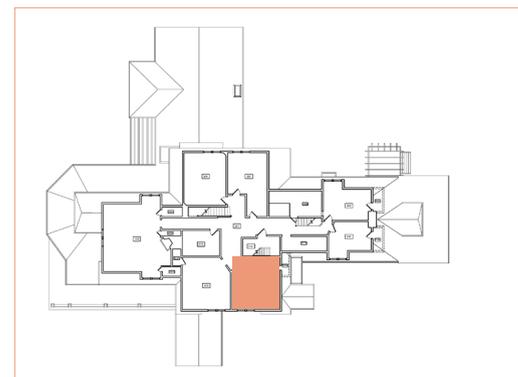
The large house and active family needed a large staff to support and manage them. Over the years, the household staff ranged from 4-9 people and included a valet who doubled as a butler, a lady's maid, a cook, a nurse, a governess and a variety of maids. The single female staffers were housed on the third floor; while two married couples shared a small farm cottage. If additional help was needed for a party or formal dinner, Edith would hire extra serving or kitchen staff from town.

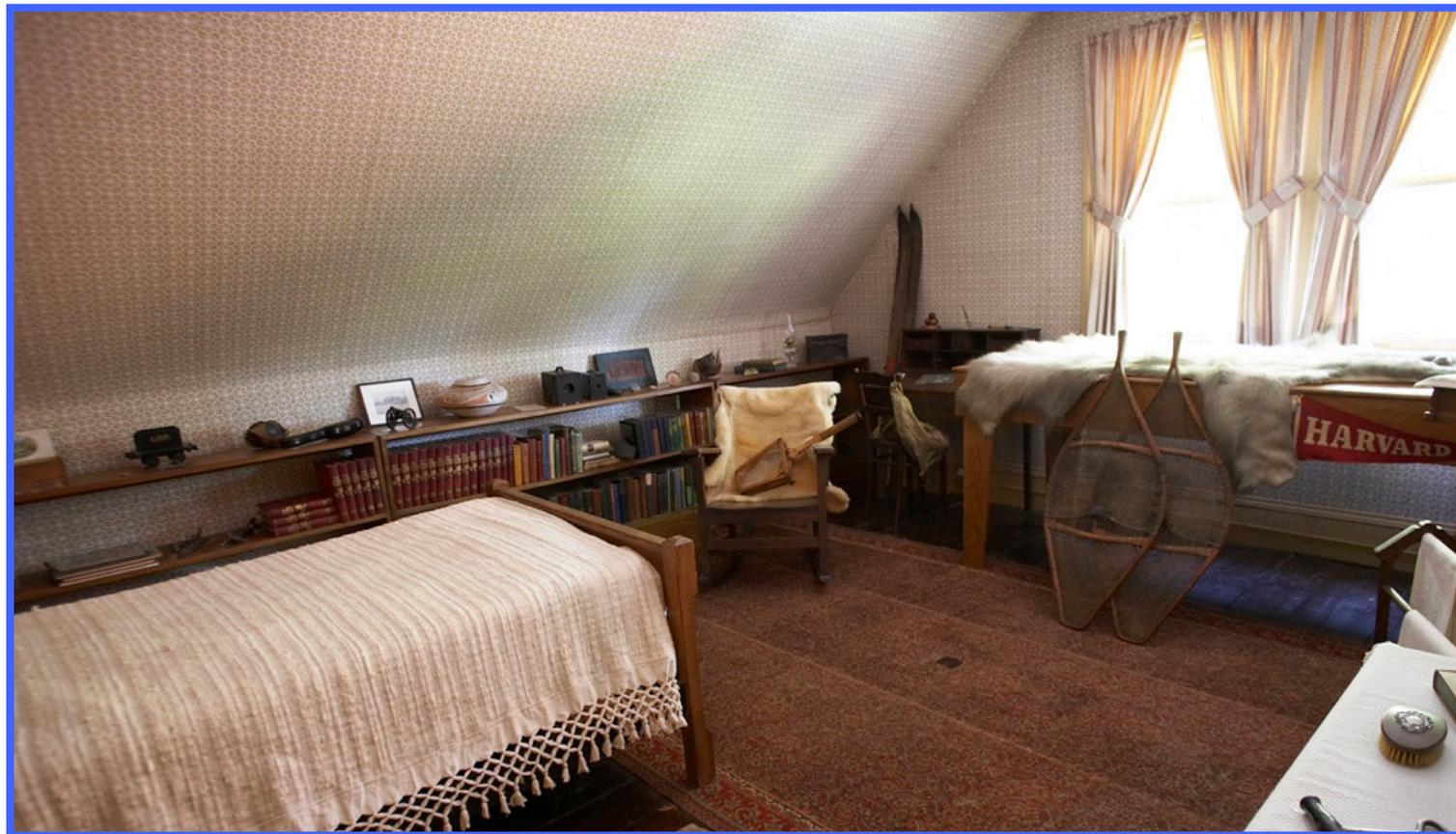




## MAID'S ROOM

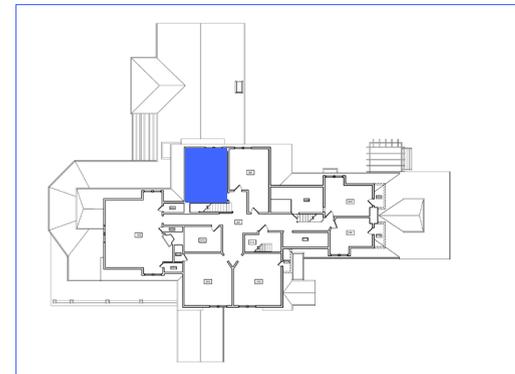
Some of the servants stayed for years and became like members of the family. Mary Ledwich, known as “Mame”, had been Edith’s nurse when she was a baby. She joined the household in 1887, when Ted Jr. was born and stayed until Quentin started school. Two of the cooks, Annie O’Rourke and Brigid Turbidy, each stayed for more than 25 years. Charles Lee had started to work for the Roosevelts while they were living in the Governor’s Mansion in Albany, and then followed them to Washington and to Oyster Bay; he and his wife Clara lived at Sagamore Hill into the 1930s.





## TED JR'S ROOM

This room was used as a bedroom by a series of nurses and governess through the 1890s. In 1902, after Quentin started school and no longer needed a governess, 14-year-old Ted Jr. convinced his mother that as the oldest boy, he needed a room of his own. The furnishings reflect the interests of this growing teenager – sports, hunting, photography and books. After Ted married in 1910 and moved out of the house, the “musical chairs” game continued and Archie moved upstairs into his brother’s old room.

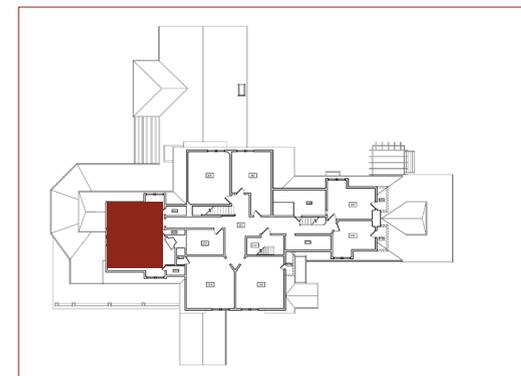




## GUN ROOM

Originally designed as a billiard room, this den served as a multi-function room for the Roosevelts. Dubbed The **Gun Room** by Ted Jr. because of the hunting equipment stored here, it was also used a playroom for the children. Often, TR read bedtime stories or told ghost stories to the children in front of the fireplace. Several summers, it served a study hall when one of the boys got extra tutoring by a private teacher. Edith Roosevelt used one of the closets to store her ball gowns.

The room also provided an extra work space for the staff hired to help TR write his books. TR did most of his "writing" by dictating the text to a stenographer; the desk was used by the typist who transcribed the notes.





## CLOSING

Theodore Roosevelt died at Sagamore Hill on January 6, 1919 at the age of sixty years old.

On the last day of his life, Edith caught him gazing out the window in the Gate Room; he turned to her and said, "I wonder if you know how much I love Sagamore Hill."

Edith outlived her husband by 29 years and died at Sagamore Hill in September, 1948 at the age of eighty-seven. The Theodore Roosevelt Association (TRA) purchased Sagamore Hill, including the contents of the home, from the Roosevelt family and opened it to the public on June 14, 1953. In July, 1962, the TRA donated Sagamore Hill to the National Park Service (NPS) as a gift to the American people.

