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*Front and back cover illustrations:
Theodore Roosevelt's Sagamore Hill home
upon completion in 1885; farm hands and
cows in front of new barn at
Sagamore Hill, 1907.
Sagamore Hill National Historic Site,
National Park Service*

PUBLICATION SCHEDULE FOR 2009

The *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal* is publishing three 2009 issues. This expanded edition (Volume XXX, Numbers 1 & 2, Winter-Spring 2009) will be followed by regular Summer 2009 and Fall 2009 editions.

SAVE THESE DATES

The Ninetieth Annual Meeting of the Theodore Roosevelt Association will take place in Tampa, Florida, from Friday, October 23 to Sunday, October 25, 2009. The theme is "A Splendid Little War." In June 1898, Theodore Roosevelt's regiment, the First United States Volunteer Cavalry (the Rough Riders), shipped out from Tampa bound for Cuba to participate in the Spanish-American War. Highlights of the weekend will include a Friday dinner, during which the speaker will be Professor Stacy Cordery, at the historic Plant Museum; a Saturday symposium and luncheon featuring several distinguished speakers; a gala Annual Dinner and Awards Banquet on Saturday evening; and a bus tour of historical sites in and around Tampa on Sunday.

Our host hotel is the newly refurbished Tampa Marriott Waterside Hotel and Marina. A limited number of special package rooms, at a rate of \$179 per night, have been reserved for those attending the TRA Annual Meeting. Please call 813-221-4900 to make your reservation.

Detailed information and a registration form will be sent to all TRA members during the summer. The Summer 2009 issue of the *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal* also will provide detailed information and a detachable registration form.



The *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal*
is published quarterly by the

THEODORE ROOSEVELT ASSOCIATION

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Guidelines for unsolicited submissions: Send three double-spaced printed copies to Professor William Tilchin, Editor, *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal*, College of General Studies, Boston University, 871 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215. Also provide an electronic copy on a disk or as an e-mail attachment addressed to wnt@bu.edu. Notes should be rendered as endnotes structured in accordance with the specifications of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Submissions accepted for publication may be edited for style and length.

The *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal*, established in 1975 by Dr. John Allen Gable and edited by him through 2004, is a refereed journal. Articles appearing in the *TRA Journal* are abstracted in *American History and Life* and *Historical Abstracts*.

The Theodore Roosevelt Association is a national historical society and public service organization founded in 1919 and chartered by special Act of Congress in 1920. We are a not-for-profit corporation of the District of Columbia, with offices in New York State. A copy of the last audited financial report of the Theodore Roosevelt Association, filed with the Department of State of the State of New York, may be obtained by writing either the New York State Department of State, Office of Charities Registration, Albany, NY 11231, or the Theodore Roosevelt Association, 20 Audrey Avenue, Oyster Bay, NY 11771-1532.

The fiscal year of the Association is July 1 – June 30.

The Theodore Roosevelt Association has members in all fifty states, and membership is open to all.

The annual meeting of the Board of Trustees is held on or near Theodore Roosevelt's birthday, October 27. The day-to-day affairs of the Association are administered by the Executive Committee, elected annually by the Board of Trustees. The members of the Board of Trustees are elected in three classes, each class with a term of three years.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY AT THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT ASSOCIATION

Due primarily to economic factors, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Theodore Roosevelt Association voted unanimously on February 28, 2009, to suspend indefinitely the TR museum project launched in 2007. Several weeks later, the TRA appointed Professor Howard Ehrlich to the position of Interim Executive Director. Chair Barbara Brandt has formed a Search Committee and has commissioned it to identify the TRA's next Executive Director.

Amidst these changes, the Theodore Roosevelt Association remains firmly committed to its long-standing core purposes and programs. The TRA's core purposes are embodied in the organization's Vision Statement (see page 51). The TRA's core programs include the Annual Meeting in October, a second major TR-related travel opportunity during the spring or summer, establishing and supporting local and regional TRA chapters, public speaking contests, police awards, Teddy's Bears for Kids, and, of course, the *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal*.

MAINE'S NORTHWOODS AND KATAHDIN: A THEODORE ROOSEVELT STRENUOUS LIFE WEEKEND

In 1878, in the shadows of his father's death earlier that year, young Theodore Roosevelt visited the Northwoods of Maine and began a lifelong friendship with William Sewall. In Island Falls, TR stayed as a guest of the Sewalls, hunting, canoeing, and learning the ways of the lumbermen. The following year, again on break from his studies at Harvard, Roosevelt returned and, along with Sewall and Sewall's

nephew Wilmot Dow, ascended to the top of nearby Katahdin, the 5,267-foot mountain that bears the Penobscot name and rises to the highest point in the Pine Tree State. In 1884, when TR went to the Dakota Territory to become a cattle rancher, he imported Sewall and Dow to be his ranch foremen, and the lumbermen figured prominently in many of Roosevelt's cowboy adventures.

To commemorate the 130th anniversary of TR's ascent of Katahdin and generally to enjoy the pleasures of the woods and waters of northern Maine, Joe Wiegand, president of the Chicago Bull Moose Chapter of the Theodore Roosevelt Association, is coordinating a Theodore Roosevelt Strenuous Life Weekend in Island Falls and Millinocket this August. Due to factors of time, budget, and location, participants will be on their own for making arrangements for travel and accommodations. With the support of last year's Medora, North Dakota, coordinators, Michele Bryant and Rebecca Rickey, Wiegand will provide transportation and lodging information. For more details, call Joe at 847-373-0691, or contact him by e-mail at jwiegand@tbc.net.

The tentative itinerary includes the following:

On Friday, August 21, participants will arrive in the region (Bangor, Maine, has the nearest large airport). Lodging, ranging from campgrounds to cabins to hotels to bed and breakfasts, will be available throughout the Millinocket and Baxter State Park region.

On Saturday, August 22, our activities in Island Falls will be sponsored by the Sewall House Inn and Yoga Retreat and by the Island Falls Historical Society. In the early morning, participants will travel by boat or lumber trail to Bible Point State Historic Site, where, in 1921, the Roosevelt Memorial Association (the forerunner of the TRA) erected a plaque in honor of TR and his connection to the place. At midday, participants will enjoy refreshments on the grounds of the historic Sewall House, where young Roosevelt stayed during his visits. An afternoon excursion to the nearby Lumbermen's Museum in Patten will be followed by a Historical Society supper and living history entertainment by Wiegand, a professional reenactor of Theodore Roosevelt.

On Sunday, August 23, participants will hike in Baxter State Park. While some will enjoy a day among Katahdin's foothills, Wiegand will lead a venture to reach Katahdin's peak and return before dusk. Programs at the park are still being arranged.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT ASSOCIATION JOURNAL**VOLUME XXX, NUMBERS 1 & 2, WINTER-SPRING 2009****CONTENTS**

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UNDERSTANDING THE PLACE: THEODORE ROOSEVELT'S HOMETOWN OF OYSTER BAY AND HIS SAGAMORE HILL HOME¹

by Natalie A. Naylor

Theodore Roosevelt was born in New York City, but much of his life was associated with Oyster Bay and his Sagamore Hill home on Long Island. The theme of the 2008 Theodore Roosevelt Association Annual Meeting on Long Island was "TR's Hometown: To Understand the Man, You Must Understand the Place." This article focuses on Theodore Roosevelt's hometown of Oyster Bay and his Sagamore Hill estate, emphasizing outdoor activities there, as well as describing some of the people who worked there and enabled the Roosevelts to enjoy their home in the country.

Oyster Bay and Long Island

Following the English tradition of owning country houses, Long Island began to attract wealthy New Yorkers in the years after the Civil War. The North Shore, including Oyster Bay, was appealing because of its natural beauty, proximity to the water, protected harbor, and cool breezes. Long Island offered many opportunities for leisure, including equestrian trails for horseback riding, polo playing, fox hunting, boating, yachting, sailing, bathing, golfing, fishing, and fowling. But perhaps most important, Long Island was easily accessible from Manhattan.²



Long Island Railroad map of Long Island, 1895.

Long Island lies east of New York City and is 118 miles long, extending from Brooklyn to Montauk Point. The community of Oyster Bay is thirty-five miles from Manhattan. Oyster Bay is the name of the village (or more accurately, the hamlet, since it is not an incorporated village) and also of the town (township), which extends south to the Atlantic Ocean. The town of Oyster

Bay was part of Queens County until Nassau County was formed in 1899 from the three eastern towns of Queens. (The three western towns had joined Greater New York City in 1898.) Oyster Bay is the town seat, housing the town hall and other town offices. From 1919 to 1932, most of the areas surrounding the hamlet of Oyster Bay incorporated as villages, including Mill Neck (1924), Cove Neck (1927), Oyster Bay Cove (1931), and Upper Brookville (1932).

In the nineteenth century, steamships served some Long Island communities during the summer, but it was the railroad that truly facilitated travel to the island. Chartered in 1836 as the "Long-Island Rail-Road" (LIRR), its tracks extended through the center of the island, reaching Hicksville in 1837 and Greenport on the North Fork in 1844. In 1854 a branch line from Hicksville reached Syosset. The western terminus was initially in Brooklyn, but was shifted to Hunter's Point in Queens by 1861. From Brooklyn or Queens, passengers took a ferry to Manhattan. Construction on another LIRR branch line from Mineola to Locust Valley was completed in 1871 and was extended in 1889 to its terminus in Oyster Bay.

When the railroad reached Oyster Bay in 1889, it eliminated the necessity for a stagecoach ride from Syosset or Locust Valley. Some of the summer residents opposed bringing the railroad to Oyster Bay, fearing that the community might become less exclusive. The Long Island Railroad described the attractions of the area in one of its promotional brochures in 1890:

It is indeed a pretty village, and it is not strange that property owners zealously guard its interests. Situated directly on a beautiful bay, the boating facilities are unsurpassed, a fact easily seen on a summer's day by counting the yachts and pleasure-boats which harbor there. It is the headquarters for several prominent yacht-clubs, and regattas and rowing-races are frequently held during the season. The [carriage] drives are numerous and delightful. The place is noted for its many fine residences. There are several old homesteads which played important parts in the early history of the country, and many relics of colonial times are to be found.³

Of all of the LIRR's stations on the North Shore, Oyster

Bay was the closest to Long Island Sound. The surrounding waters provided a protected harbor for rowing, which Roosevelt preferred, and for sailing. Oyster Bay's population in 1885 was 1,255, and about 2,300 by 1900 (the numbers increased in the summer). Today, the population is about 6,800.⁴

The Oyster Bay Roosevelts

Theodore Roosevelt's grandfather, Cornelius Van Schaack Roosevelt (1794-1871), rented a country home in Oyster Bay after the Civil War, and thereby became the progenitor of the "Oyster Bay Roosevelts." Theodore Roosevelt, Sr. (1831-1878), took his young son "Teedie" to his grandfather's Oyster Bay house when the boy had one of his asthma attacks.⁵ After spending summers in New Jersey and in the Hudson River Valley, Theodore Roosevelt, Sr., joined his brother James Alfred Roosevelt in Oyster Bay in 1874 and rented a house on East Main Street from Otis Swan. He named the house "Tranquility," and it served as the Roosevelt country home for several years.⁶

Many of the summer residents of Oyster Bay, including TR's father, his uncle, and several of his cousins, were members of both the influential Union League Club in New York City and the prestigious Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club. TR himself would later become a member of these two organizations. Seawanhaka was founded in 1871 on William Swan's sloop anchored in Oyster Bay Harbor, off Centre Island's Soper's Point. (The Point is located in the southwest corner of Centre Island, which is actually a peninsula.) The club held regattas and rowing races in the waters near Oyster Bay and, after leasing a basin in Staten Island and a clubhouse in New York City, built its still extant clubhouse on Centre Island in 1892.⁷

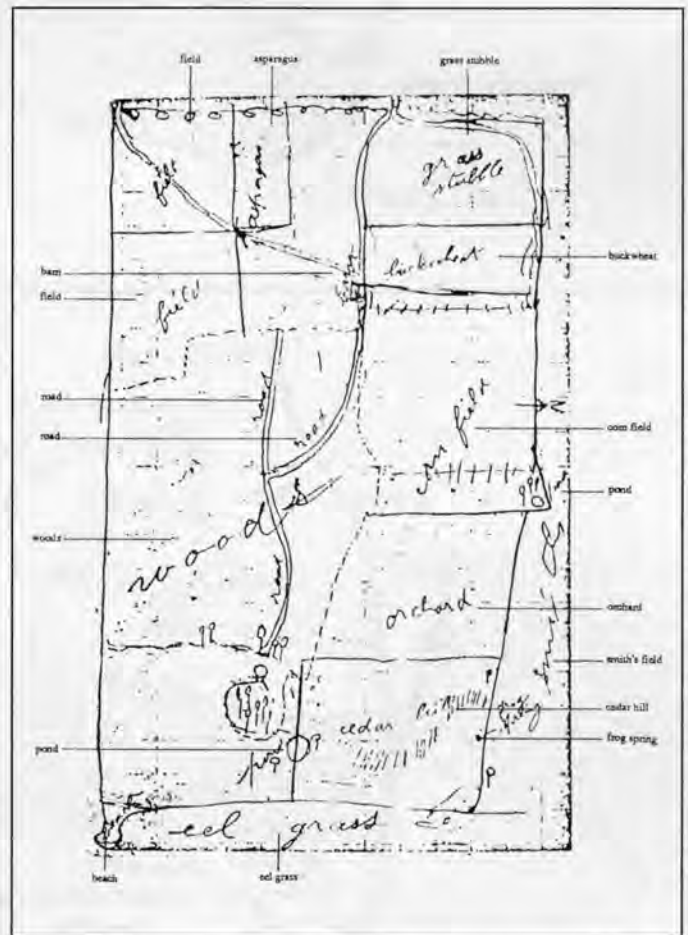
Theodore was in his fifteenth year when his family began to spend summers in Oyster Bay. His sister Corinne later referred to Oyster Bay as "The Happy Land of Woods and Waters"—an "enchanted spot. . . . Every special delight" in those years was "connected with Oyster Bay." Together with visiting cousins and friends, they took rides on horseback, rowed in the harbor, and enjoyed picnics. Young Theodore's diary during and after his freshman year at Harvard indicates how much he loved the area. He wrote that he was "leading the most thoroughly out of door life. Riding and walking every day and rowing in my little boat almost as often." He also recorded shooting birds and ducks, "frogging," seining fish, roaming the area, and sailing on the bay and Long Island Sound. Once he rowed to Whitestone with a friend, a distance of more than twenty-five miles each way. They "got caught in a heavy nor-easter" storm on the way back, reaching home at 1:00 A.M. The next summer, he rowed alone across Long Island Sound to Rye and back.⁸ During his college years, he visited the Adirondacks and Maine on his summer vacations, but spent much of his time in Oyster Bay. He collected his *Notes on Some of the Birds of Oyster Bay, Long Island, March 1879*, which he had printed as a broadside while still an undergraduate. After he married Alice Lee in October

1880, Theodore and his wife spent their two-week honeymoon at Tranquility in Oyster Bay.

Sagamore Hill on Cove Neck

When the Roosevelts stayed at Tranquility, nearby Cove Neck—the peninsula where TR would build Sagamore Hill—had fewer than a dozen houses. Most were at the northern tip, and all the houses adjoined Oyster Bay Harbor (i.e., the western shoreline), except Thomas Youngs's house fronting on Cold Spring Harbor on the eastern shore. At the time, most of the land on Cove Neck was woodland, pasture, or farmland.⁹

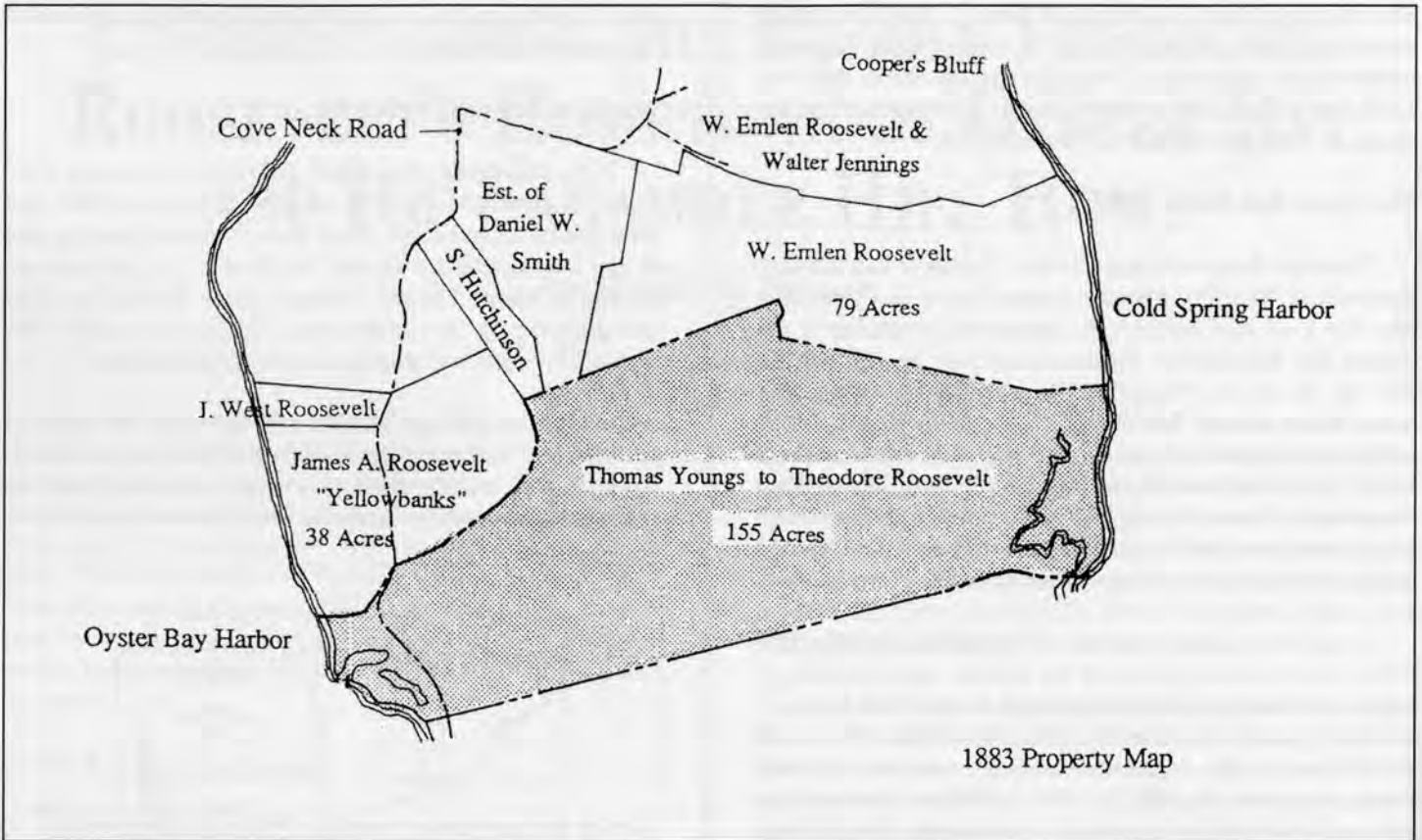
Because of his fond memories of the area, TR began to purchase land on Cove Neck from Thomas Youngs soon after he married. Like his father before him, he was joining relatives in the area. His cousin, Dr. James West Roosevelt, owned four



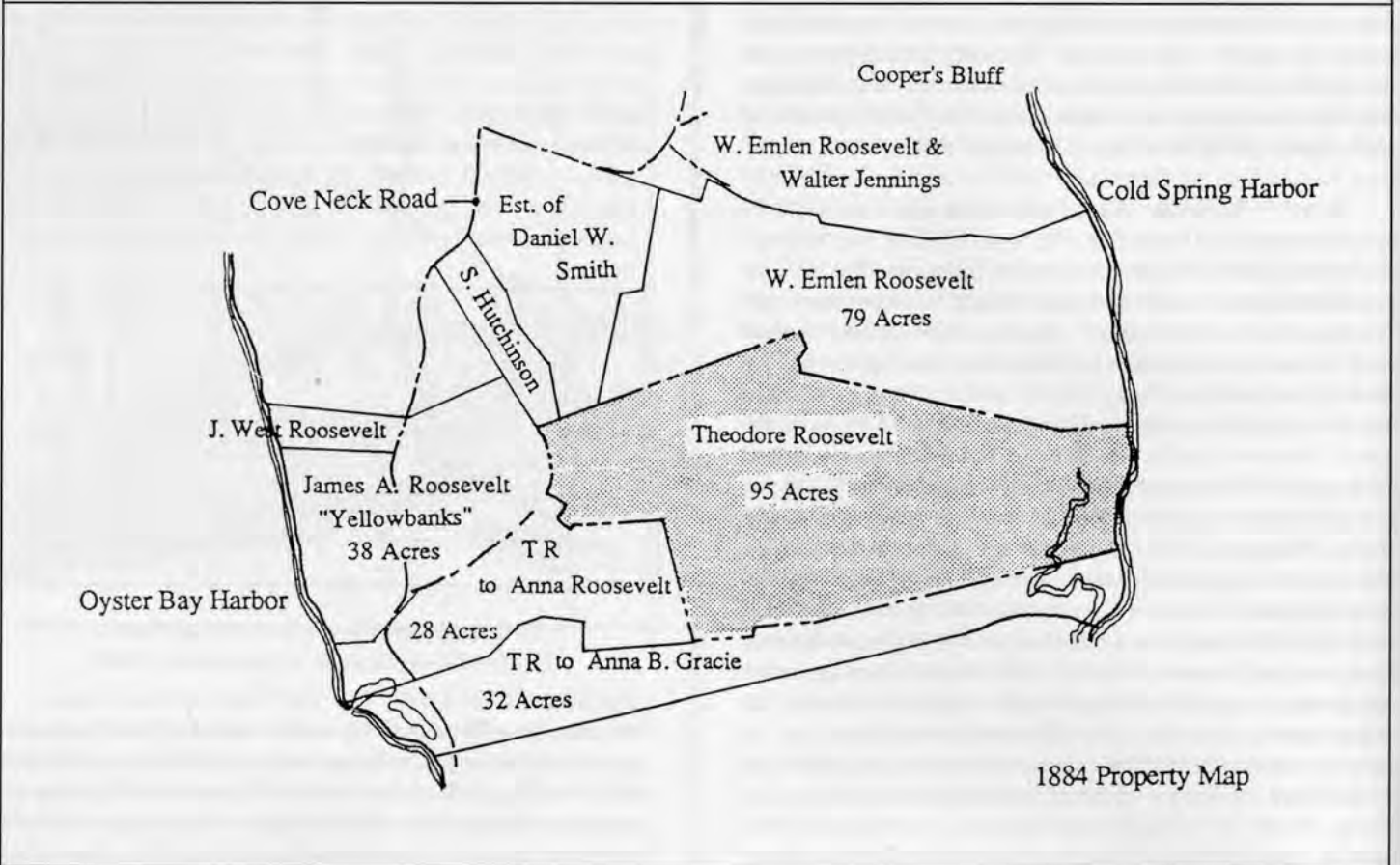
Theodore Roosevelt's sketch of his property, c. 1880.

acres on Cove Neck, and his uncle, James Alfred Roosevelt, purchased thirty-eight adjacent acres in 1880. Between 1880 and 1884, TR purchased a total of 155 acres for \$30,000—the equivalent of more than \$600,000 today. He subsequently sold thirty-two acres to his aunt, Anna Bullock (Mrs. James K.)

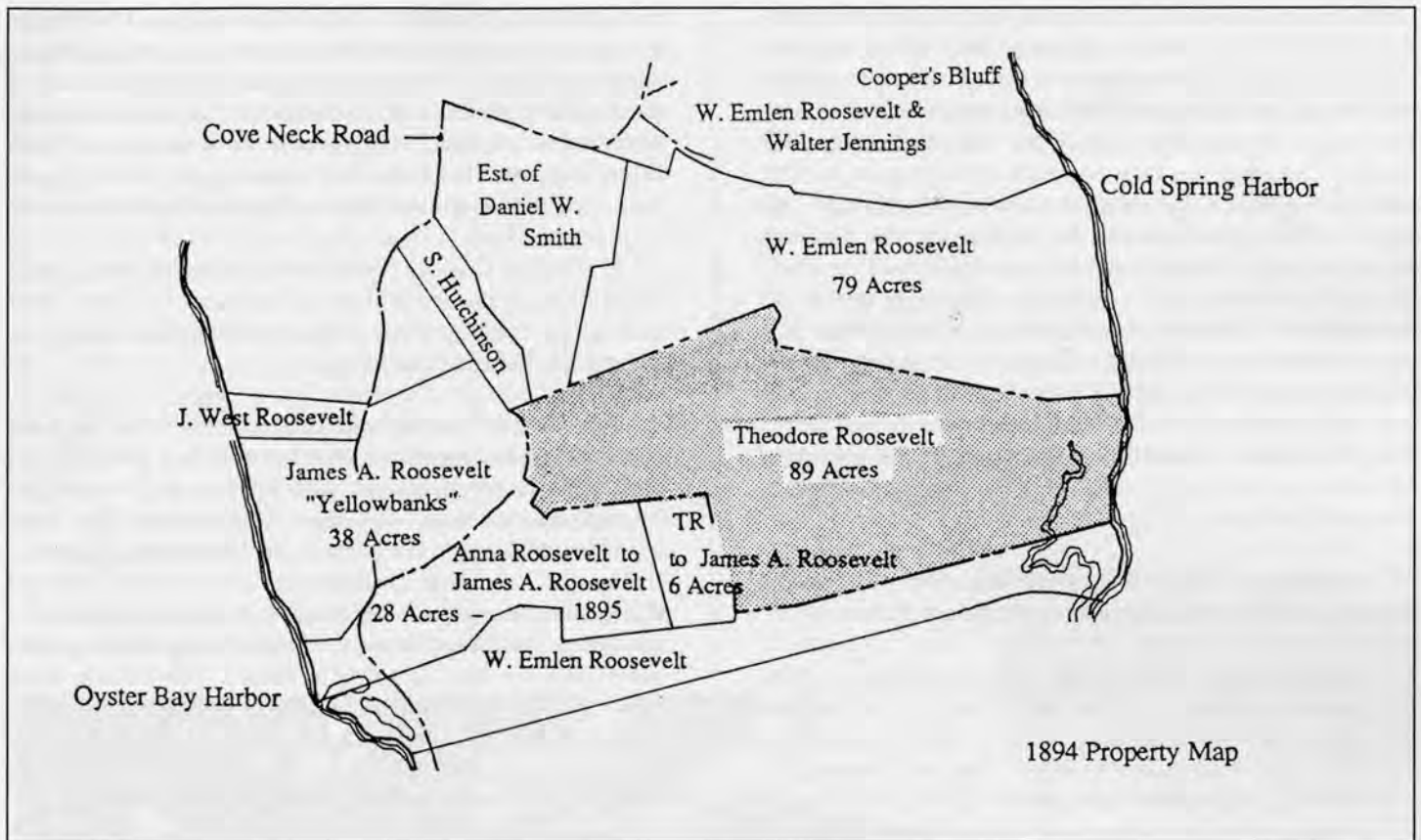
Regina M. Bellavia and George W. Carry, Cultural Landscape Report for Sagamore Hill National Historic Site (Boston: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, 1995), p. 18



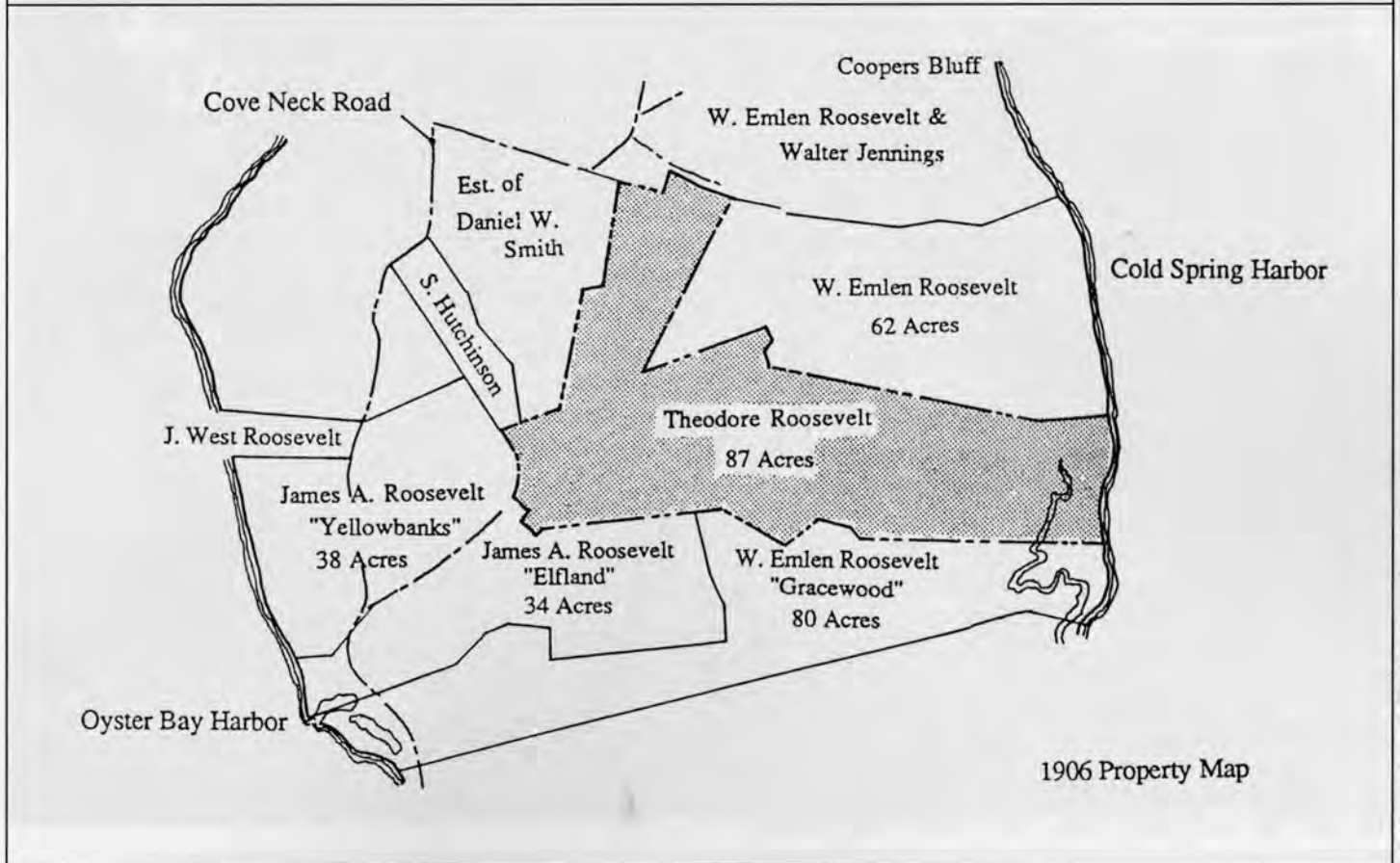
1883 Property Map



1884 Property Map



1894 Property Map



1906 Property Map

and others' properties, 1883-1906.

Gracie (his mother's sister), and twenty-eight acres to his sister Anna (known in the family as Bamie or Bye), leaving him with ninety-five acres. Cove Neck was a Roosevelt compound, and the children and cousins roamed over neighboring Roosevelt estates. (The maps on pages 8-9 identify the surrounding Roosevelt owners.) According to a sketch he made of the property in 1880, more than a third of TR's land was woodland and beach. (See page 7.) Youngs had pastures for grazing and also had been raising asparagus, buckwheat, corn, and apples on Cove Neck. The only structure on the acreage that TR bought was an old barn, which the Roosevelts used until it collapsed in 1904. As a result of some later purchases, exchanges, and sales to relatives of small parcels, the size of TR's Sagamore Hill property in 1906 was eighty-seven acres. This was close to the median size of Long Island estate properties. Today Sagamore Hill consists of 82.3 acres, including a few acres TR did not own, but which the National Park Service acquired for protection.¹⁰

A gazetteer published in 1885 when TR was building Sagamore Hill described the community in these words:

Oyster Bay—a cosey [cozy] and comfortable village pleasantly situated on the harbor and in the northern part of the town of the same name. It has a population of 1,255, and 7 churches—Episcopal, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, African Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Quaker. Stages connect the village with [the railroad station in] Syosset, about 4 miles south, and with Locust Valley, the same distance west. The people are engaged in farming, the culture of asparagus being an important item.¹¹

The first structure Roosevelt built on his property was a stable and lodge in 1883-1884 at a cost of \$5,160. This building included a residence for the farm manager or estate superintendent, as well as stalls for horses and space to store hay. "It would be lovely to have a farm," TR had written Bamie in 1882, and obviously he intended to continue farming the land. The architects for the lodge and the main house were Lamb & Rich of New York City, who had established a reputation for designing country houses. John A. Wood & Son, carpenters in Lawrence, were the builders of both structures. The house, to be situated at the top of the hill, was originally to be called Leeholm, for TR's wife, Alice Lee.¹²

On February 14, 1884, just two days after TR's daughter Alice was born, both his wife and his mother died. He was devastated, but nonetheless, two weeks later, he signed a contract for the construction of the main house for \$16,975—the equivalent of more than \$350,000 today. (He renamed his estate for an Algonquian Indian chief, Sagamore Mohannis, who had lived in the area.)

By the standards of the day for country houses, Sagamore Hill, with its twenty-two rooms, was smaller than average, decidedly unpretentious, and staffed by fewer servants—between

nine and eleven from 1900 to 1920—than the typical twenty-five to fifty, and sometimes more than a hundred, on larger estates. Sagamore Hill was also moderately priced: \$17,000 compared to the median price for a country house at this time of between \$20,000 and \$30,000.¹³ Long Island has a number of North Shore mansions that have been preserved as historic house museums, including Coe Hall in Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park in Oyster Bay (built 1919), Westbury House at Old Westbury Gardens (1906), Harry Guggenheim's Falaise in Sands Point (1923), and William K. Vanderbilt II's Eagle's Nest in Centerport (1907). Each of these estates is larger and more ostentatious than Sagamore Hill.

Most of the wealthy who had country homes on Long Island also had a mansion or town house in New York City and often other country homes in such locations as Newport, the Adirondacks, and South Carolina. They occupied their Long Island house for only a few weeks a year. In contrast, Sagamore Hill was the only home the Roosevelts owned in New York and was intended as a primary residence in the country, to be lived in throughout the year. (TR and the family did stay with his older sister Bamie in New York City at times.) Few historic house museums have as many of the original furnishings as Sagamore Hill, which retains an estimated 95 percent. Families usually take or sell the furniture, and curators then spend their careers trying to get it back or furnish the house with period pieces.

TR's sister Bamie oversaw the construction of Sagamore Hill (and cared for TR's infant daughter, Alice) when he was at his Dakota ranch after the deaths of his wife and mother. In 1886, TR married his childhood friend, Edith Kermit Carow, in London. When the couple returned from their honeymoon in Europe, Edith began to put her imprint on the house.

The pastoral ideal of living close to nature is a long-standing American tradition. His home in the country enabled TR to pursue his interests in natural history and the strenuous life, and to provide a healthy and wholesome environment for his



Stable and lodge in 1885, soon after completion.

children. Carved into the lintel over the west side doorway was the motto from the Roosevelt family crest: "*Qui plantavit curabit*" (he who has planted will preserve). After generations of his ancestors living in Manhattan, TR was the first in his family who literally would be planting on his land. In establishing Sagamore Hill, he envisioned himself as a gentleman farmer, planting and harvesting crops on his property.

The Estate: Farm and Gardens

Sagamore Hill was the name not only of the house, but of the entire estate, and the Roosevelts spent much of their time in Oyster Bay outdoors. It was a working farm, with pastureland, an apple orchard, and vegetable gardens. The Roosevelts had horses, cows, pigs, and chickens and raised wheat, oats, corn, and hay. As a 1910 article, "Roosevelt the Husbandman," concluded, "Altogether Sagamore Hill presents a lively picture of a small American farm."¹⁴

Edith took great pleasure in the flower garden. The Roosevelt children had their own sections of the garden, and

sometimes their own animals as well (in addition to many pets). Edith wrote TR from Sagamore on October 14, 1900, "I went to church where Kermit was so naughty that I told him if he could not behave I would not allow him to keep chickens." Kermit was then eleven years old.¹⁵

The first gardener at Sagamore Hill was Alfred Davis, who had been a groom for the Roosevelt family at Tranquility. Davis (1829-1910) was an African American who worked for the Roosevelts into his seventies. The Roosevelts' eldest son, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., wrote in his memoirs, "The [Sagamore Hill] garden in early days was ruled by an old negro named Davis. . . . We must have been a 'thorn in the flesh and a rankling fire' to him—tramping on his flower beds, eating his grapes and currants. His form of address to us had such a sameness that we christened him 'Old Let-It-Be.'"¹⁶

Noah Seaman (circa 1857-1911), an "ex-oysterman," was initially in charge of the farm. He worked at Sagamore Hill for more than twenty years and was assisted by day laborers. Seaman too tried to protect the garden and farm "against



View of stable and lodge from garden, 1905.



Haying at Sagamore Hill, c. 1904 (TR is second from right).

Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library

marauding children.”¹⁷ The Park Service plans to restore some of the gardens, but much of the land where the gardens were is now covered by the access road and parking lot.

TR often participated in the haying at Sagamore Hill. James Amos, an African American who was “head man” on the estate, wrote in his published memoir: “Mr. Roosevelt loved to put in a day’s work on his place with the men—particularly at haying time. At such times he went to work in the morning and worked through the day, knocking off at sunset and at lunch time with the others. He joked and talked with his fellow workers, drank from the same bucket and dipper and always insisted on Seaman, his gardener, putting his name on the pay-roll and paying him for his day’s work.”¹⁸ (TR received \$1 a day.)

Because of articles in the press about TR’s haying, some newspapermen joked about “our own Cincinnatus,” and implied that he did it for the benefit of photographers. TR wrote his daughter Alice in 1908 about one of her friends whom he had just seen: “When he came out I had just stopt haying, and I besought him to tell you this fact so as to refute your cruel suspicions that I had hitherto hayed with a view to my political future.” In his 1910 article, “Roosevelt the Husbandman,” Henry Forman wrote that TR “enjoyed pitching hay and he has gone right on

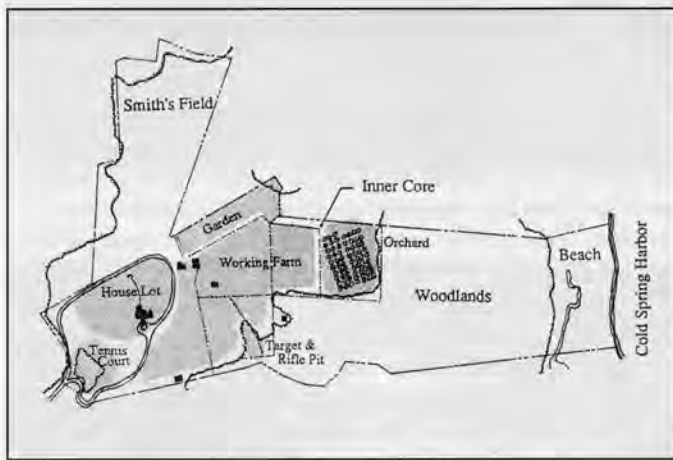
pitching hay, regardless of whether anybody saw him and smiled or not.” He quoted TR saying, “We were unable to get an extra hired man this year, so I had to help bring in the hay. We have just brought in the last load.” In fact, when Edith Roosevelt thought her husband was not getting enough exercise, she would have Seaman tell him he was shorthanded and needed help pitching hay. Forman observed that “to work two afternoons in the hayfield under a baking sun, side by side with his own farm laborers, scarcely sounds like an attempt at a Cincinnatus pose.”¹⁹

Forman also noted a prediction of one of his “keen-minded” friends: that “fifty years hence, when Sagamore Hill will be a national preserve, the curator will point out the carefully-guarded ‘last hayrick that Theodore Roosevelt helped to make.’”²⁰ Sagamore Hill was opened to the public in 1953 by the Roosevelt Memorial Association (now the Theodore Roosevelt Association) and became part of the National Park Service in 1963, so the prediction of it becoming a national preserve in fifty years came true. However, TR’s “last hayrick,” or haystack, was not preserved and, at the present time, there is no hay at all on the grounds.

To evoke the pasture, the Park Service does not cut the lawn

in front of the porch very often, despite complaints from some visitors who want the estate to look like a cultivated park. Many of the large estates on Long Island had formal gardens designed by landscape architects.²¹ The grounds of Sagamore Hill were never landscaped in TR's day and, with hay and other forage grown, were pastoral, even rustic.

Like most of the estate farms, Sagamore Hill was not a commercial operation, but rather was designed to sustain the family and others living on the property. In response to a letter of July 1918 from someone who wanted to write an article on how Sagamore Hill was self-supporting, TR responded: "Alas, alas you have been misinformed and I have no such feat to my credit! Sagamore Hill is simply my home. My business which I need hardly tell you is varied in character and very exacting in its demands, absorbs too much of my time for me to be able to pay much attention to the farm. We try to make the place partially (sometimes very partially) self-supporting. We raise vegetables, fruits, chickens, eggs, milk and pork for our own use; and hay and corn for the cows and horses. We sometimes sell hay, corn, potatoes or apples, but that is very nearly all."²²



Spatial organization of Sagamore Hill property in TR's time.

Of course, TR's "we" here refers primarily to Edith, the farm superintendent, and the hired hands. It was Edith who sold the hay. The Roosevelts bought meats and vegetables from village shops to supplement what they produced on their farm. Sometimes fresh fruits and vegetables would be sent to the Roosevelts from their farm when they were living in the White House, and later to Edith when she spent time in the home she purchased in Connecticut in 1927. The Roosevelt children who lived in the area as adults also received some of the produce from the gardens.

James Amos and Charles Lee, also an African American, had worked for the Roosevelts at the White House. After continuing in government service for a time, they asked if they could come to work at Sagamore Hill. Edith Roosevelt reportedly asked

the ministers of the black churches in Oyster Bay for suitable ladies to introduce to the two bachelors. Both soon married and lived on the property in separate apartments in Grey Cottage. (The building survives and is now staff housing for the park superintendent and his family.) Amos and Lee are listed in the census at various years as messenger, chauffeur, or simply servant. Their wives, Annie Amos and Clara Lee, are also listed as "servants." (Employing black servants was unusual at that time on Long Island.)²³ Amos left the estate in 1913, but came back to help, especially to accompany TR and handle the money on his travels. At TR's request, Edith Roosevelt called Amos back in 1919 after her husband came home from the hospital, and James Amos was with TR when he died.

Robert Gillespie was the superintendent of the estate from 1913 or 1914 until the early 1940s. He and his family lived in the lodge. Nancy Roosevelt Jackson (born 1923) recalled that the children in her generation called him, "Gallapesky." Like his predecessors, Gillespie was protective of the garden and did not like to have the children there.²⁴

Edith's role as manager of Sagamore Hill is a topic for another article, but suffice it to say here that she managed the finances for the farm and household—the staff, the six Roosevelt children, and TR, who she said was her oldest and sometimes most difficult child. "Edith managed the farm and paid the farmer, gardener, coachman, and house servants," though as Kathleen Dalton indicates in her TR biography, "Theodore liked to think he was in charge." Cousin Franklin D. Roosevelt once said that Edith "managed TR very cleverly without his being conscious of it."²⁵

When they were engaged, Edith wrote to TR from England, "Mamma says I must tell you that I am very practical and know a great deal about money." It was fortunate that she was good with finances, because TR was hopeless. Dalton writes that TR "could not manage his own finances. She had to look after their money because Theodore was careless about what he spent and always assumed he had enough. He lost checks and forgot for years at a time to balance his checkbook." Edith tried to put him on a budget and would sometimes give him \$20, but he had no idea when he returned home what had happened to it.²⁶ That, of course, is easy to do with \$20 today, but \$20 in 1910 was the equivalent of \$450 today.

The Strenuous Life: Outdoor Leisure Activities

TR practiced the strenuous life he preached. The whole family enjoyed horseback riding, and in the early years, TR played polo and went fox hunting. His brother Elliott was Master of the Meadowbrook Hunt. Theodore joined the Meadowbrook Club and in 1885 hosted a breakfast for a hunt at Sagamore Hill. After some accidents, and after breaking his arm in a fox hunt, TR abandoned fox hunting and polo, deciding that they were not good for his political career. "Polo player" at the time was akin to "playboy."

TR enjoyed rowing, and he often took his wife out in a rowboat. In fact, he had named his first rowboat for Edith Carow before he went to Harvard, and he subsequently named all his rowboats "Edith." The whole family enjoyed swimming. TR was fond of playing tennis, but the tennis court at Sagamore Hill was not a manicured or even a smooth lawn. Another of his pleasures was sitting on the porch or piazza in the evenings and looking at sunsets over the water. Today, even from the third floor of the house, taller trees obscure the view of the water.

The barn with its hay was a favorite place for the children to play. "The barn is filled with hay," TR wrote to Emily Carow (Edith's sister) in August 1903, "and of course meets every requirement for the most active species of hide-and-seek and the like." Ten days later he again was romping with the children in the old barn. "Really it seems, to put it mildly," he remarked to Emily, "rather odd for a stout, elderly President to be bouncing over hay-ricks in a wild effort to get to goal before an active midget of a competitor, aged nine years. However, it was really great fun."²⁷



TR timing children in obstacle race through old barn, c. 1895.

TR wrote in *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography*, published in 1913:

One of the stand-bys for enjoyment, especially in rainy weather, was the old barn. A favorite amusement used to be an obstacle race when the barn was full of hay. The contestants were timed and were started successively from outside the door. They rushed inside, clambered over or burrowed through the hay, as suited them best, dropped out of a place where a loose board had come off, got over, through or under the three fences, and raced back to the starting-point. When they were little, their respective fathers were expected also to take part in the obstacle race,

and when with the advance of years the fathers finally refused to be contestants, there was a general feeling of pained regret among the children at such a decline in the sporting spirit.²⁸

The "point-to-point" hikes at Sagamore Hill are well known. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., wrote in his memoirs that if a "haystack



TR and family members hiking through field at Sagamore Hill in 1914.

was in the way" on one of the point-to-point walks, "we either climbed over it or burrowed through it." When playing hide-and-seek in the barn, "we tunneled the hay until it was like a rabbit warren. These burrows gave us a great advantage over the older members of the family, because the grown-ups on account of their size got stuck if they tried to use them."²⁹

Roosevelt also asserted in his *Autobiography*, "There could be no healthier and pleasanter place in which to bring up children than in that nook of old-time America around Sagamore Hill." He wrote that all the children "tramped" on Cove Neck and boated in the surrounding waters; in winter they "coasted and skated." They were friends with all the animals on the farm and had many pets—dogs, guinea pigs, flying squirrels, kangaroo rats, a badger, and even a young black bear.³⁰ The pet cemetery at Sagamore Hill is testimony to the family's respect for animals.

TR enjoyed chopping down trees at Sagamore Hill. James Amos wrote: "I am sure he was never so happy as when he was out in the grounds of his estate with an axe in his hands chopping down a tree or building a fence."³¹ His former military aide, Archie Butt, visited Sagamore Hill after the presidential years and recorded an incident when the telephones were out of order. It turned out that TR had cut down trees that carried the wires. Butt wrote: "The Colonel looked guilty as Mrs. Roosevelt began to laugh, but he stopped her quickly by saying, 'Now, Edie, don't you say a word. It was your own fault. You always mark the trees I am to cut down, and you did not do it. No, Edie, you did not do your duty as forester of this establishment, and you



Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, National Park Service

A Roosevelt family picnic.



Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library

TR chopping wood at Sagamore Hill in 1905.

ought to be punished, but I will say nothing more about it and not hold you up to scorn before your children if you will let the subject drop once for all.' The French ambassador, Jean Jules Jusserand, who was there at the time, remarked, "It seems to me that no one has said a word but yourself." TR responded, "Ah! But you don't know my wife. She has a language all her own. That telephone will never ring now that my wife will not begin to chuckle to herself, and if the cursed thing ever gets out of order, which it most frequently does, she will tell the servant to see if the wires are still up or if the trees are down. No, my dear Mr. Ambassador, people think I have a good-natured wife, but she has a humor which is more tyrannical than half the tempestuous women of Shakespeare."³²

Theodore Roosevelt and Oyster Bay

As President, TR returned to Oyster Bay every November to vote. Of far greater consequence, Roosevelt annually utilized Sagamore Hill as his Summer White House, and during those presidential summers, he often spoke at local Fourth of July celebrations, following a parade. It was therefore fitting that Oyster Bay held a parade in celebration of TR's sesquicentennial in 2008. In September 1902, the Roosevelts hosted a reception for "Friends and Neighbors" at Sagamore Hill. The total population of the village of Oyster Bay was then only 2,300, but 8,000 guests

⁴ Richard M. Bayles, *Bayles' Long Island Handbook* (Babylon: Privately printed, Budget Steam Print, 1885), p. 45; Peter Ross, *A History of Long Island From its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time* (New York: Lewis Publishing, 1902), p. 934; *Newsday*, March 16, 2001, p. E-8.

⁵ David McCullough, *Mornings on Horseback* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), p. 111; Nathan Miller, *The Roosevelt Chronicles: The Story of a Great American Family* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1979), p. 165.

⁶ Tranquility was also spelled "Tranquillity." The house stood on the south side of the street, midway between today's Blair Road and Steamboat Landing Road. It was razed in the mid-1930s, and a post-World War II split level house is now on the site. Robert B. MacKay, "Turmoil Begat 'Tranquility': The Theodore Roosevelts Move to Oyster Bay," in Natalie A. Naylor, Douglas Brinkley, and John A. Gable, eds., *Theodore Roosevelt: Many-Sided American* (Interlaken, NY: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1992), pp. 45-53; and F. W. Beers, *Atlas of Long Island* (New York: Beers, Comstock, & Cline, 1873). Nathan Miller states that Cornelius V. S. Roosevelt had also rented the same house, but provides no documentation. *Roosevelt Chronicles*, p. 165.

⁷ The Seawanhaka Club is one of the oldest yacht clubs in America. "Seawanhaka," meaning "island of shells" or "island of seawan," was one of the Algonquian Indian names for Long Island. Corinthian refers to amateur yachting, rather than hiring a professional captain and crew. The Seawanhaka clubhouse has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1975.

⁸ Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, *My Brother, Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), pp. 88-89; Theodore Roosevelt, *Diaries of Boyhood and Youth* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), pp. 360-362; McCullough, *Mornings on Horseback*, p. 189.

⁹ The population of Cove Neck Village was 276 in 1930, the first year the federal census reported the village's population separately. In following censuses, its population has ranged from 130 to 344 people; in 2000, it was 300. Cove Neck has one of the lowest population densities of any locality in Nassau County (231 people per square mile in 2000, compared to 4,653 for the entire county). Population for the hamlet of Oyster Bay was first reported in the 1940 census when it was 4,981; in 2000, it was 6,826. Long Island Regional Planning Board, *Historical Population of Long Island Communities, 1790-1980* (Hauppauge: Long Island Regional Planning Board, 1982), pp. 19, 28; *Newsday*,

March 16, 2001, pp. E-8, E-10.

¹⁰ Regina M. Bellavia and George W. Curry, *Cultural Landscape Report for Sagamore Hill National Historic Site* (Boston: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, 1995), pp. 17-23. The equivalency for \$30,000 (and subsequent conversions) was calculated using the website www.measuringworth.com.

¹¹ Bayles, *Bayles' Long Island Handbook*, p. 45.

¹² Natalie A. Naylor, "A Sense of Place: Sagamore Hill, Oyster Bay, and the North Shore of Long Island," and Appendix 4, "Lamb & Rich, Architects," in H. W. Brands, Kathleen Dalton, Lewis L. Gould, and Natalie A. Naylor, *Theodore Roosevelt and His Sagamore Hill Home: Historic Resource Study* (Oyster Bay: National Park Service [internal publication], 2007), pp. 18-19, 140-142 (this publication was revised and reprinted from the edition originally issued in 2005); Theodore Roosevelt to Anna Roosevelt, September 15, 1881, in Elting E. Morison et al., eds., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 8 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951-1954), Vol. I, p. 57.

¹³ Naylor, "A Sense of Place," and Appendix 1, "The Name Sagamore Hill," in *Theodore Roosevelt and His Sagamore Hill Home*, pp. 20-21, 137-138.

¹⁴ Henry James Forman, "Roosevelt the Husbandman," *American Review of Reviews*, August 1910, p. 177. See also Naylor, "A Working Farm," in *Theodore Roosevelt and His Sagamore Hill Home*, pp. 89-108.

¹⁵ Edith Roosevelt to TR, October 14, 1900, Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library, Cambridge, MA.

¹⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., *All in the Family* (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1929), p. 15.

¹⁷ "Biographical Index," in Will Irwin, ed., *Letters to Kermit from Theodore Roosevelt, 1902-1908* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), p. 291. See also Franklin R. McElwain, "The Search for Noah Seaman: TR's Superintendent and Friend," *The Freeholder* (Oyster Bay Historical Society), Vol. 2, Winter 1998, pp. 20-22.

¹⁸ James E. Amos, *Theodore Roosevelt: Hero to His Valet* (New York: John Day, 1927), pp. 84-85. Amos was never TR's valet; the title of his book was a retort to a common expression, that "no man is a hero to his valet." When he left Sagamore Hill in 1913, Amos worked first for the Burns Detective Agency and then

as a Special Agent for the FBI from 1921 to 1953.

¹⁹ Cincinnatus was a Roman ruler who resigned (ca. 460 BCE) and returned to his farm. TR to Alice Roosevelt, June 29, 1908, in Letterbook, Series 2, 1908, p. 82, quoted in Francis Wilshin, *Historic Resource Study: Sagamore Hill and the Roosevelt Family* (Denver: National Park Service, 1972), p. 125; Forman, "Roosevelt the Husbandman," pp. 174-177; and *Sagamore Hill National Historic Site: Home of Theodore Roosevelt, Oyster Bay, New York* (Lawrenceburg, IN: Creative Company, 2000), p. 7.

²⁰ Forman, "Roosevelt the Husbandman," p. 174.

²¹ Examples of the elaborate gardens can be seen in Cynthia Zaitzevsky, *Long Island Landscapes and the Women Who Designed Them* (New York: SPLIA and W. W. Norton, 2009).

²² Loren Palmer to Roosevelt, July 8, 1918, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Series 1, reel 283; TR to Palmer, July 15, 1918, *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, Vol. VIII, p. 1352.

²³ Linda Milano, "Theodore Roosevelt on Civil Rights: African Americans, Employees," Theodore Roosevelt Association website. (The account errs, however, in stating that Amos went from the White House to the Burns Detective Agency; see note 18 above.) The 1910 federal manuscript census reports both Lee and Amos living on the Sagamore Hill estate with their wives; each had been married a year, and their wives had been born in New York and New Jersey, respectively. Most of the household servants at Sagamore Hill who lived on the third floor inside the main house were single Irish immigrant women. See Naylor, Appendix 5, "Census Data on Sagamore Hill Residents and Employees 1900-1930," in *Theodore Roosevelt and His Sagamore Hill Home*, pp. 145-146.

Charles Lee died in 1934; his widow Clara was president of the Clara Lee Women's Republican Club of Oyster Bay and continued to serve for the rest of her life (she died in 1947) as a maid for Edith. On Amos and the Lees, see Kathleen Dalton, "The People of Sagamore Hill," in *Theodore Roosevelt and His Sagamore Hill Home*, pp. 111-115.

²⁴ Nancy Roosevelt Jackson, "A Sense of Style: Remembering Edith Kermit Roosevelt," *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, 1999, p. 4.

²⁵ Kathleen Dalton, *Theodore Roosevelt, A Strenuous*

Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), p. 123; the quotation from FDR is the initial epigraph in Sylvia Jukes Morris, *Edith Kermit Roosevelt: Portrait of a First Lady* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980), unpaginated. See also Natalie A. Naylor, "To the Manor Born: Theodore Roosevelt, Country Gentleman, and Edith Kermit Roosevelt, the Lady of Sagamore Hill," a forthcoming article.

²⁶ Morris, *Edith Kermit Roosevelt*, p. 86; Dalton, *TR: A Strenuous Life*, p. 123.

²⁷ Theodore Roosevelt and Joseph Bucklin Bishop, *Theodore Roosevelt's Letters to His Children* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), pp. 52-54. *Theodore Roosevelt's Letters to His Children* has been reprinted in *A Bully Father*, with a biographical essay and notes by Joan Paterson Kerr (New York: Random House, 1995).

²⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography* (1913, reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1985), p. 357.

²⁹ Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., *All in the Family*, pp. 88-90.

³⁰ TR, *Autobiography*, p. 355.

³¹ Amos, *Hero to His Valet*, p. 81. Additional evidence on chopping trees is in Naylor, "A Working Farm," in *Theodore Roosevelt and His Sagamore Hill Home*, p. 96.

³² Archibald Willingham Butt, *Taft and Roosevelt: The Intimate Letters of Archie Butt, Military Aide*, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1930), Vol. 2, pp. 831-832.

³³ *Harper's Weekly*, September 27, 1902, p. 1342.

³⁴ *New York Times*, June 19, 1910.

³⁵ *New York Times*, July 5, 1906.

³⁶ TR to Ethel Roosevelt, June 11, 1906, in *TR's Letters to His Children*, p. 165.

³⁷ John R. Lancos, "Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace," and David H. Wallace, "Sagamore Hill: An Interior History," in Naylor et al., eds., *TR: Many-Sided American*, pp. 524, 530-531.

³⁸ See sidebar on p. 19.

Theodore Roosevelt's Legacy on Long Island: Sites, Buildings, and Memorials

Oyster Bay

- Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, including Old Orchard Museum, Cove Neck
- Bust of TR in front of Town Hall West, 74 Audrey Avenue (across from post office), c. 1983
- Grave of TR and Edith Roosevelt in Youngs Memorial Cemetery, Cove Road
- Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center, 134 Cove Road
- WPA sculptures and mural (1937) in the Oyster Bay Post Office, 1 Shore Avenue: bust of TR; bas reliefs, fresco mural of TR with his children in 1900
- Statue of Theodore Roosevelt on Horseback (*Rough Rider*), by A. Phimister Proctor, 1 Pine Hollow Road (Route 106)/South Street, at junction with Lexington Avenue and Berry Hill Road
- Theodore Roosevelt Association, 20 Audrey Avenue; office of national organization chartered in 1920 to perpetuate the memory and ideals of Theodore Roosevelt
- Roosevelt Memorial Park, adjacent to train station, fronts on Oyster Bay Harbor (can enter from Railroad Avenue); includes a TR Monument Assemblage of a plaque and 24 stones
- Theodore Roosevelt Marina—off South Street
- Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School, 150 West Main Street
- Christ Episcopal Church, 61 East Main Street; TR and his family attended services here; memorial plaques
- First Presbyterian Church, East Main Street; historical marker (TR and his parents attended here)
- Canterbury Ales, Oyster Bar and Grill restaurant, 46 Audrey Avenue; extensive vintage TR photographs on walls

Mineola – Nassau County Seat

- Theodore Roosevelt Executive and Legislative Building, 1550 Franklin Avenue (old Nassau County Courthouse); building renamed in 2002, and restoration completed in 2008
- WPA Mural (1938): Gov. Theodore Roosevelt laying the cornerstone of the courthouse, 1900, in rotunda of TR building
- Theodore Roosevelt*, statue by Paulanship, in front of TR building, unveiled July 2008

Roosevelt – community named for TR in 1902 when it established a post office; many organizations and businesses in the Roosevelt community bear the name Roosevelt

Other Locations

- Theodore Roosevelt Nature Center, Ocean Parkway, Jones Beach (West End 1), South Shore
- Theodore Roosevelt Hall, built 1957, Hofstra University, Hempstead; 1918 portrait of TR by Princess Vilma Lwoff-Parlaghy is in the second floor corridor
- Theodore Roosevelt Hall (1965), Farmingdale State College, SUNY, Melville/Broadhollow Roads, East Farmingdale
- Theodore Roosevelt [Suffolk] County Park (1,185 acres), Route 27 (Montauk Highway), Montauk; site of Camp Wikoff where Rough Riders disbanded; Camp Wikoff exhibits are on the lower level of the "Third House," which was the camp headquarters
- Theodore Roosevelt United States Courthouse, Cadman Plaza, Brooklyn; the U.S. District Court was renamed for TR in 2008

Family and Relatives

- "Meadow Croft," restored 1891 home of John Ellis Roosevelt (cousin of TR), Middle Road, Sayville (South Shore); open Sunday afternoons, June-October
- Roosevelt Field Shopping Mall: on site of Roosevelt Field airfield, which was named in 1918 (eastern end)/1929 (western end) for TR's son, Quentin Roosevelt, killed in WW I
- BG [Brigadier General] Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., United States Army Reserve Center, Oak Street, Uniondale; named for TR's son who served in both world wars and received Medal of Honor for leading his troops on D-Day at Utah Beach; died in 1944
- Derby-Hall Memorial Bandstand, Townsend Park, Oyster Bay (between post office and town hall); reconstructed bandstand, dedicated in 1980 to TR's daughter Ethel Roosevelt Derby and her godson, Leonard Hall (son of TR's coachman), who became a U.S. Congressman
- Adams-Derby House, Derby Court (off Lexington Avenue), home of Ethel Roosevelt Derby from 1913 until she died in 1977; centerpiece of condominium Landmark Colony; private

THE ROOSEVELT COUSINS OF OYSTER BAY: A PERSONAL FAMILY MEMOIR

by Elizabeth E. Roosevelt

(a symposium presentation on Saturday, October 25, 2008, in Glen Cove, New York, during the eighty-ninth Annual Meeting of the Theodore Roosevelt Association)

Oyster Bay, especially Cove Neck, was a summer place for our family until after World War II. It began when Cornelius Van Schaack Roosevelt started coming to Oyster Bay for the summer in his sixties. But it really got started when one of his sons, my great-grandfather James Alfred Roosevelt, bought a large tract of land on Cove Neck in 1880 and commissioned the building of Yellow Banks. Soon he was joined by his first cousin, Dr. J. West Roosevelt, who built Mohannes to the north of Yellow Banks; his daughter Leila (Mrs. Reeve-Merritt), who built Elfland, now on the Sagamore Hill road; and, of course, his cousin Theodore Roosevelt, who built Sagamore Hill. After that there were cousins all over Cove Neck in the summer.

The family has a curious custom of lining everybody up by height on special occasions and taking photographs. So a picture taken at Sagamore Hill in 1897 shows the children of W. Emlen Roosevelt (James Alfred's son): They were Christine, George, Margaret, John, and Philip. The children of Alfred Roosevelt (James Alfred's other son) were Elfreda, James, and Katherine.

Dr. J. West Roosevelt's children were Oliver, Nicholas, and Lorraine, and Theodore Roosevelt's children were Alice, Ted, Kermit, Ethel, and Archie. So there were plenty of people to play with, ranging in age from three to fifteen.

In good weather they came together to picnic, swim, sail, row, and play tennis (there were two courts, one at Sagamore Hill and one at Yellow Banks). Later, in 1927, an indoor court would be built on what was then the Merle-Smith property. Everyone rode horseback. A hard and fast rule that has come down to the present is that no one could go out in a boat until he or she could swim.

When the weather was rainy they read, played chess, and roughhoused in the family barns, and sometimes the girls organized amateur theatricals. I was told that my father John (called Jack) didn't like acting and at one point painted his hair green so that he couldn't appear.



Roosevelt cousins in July 1897. From left: Archie, Nicholas, Oliver, Ethel, Philip, Kermit, Ted, Katherine, Lorraine, Margaret, John K., George, Elfreda, James, Alice, Christine.



Theodore Roosevelt Association

Roosevelt cousins in September 1908. From left: Quentin, Archie, Lorraine, Nicholas, Oliver, Ethel, Margaret, Ted, Christine, George, Philip, John K.

Everybody memorized reams of poetry, favorites being poems by Longfellow and Kipling. These were poems that stayed with you for life; men told of cousin Ted and cousin Archie quoting Kipling to their troops on the battlefield. Until I went away to boarding school, I thought everyone could recite poetry by heart; it's a great way to entertain yourself.

The family photograph taken in 1908 shows some of the same people grown a good deal bigger. Jack, George, and Philip are now over six feet tall, and their sisters Christine and Margaret are grown young ladies. Ted, Ethel, Archie, and Quentin are in the picture, as are Oliver, Nick, and Lorraine. Elfreda had married in 1905 to Lord Orme Clark and had gone off to Bibary Court in England to live.

In 1909 both Christine and Katherine married, Christine to a regular army officer she had met on a visit to Cuba, and Katherine to Stanley Reeve of Boston. Margaret died in 1914, having contracted typhoid on a trip to Brazil with Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt. In the same year George married his first wife Julia Addison, and in 1916 his brother John married Elise Weinacht.

World War One would see many of the cousins engaged and far from Oyster Bay. George would serve in the army on the Mexican border against Pancho Villa, and among other things would help deliver a baby, who would be named Jesus Christ George Emlen Roosevelt in his honor. John, who had become involved with the cable company in which the family owned an interest, served first in the signal corps and then transferred to the navy, where he spent a lot of time trying to work out a way to get airplanes across the ocean to France. Philip and Quentin

both joined the air force and went to France to fly. There Quentin was killed, and Philip gained the Croix de Guerre with palm presented to him by Marshal Pétain. Ted, Kermit, and Archie all fought in the Great War. Kermit participated first with the British army in Mesopotamia. All served with distinction.

After the war many of the cousins married, and some moved away from Long Island. Those who remained produced another generation of children who spent summers in Oyster Bay.

Theodore, Jr., and his wife Eleanor lived at Old Orchard when not involved elsewhere. Two of their children, Kermit and Quentin, also had houses on Cove Neck. Ethel, who married Dr. Richard Derby, lived in Oyster Bay Village with their four children, and Archie and his wife Gracie moved to Cold Spring Harbor.

George and Julia lived at Gracewood just down the road from Sagamore Hill. It still had the family farm with cows, pigs, and poultry up until World War II. Their children Margaret, Medora, George, and Julian all grew up on Cove Neck. They were a pretty rowdy crowd.

In 1925 Philip married his second cousin Jean who came from the South Shore, and they were given Dolonor as a wedding present. Their children Philippa, P. James, and John E. grew up there.

My father John K. and my mother Elise did not move to Cove Neck until 1937 after Grandmother (Mrs. W. Emlen Roosevelt) died. There were five of us children in the Yellow Banks house



The schooner Mistress.



The square-rigged friendship sloop Nancy Belle.

until my sister Virginia married in 1939, and my brothers Emlen and Alfred went off to World War II.

Between the wars and even after World War II, sailing was a main preoccupation of these families. George had the schooner *Mistress* built in Nova Scotia in 1928. He sailed it in the 1931 Transatlantic race and then in the Fastnet race and came in third in both. Between 1930 and 1945 he sailed it with some family members in the race to Bermuda.

My father, George's brother John, owned a variety of boats. These included the six-meter *Mist*, the New York 32 *Esmeralda* which he raced to Bermuda, and his last boat, a friendship sloop which he square-rigged, named *Nancy Belle*.

Philip was very successful in sailing small boats on Long Island Sound: fifteen-footers, an S boat named *Suriname*, and a Seawanhaka 21 named *Capitana*. He became president of the North American Yacht Racing Union in 1936 and Commodore of Seawanhaka in 1939.

My own recollections of growing up on Cove Neck begin with the 1938 hurricane, which my brother Peter and I watched from Yellow Banks.

The Flood strewed wrecks upon the grass.
The ebb swept out the flocks to sea.

As the poet suggested, it was very exciting for small children.

World War II saw the Yellow Banks property turned into a subsistence farm. The garden, which had always produced large quantities of vegetables, now produced them to be frozen—then a new process. Three cows provided milk and butter. There were also pigs, chickens, and a couple of sheep. All of us children were kept busy working on the property along with the regular gardening help.

After the war Quentin brought Frances, his bride, back to Oyster Bay. He died in a plane crash in Hong Kong in 1948, and Frances and their three girls, Sandy, Anna, and Susan, came to live at Old Orchard with the girls' grandmother, Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.

At this point those who remained lived here year-round, and my cousin P. James even moved his business office to Oyster Bay. But gradually, unlike our resident geese, the cousins migrated away, some going west. Some others died. Now, although there are still plenty of us sprinkled around the country, I am the last one left on Cove Neck.



Elizabeth E. Roosevelt, a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Theodore Roosevelt Association, taught U.S. and European history at the high school level for thirty-two years.

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE EIGHTY-NINTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT ASSOCIATION IN OYSTER BAY AND GLEN COVE, NEW YORK, OCTOBER 24-27, 2008

theme: "TR's Hometown: To Understand the Man,
You Must Understand the Place"

all photos by Art Koch



*FBI Special Agent Craig McLaughlin speaking at the
Friday luncheon.*



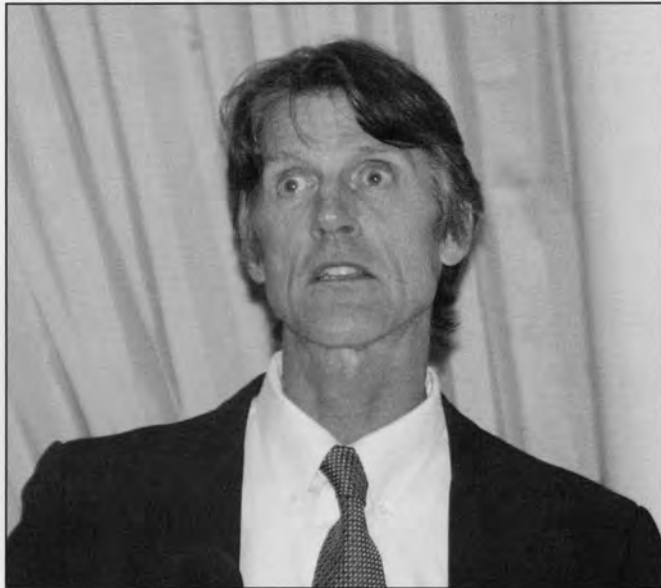
*TRA Immediate Past Chair Norman Parsons, chief planner of the 2008
Annual Meeting and Chair of the Host Committee.*



Photos from Saturday's TR Sesquicentennial Parade in Oyster Bay.



More photos from the TR Sesquicentennial Parade.



Photos from Saturday's Annual Dinner and Awards Banquet.



Photos from Sunday's visit to Sagamore Hill.



Photos from Monday's presidential wreath laying at Youngs Memorial Cemetery.



Theodore Roosevelt Association MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Theodore Roosevelt Association, chartered by Act of Congress in 1920, invites anyone interested in helping perpetuate Theodore Roosevelt's memory and ideals to become a member. The TRA has given the American people Theodore Roosevelt's Birthplace in New York City, his home at Sagamore Hill in Oyster Bay, Long Island, and Theodore Roosevelt Island in Washington, D.C. Membership includes a subscription to the *TRA Journal*, published quarterly, and invitations to Association functions.

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*Sagamore Hill,
Oyster Bay, New York, opened in 1953*

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THEODORE ROOSEVELT IN FOCUS AT TRANSATLANTIC STUDIES ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

The annual conference of the Transatlantic Studies Association for 2008 took place in Dundee, Scotland, at the West Park Conference Centre from July 7 to July 10. The TSA was established in 2002 and has since convened for a conference every year in England, Scotland, or Ireland.

Multiple panels were organized for the Dundee conference in the following broad categories: (1) History, Diplomacy, and International Relations; (2) Literature, Arts, Culture, and Media; (3) NATO; (4) American Empire and the Roosevelt Legacy; and (5) Planning, Regeneration, and Environment. Many stimulating papers were presented by panelists and by speakers at the three plenary sessions. Exactly one hundred participants (called “delegates”) were listed in the official programme. A number of papers in the “American Empire and the Roosevelt Legacy” category were subsequently published in the quarterly journal *Diplomacy & Statecraft*. Versions of two of

those papers are included in this issue of the *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal*: “Theodore Roosevelt and Foreign Policy: The Greatest of All U.S. Presidents” (originally “For the Present and the Future: The Well-Conceived, Successful, and Farsighted Statecraft of President Theodore Roosevelt”) by William N. Tilchin (on pages 30-38), and “Theodore Roosevelt and the Transoceanic Naval Arms Race, 1897-1909” (originally “A Whiff of Cordite: Theodore Roosevelt and the Transoceanic Naval Arms Race, 1897-1909”) by Carl Cavanagh Hodge (on pages 39-51).

The West Park Conference Centre proved to be an excellent venue for the gathering. The accommodations were pleasant and comfortable, the food was consistently of a high quality, and the facilities for dining and socializing and for the panels and plenary sessions were entirely suitable. Moreover, there was plenty of good company, and, especially for those averse to July heat, the weather was cool and refreshing.



Young Scottish bagpiper and dancer and their audience at the West Park Conference Centre prior to the celebratory dinner on July 9, 2008.



Views of the Firth of Tay from Room 155 of the West Park Conference Centre and from a street in Dundee, Scotland.

photos by William N. Tilchin

photos by William N. Tilchin and Carol T. Gilbert

THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND FOREIGN POLICY: THE GREATEST OF ALL U.S. PRESIDENTS¹

by William N. Tilchin

Introduction

The year 2008 is a most appropriate time to undertake an exploration of the remarkable foreign policy of President Theodore Roosevelt and its equally remarkable legacy. After all, 2008 marks both the sesquicentennial of the birth of TR and the centennial of the final full year of his presidency.

In another sense, however, such an exploration actually is long overdue. With some justification, scholars of European history tend to view the first decade of the twentieth century as a late phase in the "century of peace" between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the onset of World War I, with July and August of 1914 marking the true beginning of the twentieth century. But where United States foreign policy is concerned, such a perspective is unsustainable. For the roots of twentieth century U.S. foreign relations, and particularly of U.S. foreign relations as of 1939, lie firmly in the century's opening decade, in the diplomacy of Theodore Roosevelt. Impressively practical and successful in its own era, Rooseveltian statecraft at the same time merits the designation "visionary." Although its core ideas were marginalized for about thirty years after Roosevelt exited the White House, Rooseveltian diplomacy ultimately provided a blueprint for later generations of U.S. leaders, who internalized and acted upon its fundamental precepts.

Three Guiding Precepts

Theodore Roosevelt's foreign policy can be seen as having been guided by three central precepts. While the identification of these precepts is a retrospective historical exercise and does not correspond precisely to Roosevelt's own terminology, a focus on these precepts as a way of comprehending Rooseveltian statecraft is no less valid than it would be if Roosevelt himself had named and defined them. The precepts in question might be labeled the "precept of broadly defined U.S. interests," the "precept of U.S. power," and the "precept of Anglo-American leadership."²

According to the precept of broadly defined U.S. interests, important events occurring around the globe do affect the United States and should be of concern to the country's leaders. It is not only fruitless but also harmful to U.S. interests to try to shield America from major overseas developments, and isolationism therefore is an irrational, self-defeating approach to U.S.

foreign relations. The precept of broadly defined U.S. interests, moreover, is an active one, meaning that the United States should seek to influence and to shape important overseas events to its advantage rather than passively waiting to see what impact such events will have on the United States. Finally, this is a precept that combines components of realism with components of idealism. While primarily emphasizing the former—that is, U.S. and international security—this precept often has been expanded to encompass in addition the promotion of freedom and democratic government and the halting of humanitarian disasters.

The precept of U.S. power is anchored to the recognition of the reality that power is the single most significant factor determining the course of international relations. Thus, a nation needs to be strong militarily in order to defend its inhabitants and uphold its interests. According to this precept, the best way for the United States to avoid war is to be well-prepared for war; hostile nations can be deterred from attacking or challenging the United States if they are convinced that they cannot possibly win, or even accomplish any important political objectives through, a war against America.

The third precept, the precept of Anglo-American leadership, is closely connected to the second. It is grounded in the belief that some nations and peoples have progressed beyond others with respect to their political culture and international conduct, and that the world is far better off if the most advanced nations are also the most powerful. For while less advanced countries are prone to engage in acts of military aggression when they expect to prevail, the most advanced nations can be trusted with a preponderance of power and can be counted on to refrain from selfish imperial adventures and, more generally, to act decently toward weaker nations. In the view of Theodore Roosevelt and many later U.S. Presidents, foremost among the advanced nations have been the United States and Great Britain, two democratic powers whose values, interests, and objectives usually have coincided, and whose twentieth century disagreements were invariably amenable to diplomatic arrangements.

The Rooseveltian Worldview

The fundamentals of Theodore Roosevelt's worldview were already firmly in place by September 1901. Prior to that date Roosevelt had traveled widely and had read and written



Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library

Theodore Roosevelt as assistant secretary of the navy.

and spoken extensively on American foreign policy issues. As assistant secretary of the navy during 1897-1898, he had played a major role in the augmentation in size and capabilities of the U.S. Navy. While the President's international perspectives would evolve in certain ways between 1901 and 1909, the foundations of the worldview with which Roosevelt entered the presidency would remain solidly intact.

As President Roosevelt broadened the definition of U.S. interests, he did so discriminatingly. TR saw the Western Hemisphere and the western Pacific as the two areas of the world most vital to the United States. In particular, he perceived U.S. hegemony in the Caribbean as a self-evident strategic imperative. In other regions Roosevelt was especially attentive to situations where there was conflict, or the potential for conflict, among two or more of the great powers. Although he was an unwavering proponent of the "just war" doctrine, Roosevelt harbored no illusions about the horrors and the unpredictable consequences of war and considered it his moral obligation to do all that he realistically could to prevent or to stop unnecessary great power wars. Even so, Roosevelt was careful and calculating about U.S. involvement in non-vital areas; when contemplating a diplomatic initiative, he always took into account such factors as the relative importance of the issue at hand, domestic political impediments, the likelihood of achieving a desirable outcome, and the repercussions in the event of failure.

Roosevelt's adherence to the precept of U.S. power was accompanied by advocacy of arbitration as a method for resolving international disputes. But in promoting arbitration, TR excluded from that process questions of vital interests, territorial integrity, or national honor; in such cases he was adamant that the United States must be free to act as it saw fit. And he realized that a large modern navy, well-equipped and well-trained, was essential to that freedom of action. The

U.S. Navy was the "big stick" that undergirded Rooseveltian statecraft throughout TR's years in the presidency.

As for the precept of Anglo-American leadership, the cultivation and fortification of a special relationship between the British Empire and the United States was the very cornerstone of Roosevelt's foreign policy. TR was both a proud American nationalist and, in important respects, an internationalist. But as his presidency proceeded, and as his devotion to U.S.-British unity was continually reinforced by events, he became in a sense an *Anglo-American binationalist* as well.⁸ Without reservation, therefore, Roosevelt considered the unrivaled power of the Royal Navy to be an asset to the United States, and in his private correspondence he frequently proclaimed his support for the maintenance by Britain of its overwhelming naval superiority.⁴

The one other power eventually embraced wholeheartedly by Roosevelt was France. TR's initial misgivings about that nation were overcome as a result of the establishment in April 1904 of the Anglo-French *entente cordiale* and the influence of the French ambassador to the U.S., Jean Jules Jusserand, who became a member of Roosevelt's "tennis cabinet" and a valued friend and adviser. As David Haglund explains in a recent article, by 1905 TR "had developed a real affection for France."⁵ For the remainder of his presidency, Roosevelt had a very positive view of French diplomacy, considering it entirely unthreatening and looking upon it as an extremely useful asset to his ongoing efforts to strengthen Anglo-American ties.

In contrast, Roosevelt perceived Germany, Russia, and Japan to be potential enemies of the United States. Not only did their interests often clash with those of the U.S. and Britain, but they had not yet attained America's or Britain's (or France's) level of civilization. Imperial Germany was aggressive and militaristic, while tsarist Russia was reactionary and utterly untrustworthy. Roosevelt's outlook on Japan was more positive, but his respect and admiration for that country were tempered by uncertainty and suspicion regarding its intentions and future course.

Economic concerns, it should be noted, were never very prominent in Roosevelt's foreign policy. Therefore, amicable U.S.-Japan relations always took precedence over the open door for commerce in Manchuria. As for imperialism, it could be justified by strategic considerations and especially by the idealistic imperative of advancing civilization and improving the human condition, but never as a vehicle for economic exploitation. Paternalistic though it may have been, President Roosevelt's policy toward the Philippines demonstrated the sincerity of his concept of benevolent imperialism.

The Rooseveltian Approach

The style in which President Theodore Roosevelt practiced the art of statecraft suited his personality and facilitated the

attainment of his foreign policy objectives. In this regard three points might be emphasized.

First, although he was very ably assisted by Secretaries of State John Hay and Elihu Root, Roosevelt was an energetic chief executive who held strong, well-defined foreign policy views. When dealing with the international matters to which he accorded the highest priority, Roosevelt charted the broad course of American diplomacy and attended personally to the significant details of its execution.

Second, the President generally preferred an informal, personal approach to diplomacy. TR employed a sizable and varying network of American and foreign (especially British) friends and associates as he carried out foreign policy. Even with the small number of overseas U.S. diplomats in whom Roosevelt had great confidence, major communications tended to be in the form of private letters exchanged outside the established channels.

Third, as is well-known (but often misunderstood and caricatured), Roosevelt devised and practiced an approach called "big stick" diplomacy. The five central requirements of big stick diplomacy were to possess a formidable military apparatus, to act justly toward other nations, never to bluff, to strike only if prepared to strike hard, and to allow an honorable adversary to save face in defeat. Big stick diplomacy was a particularly striking manifestation of the precept of U.S. power.⁶

Three Phases of Presidential Diplomacy

Consistently adhering to the three precepts previously introduced, President Theodore Roosevelt defined and pursued his foreign policy agenda with consummate skill and effectiveness. Roosevelt's presidential diplomacy is perhaps best understood as unfolding in three rather distinct phases. During the period 1901-1903 the president's focus was on the Western Hemisphere; during the years 1904-1906 he can be viewed as a global activist for peace, stability, and U.S. advantage; and during 1907-1909 Rooseveltian statecraft aimed at strengthening an already solid partnership with Britain and at achieving an understanding with Japan.⁷ Although all three of the precepts under consideration were actively in play during each of the three phases just identified, one might observe that the precept of U.S. power took center stage during the opening phase, that the precept of broadly defined U.S. interests was most sharply in focus during the middle phase, and that the precept of Anglo-American leadership, always a driving force, received its fullest expression during the final phase of President Roosevelt's foreign policy.

Right from the outset of his presidency, Roosevelt was determined to establish U.S. preeminence in the Western Hemisphere. As he pursued this ambitious objective, the biggest foreign policy issues for TR during the period 1901-1903 were

the acquisition of a canal route across the isthmus of Panama and the resolution of conflicts with Germany over its Venezuelan intervention and with Great Britain over the disputed boundary between Alaska and Canada. All the while—indeed, throughout his presidency—the naval historian and naval expert President was building new ships for and improving equipment and training in the U.S. Navy to enhance U.S. security and back up his far-reaching diplomatic agenda.

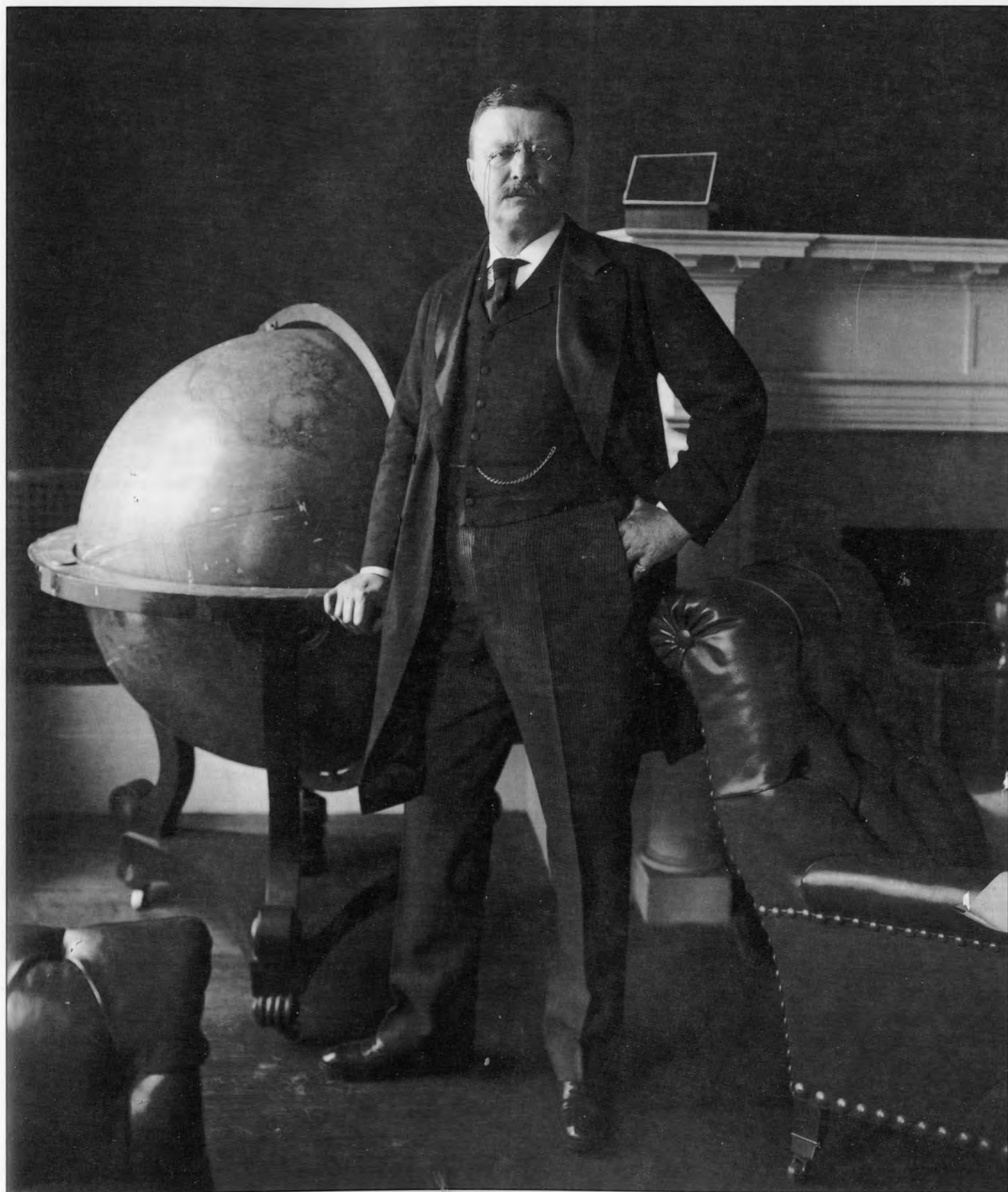
Roosevelt was not to be denied his trans-isthmian canal. Winning Senate ratification in November 1901 of the second Anglo-American Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, which authorized the United States to build, control, and fortify a canal, TR soon entered into negotiations with Colombia. Determining in 1903 that Colombia was negotiating in bad faith and obstructing his cherished project, in November Roosevelt opportunistically took advantage of the strong and rising secessionist ferment in Colombian-ruled Panama in order to secure U.S. control of a canal zone. The President deployed U.S. naval forces to prevent Colombia from suppressing the Panamanian Revolution and then negotiated an extremely favorable treaty with newly independent Panama, which became a U.S. protectorate.

One of Roosevelt's classic displays of big stick diplomacy occurred during the Venezuelan crisis of 1902-1903. Perceiving a German challenge to the Monroe Doctrine, TR ordered a battleship squadron to the waters near Venezuela, insisted on an arbitrated settlement, and privately issued two timely and stern ultimatums to Germany, which finally capitulated to his demands.

The Alaska boundary dispute posed a unique challenge for Roosevelt because, on the one hand, he considered Canada's claim to be outrageous and therefore saw the question as one of national honor; on the other hand, he had been striving assiduously ever since entering the White House to advance the cause of Anglo-American harmony. Through diligent and adroit hands-on diplomacy, Roosevelt managed to prevail on the Alaskan border without undercutting the progress he had been making in Anglo-American relations. In this case he applied big stick diplomacy in a quarrel with a friend. After dispatching U.S. troops without fanfare to the disputed region in 1902, Roosevelt, although absolutely unyielding on the core issue (an unbroken U.S. littoral spanning the entire Alaskan panhandle), engineered U.S. concessions on secondary aspects of the disagreement in a successful effort to minimize the scope and the sting of the British defeat.⁸

The second phase of Rooseveltian statecraft was equally fruitful, even as the stage became much bigger. From 1904 to 1906 the Caribbean was joined in the forefront by Europe, East Asia, and northern Africa. During these years the precept of broadly defined U.S. interests was vividly on display.

By the onset of 1904, Roosevelt's commitment to U.S.



Theodore Roosevelt at the White House in 1903.

dominance in the Caribbean had been magnified by his concerns about the security of the future Panama Canal and by his determination to dissuade other powers, especially Germany, from intervening in Latin America for debt collecting or any other purpose. Motivated by these considerations and by escalating chaos in the Dominican Republic, TR introduced the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, proclaiming the obligation of the United States to counteract "gross wrongdoing" and to "keep order" to the south of its borders.⁹ In 1905, reluctant though he was to exercise this new authority, Roosevelt felt compelled to and did arrange for a U.S. customs receivership in the Dominican Republic. In line with TR's hopes and expectations, Dominican financial solvency and political stability were the principal results of this limited U.S. intervention.

As for more distant lands, Roosevelt was increasingly suspicious of Russia's designs in East Asia and Germany's ambitions in Europe and Africa. Thus the President was very favorably disposed toward the Anglo-Japanese Alliance agreements of 1902 and 1905 and the Anglo-French *entente cordiale* established in 1904. TR viewed the former as a check on Russia and the latter as a counterweight to the growth of German power. Each he perceived as advantageous to Britain and also, therefore, to the United States.

Despite his decidedly pro-Japan sympathies during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, Roosevelt saw this war as a danger both to East Asian stability and to the new understanding between Britain (allied with Japan) and France (allied with Russia). So he hoped for an opportunity to insert himself as a mediator, and when that opportunity presented itself in the spring of 1905 following stunning Japanese military successes, he stepped forward. Discreet and agile preliminary work by TR enabled him to arrange for the convening in early August of a Russo-Japanese peace conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Then the President, operating from the "Summer White House," his permanent home in Oyster Bay, New York, proceeded to overcome formidable obstacles as he shepherded the conference to the triumphant conclusion of the Treaty of Portsmouth of September 5. Having ended a bloody great power war, and having reconstituted an East Asian balance of power, Roosevelt was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 1906.

Back in the spring of 1905, while the Russo-Japanese War was still raging, Germany sought to wreck the Anglo-French entente by provoking a crisis over Morocco. This crisis unfolded in two phases. During the first and more dangerous phase, lasting until July 1905, Roosevelt, conducting diplomacy completely out of the public eye, was instrumental in preventing war by setting up a peace conference in Algieras, Spain. During the second phase, the Algieras Conference of January-April 1906, at which Roosevelt was represented by the seasoned diplomat Henry White, the President outmaneuvered Germany to bring about a pro-French outcome, after which he characteristically did his best to disguise the reality and thereby soften the blow.



President Roosevelt in his study at Sagamore Hill in 1905.

It is not unreasonable to evaluate Roosevelt's Moroccan mediation as comparable in importance to bringing peace to Russia and Japan. For the highly flammable Moroccan crisis very conceivably could have brought on World War I nine years ahead of history's schedule.

The years 1904-1906 mark the most intense and most significant period for Rooseveltian statecraft. TR boldly declared U.S. predominance in the Caribbean and acted effectively to substantiate his declaration. On a grander stage, the President established himself as a mediator par excellence by ending one major war and preventing another. Roosevelt's well-conceived, well-executed, activist statesmanship had thrust the United States into the center of global diplomacy, in the process winning respect for and expanding the influence of the country and its leader.

More so than ever before, Anglo-American relations constituted the focal point of Roosevelt's foreign policy during 1907-1909, the third phase of his presidential diplomacy. The outcome of Roosevelt's two major mediations of 1905-1906—along with the President's forgiving attitude toward Britain's relative unhelpfulness during those crises and the advent of Lord Grey as Britain's foreign secretary under a new Liberal Party government—had served to fortify Anglo-American ties.

Now, during the final twenty-six months of the twenty-sixth U.S. presidency, Roosevelt resolved some differences in U.S.-British relations and unambiguously expressed his attachment to Britain in private letters and public statements.

Periodic Anglo-American tensions over the Newfoundland fisheries dating back to the eighteenth century were at long last settled. When the controversy had flared up again in 1905, Roosevelt had privately faulted the U.S. Senate, and his subsequent actions accorded with this outlook. He insisted on American "patience and forbearance" and, when negotiations reached an impasse in the summer of 1907, he proposed and gained British agreement on submitting the dispute to arbitration by the Hague Tribunal, which eventually rendered a compromise verdict.¹⁰

Roosevelt likewise displayed impressive "patience and forbearance" as he worked with the British government to defuse the awkward and troublesome Jamaica incident of 1907. Following a devastating earthquake and fire in Kingston, Jamaica, in January, an American naval squadron providing relief in response to urgent British requests for assistance was treated rudely by the anti-American British governor of Jamaica and was compelled to depart. Notwithstanding his great pride in the U.S. Navy and his sensitivity about insults to the national honor of the United States, Roosevelt unhesitatingly accepted Britain's prompt disavowal of the governor's behavior and took the leading American role in the execution of a joint U.S.-British policy of damage-control diplomacy that ultimately succeeded in isolating the offending governor and downplaying the episode as an aberration.¹¹ And Roosevelt was equally effective in managing the diplomacy of a less dangerous but still problematic Anglo-American controversy stemming from the 1908 Summer Olympic Games in London.¹² In one private letter to a British correspondent pertaining to the Olympics dispute, TR described this matter as "exceedingly unfortunate" and declared: "Throughout the time I have been President I have steadily striven for a better sympathy and understanding between the United States and Great Britain."¹³

By 1907 Roosevelt had achieved his objective of turning the U.S. Navy, the world's sixth in size in 1901, into the second largest. He had also overseen substantial improvements in training, readiness, and overall efficiency. But he had absolutely no intention to challenge Britain's naval supremacy. Echoing earlier such pronouncements, TR wrote these words to his close English friend Arthur Lee during the summer of 1908: "I think I have become almost as anxious as you are to have the British fleet kept up to the highest point of efficiency" and in its "present position of relative power. . . . It is a great guaranty for the peace of the world."¹⁴

Having long viewed the mammoth British Empire as a decidedly positive force for the advancement of civilization, and seeing an opportunity both to shore up British morale and



Theodore Roosevelt and his new friend Arthur Lee in Tampa, Florida, in June 1898.

to bolster the Anglo-American special relationship, Roosevelt publicly lauded British rule in India in a major speech delivered in January 1909. The President's address achieved its intended effect, as British leaders and citizens were enormously appreciative of Roosevelt's unalloyed declarations of solidarity.¹⁵

A particularly noteworthy and admirable accomplishment of Rooseveltian statecraft after 1906 was overcoming difficult impediments and establishing friendly U.S. relations with Japan. While unequivocally critical of anti-Japanese discrimination and violence in California, by 1908 Roosevelt was able to alleviate tensions through a sensitively worded "Gentlemen's Agreement" sharply curtailing Japanese immigration to the United States. Additionally, in his single most illustrious act of big stick diplomacy, Roosevelt brought his large, modern navy to bear on the situation by sending the "Great White Fleet" on a fourteen-month world cruise beginning in December 1907. A clear message was sent, yet not a threatening word was spoken; indeed, Japan invited the fleet to its shores and extended it a grand welcome in October 1908. And the following month TR's quest for amicable and respectful U.S.-Japan relations culminated in the Root-Takahira Agreement, a climactic triumph for Roosevelt's Japanese policy.

Roosevelt's Immediate Legacy

So, as Theodore Roosevelt vacated the presidency in March 1909, he left behind an exemplary record: a much stronger U.S. Navy; greatly increased U.S. international stature and influence; a seasoned friendship between Great Britain and the United States; unchallenged U.S. hegemony in the Caribbean alongside ample progress in constructing the Panama Canal; stable relations with all three of America's major potential enemies (including a wide-ranging understanding with Japan); steady advances toward self-government in the Philippines; and, in general, seven-and-a-half years of peace for the United States (aside from the final suppression of the waning Filipino insurrection during Roosevelt's first several months as President), plus the cessation of one great power war and the forestalling of another. It is difficult to imagine the leadership of U.S. foreign policy being passed on to a successor in a more promising condition.

Roosevelt's Long-Term Legacy

Contrary to a common misconception, President Theodore Roosevelt was not an empire builder. Aside from acquiring the strategically vital ten-mile-wide Panama Canal Zone, he added no territory to the domain of the United States. Moreover, TR willingly transferred to Canada a substantial quantity of U.S. territory in the Alaskan boundary settlement, and he worked consistently for the eventual transfer of the Philippines to the people of that archipelago.¹⁶

Furthermore, Roosevelt often has inaccurately been blamed for the rampant military interventionism in Latin America of Presidents Taft, Wilson, Harding, and Coolidge and for the economic imperialism practiced in that region by those and later U.S. Presidents. It is true that the Roosevelt Corollary provided theoretical cover for the United States' aggressive Latin American policies of the 1910s and 1920s, but that was unquestionably not its purpose. Roosevelt himself intervened under his corollary only in the Dominican Republic and Cuba, and both interventions were requested by indigenous authorities, limited in their scope, and deftly carried out. TR was determined to minimize Latin American resentment of the United States, and to that end Secretary of State Root undertook a very successful goodwill tour of seven Latin American countries during the summer and fall of 1906. Roosevelt detested those he regularly referred to derisively as "plutocrats," and thus, as noted previously, he was hostile to the idea of economic imperialism and never engaged in it.

The truly meaningful long-term legacy of the presidential statecraft of Theodore Roosevelt—the legacy he intended and the legacy that ultimately gained a firm hold on the foreign policy of the United States—was not a legacy of U.S. imperialism but rather one of U.S. power and influence. In essence, the Rooseveltian legacy was the broad acceptance by U.S. leaders

and citizens of the three guiding precepts under discussion in this article.

By conceiving and implementing a U.S. foreign policy grounded in the precept of broadly defined U.S. interests, the precept of U.S. power, and the precept of Anglo-American leadership, Theodore Roosevelt was well ahead of his time. Woodrow Wilson accepted the first precept only insofar as he sought to spread liberal democracy; he largely rejected the security component of that precept, was ambivalent about the precept of U.S. power, and devalued the Anglo-American partnership. And to a great extent, William Howard Taft, Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover—and even Franklin Roosevelt himself during the first half of his presidency—turned away from TR's guiding precepts. It would take the disastrous failure of isolationism and appeasement and the terrible experience of the Second World War to revive TR's way of thinking about U.S. foreign relations and to bring his outlook into the mainstream, where it has been ever since.

Fortunately—and this too can be seen as a part of Theodore Roosevelt's legacy—the Republican Party, heavily isolationist in the 1920s and 1930s and in some danger of reverting to that condition in the immediate aftermath of World War II, came under the control of its internationalist (and Rooseveltian) elements with Dwight Eisenhower's victory over Robert Taft in 1952. This was a crucial development in modern U.S. foreign relations, for the containment policy articulated by George Kennan and instituted by President Harry Truman in 1946-1947 was a long-range strategy that could prevail only if there was fundamental continuity in American foreign policy. And indeed, as it turned out, bipartisanship with regard to core principles was essential to the eventual U.S. triumph in the Cold War.

It is probably unnecessary to observe that the eventual broad acceptance of Theodore Roosevelt's earlier way of thinking about U.S. foreign relations does not mean that U.S. foreign policy since 1939 can be characterized as thoroughly Rooseveltian. TR was so successful as a diplomatist because he combined lucid, sophisticated strategic perspectives with attention to detail and a high degree of competence in the realm of execution. Setting this blend of attributes as the standard, one would be able to identify only a small number of genuinely Rooseveltian U.S. statesmen in the post-World War II decades. The list might include the team of Harry Truman, George Marshall, and Dean Acheson, who forged the containment policy and yet reached the critical decision not to make a major commitment to Chiang Kaishek's Chinese Nationalists, and Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz, whose wise and skillful stewardship of U.S. diplomacy during pivotal periods has elevated their historical stature.

Shifting focus to the twenty-first century—with due regard for the reticence of historians about passing judgment



George P. Shultz, Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993)

Secretary of State George Shultz.

on contemporary individuals and events—it appears that President George W. Bush and his leading foreign policy advisers fell far short of the Rooseveltian standard. This disparity is not the result of a turning away from Roosevelt's precepts, for Bush endorsed all three. And it seems more than likely that a post-September 11, 2001, Rooseveltian foreign policy would have encompassed a forward defense strategy against Islamic extremism and (though here the uncertainty is greater) the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. But President Theodore Roosevelt invariably thought carefully about costs and benefits before undertaking major foreign policy initiatives, brilliantly coordinated actions with desired outcomes, refrained from public bluster, and conducted diplomacy, both personally and through talented and reliable intermediaries, with exemplary discernment and finesse. Bush's failures in these regards undermined the struggle against Islamic radicalism, severely damaged the U.S. economy, and unnecessarily tarnished the United States' international reputation. Among post-World War II U.S. Presidents, perhaps only Lyndon Johnson and Jimmy Carter have approached or surpassed the inadequacies of Bush in their conduct of foreign policy.

Still, it should be emphasized that Theodore Roosevelt's foreign policy legacy has proven to be profound and enduring.

It is a legacy of U.S. engagement and power and influence, a legacy of a fruitful long-term partnership between the United States and Great Britain, a legacy of confronting aggressors, a legacy of constructive U.S. activities in defense of freedom and justice and U.S. security and international stability. To be sure, the United States often has come up short in these areas. But to imagine the grim course of world history in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in the absence of American power and leadership is to grasp the enormous importance of the work of Theodore Roosevelt and of those later figures who capably restored and carried forward his legacy.

Closing Summary

"It is difficult to escape the conclusion," this historian has claimed in previous writings, "that in the foreign policy arena Roosevelt was probably the greatest of all U.S. Presidents."¹⁷ Such a laudatory interpretation is built on an assessment of both the record achieved by Rooseveltian diplomacy during the years of Roosevelt's presidency and the long-term significance of TR's statecraft. In its own time Theodore Roosevelt's foreign policy success grew out of a sophisticated understanding of a complex international environment, a well-conceived perspective on America's interests within that environment, and a multitude of attributes in the realm of execution that usually enabled Roosevelt, even in the most challenging cases, to attain the results he was seeking. And with regard to its long-range importance, Rooseveltian diplomacy anticipated the type of foreign policy approach that would become and has remained the foundation for the practice of statecraft by many Republican and Democratic Presidents and their most influential advisers from 1939 to the present day.



Endnotes

¹ With minor revisions, this article is a reproduction of a paper prepared for and delivered on July 8, 2008, at the annual conference of the Transatlantic Studies Association in Dundee, Scotland. A version of this article was published in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 19, No. 4, December 2008, pp. 658-670, with the title "For the Present and the Future: The Well-Conceived, Successful, and Farsighted Statecraft of President Theodore Roosevelt." The original paper, with minor revisions, is presented here with permission from Taylor & Francis Group, the publisher of *Diplomacy & Statecraft*.

² For my initial brief foray into an analysis of this sort, see William N. Tilchin, "Theodore Roosevelt and the Guiding Principles of U.S. Cold War Diplomacy," *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, 1999, pp. 5-7.

³ See, in particular, William N. Tilchin, *Theodore Roosevelt and the British Empire: A Study in Presidential Statecraft* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 227-228.

⁴ See, for example, Theodore Roosevelt to Arthur Lee, June 6, 1905, in Elting E. Morison et al., eds., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* (8 vols., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951-1954), Vol. IV, p. 1207.

⁵ David G. Haglund, "Roosevelt as 'Friend of France'—But Which One?," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 31, No. 5, November 2007, pp. 903-904.

⁶ In a letter of December 1908 to U.S. Ambassador to Britain Whitelaw Reid, Roosevelt discussed big stick diplomacy in these words: "The foreign policy in which I believe is in very fact the policy of speaking softly and carrying a big stick. I want to make it evident to every foreign nation that I intend to do justice; and neither to wrong them nor to hurt their self-respect; but that on the other hand, I am both entirely ready and entirely able to see that our rights are maintained in their turn." TR to Reid, December 4, 1908, *Letters of TR*, Vol. VI, p. 1410. Big stick diplomacy is illustrated and is analyzed in some depth in William N. Tilchin, "Power and Principle: The Statecraft of Theodore Roosevelt," in Cathal J. Nolan, ed., *Ethics and Statecraft: The Moral Dimension of International Affairs* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), pp. 103-107.

⁷ A more detailed narrative pertaining to each of these phases can be found in William N. Tilchin, "Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909)," in Carl C. Hodge and Cathal J. Nolan, eds., *U.S. Presidents and Foreign Policy: From 1789 to the Present* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2007), pp. 193-198.

⁸ Canada, however, was not mollified. See David G. Haglund, "The TR Problem in U.S.-Canada Relations," *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal*, Vol. XXIX, No. 2, Spring 2008, pp. 21-28.

⁹ TR to Elihu Root, June 7, 1904, *Letters of TR*, Vol. IV, pp. 821-822.

¹⁰ Tilchin, *TR and the British Empire*, pp. 94-99, 182-185.

¹¹ Tilchin, *TR and the British Empire*, pp. 117-168, presents a detailed account of the Jamaica incident.

¹² The Olympic Games controversy is recounted in Tilchin, *TR and the British Empire*, pp. 187-208.

¹³ TR to Theodore A. Cook, November 17, 1908, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, reel 352, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., and Harvard College Library, Cambridge, MA.

¹⁴ TR to Lee, August 7, 1908, *Letters of TR*, Vol. VI, p. 1159.

¹⁵ The background to, contents of, and reactions to this speech are discussed in Tilchin, *TR and the British Empire*, pp. 218-225.

¹⁶ It should be added that some writers, including John B. Judis, have erroneously latched onto a single letter of August 1907 to argue that Roosevelt had come to view the U.S. takeover of the Philippines as a mistake and was seeking a way out. Actually, TR remained constant in his outlook on and policy toward that distant colony. Judis, *The Folly of Empire: What George W. Bush Could Learn from Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Scribner, 2004), pp. 2, 67-68.

¹⁷ Originally asserted in William N. Tilchin, "Theodore Roosevelt," in Frank W. Thackeray and John E. Findling, eds., *Statesmen Who Changed the World: A Bio-Bibliographical Dictionary of Diplomacy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), p. 487.

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THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND THE TRANSOCEANIC NAVAL ARMS RACE, 1897-1909¹

by Carl Cavanagh Hodge

“Every Splendid People”

In February 2002 the historian Paul Kennedy commented on the role played by the unprecedented seaborne reach of the United States in the initial stages of Anglo-American operations in Afghanistan. “Nothing has ever existed like this disparity of power,” he observed; “right now all the other navies of the world combined could not dent American naval supremacy.”² This supremacy is the product of a century’s commitment to the development of naval power, accelerated by the strategic demands of two world wars waged far from American shores, followed by forty years of military confrontation with the Soviet Union. It began in earnest with the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, whose ambitious naval policy was driven not by a romantic imperial imagination, but rather by a wholly objective appreciation of the most fundamental imperative of American national security for the near and distant future.³

Other Presidents had been aware of the importance of sea power to the survival and prosperity of the United States. John Adams signed a bill for the creation of the Department of the Navy in April 1798 at a time when the fledgling republic was engaged in the “Quasi-War” with revolutionary France. American ship design, exemplified in frigates such as the USS *Constellation*, was in some important respects superior to that of European navies of the time. Adams’s successor, Thomas Jefferson, nonetheless let Adams’s wooden navy rot in port, a negligence for which the United States paid a heavy price in its struggle with the Barbary States and in the War of 1812. The priority thereafter given to territorial expansion led to the acquisition of California and made the United States a Pacific nation in 1846. Less than a decade later, Millard Fillmore sent Admiral Perry’s fleet to anchor in Edo Bay, opening up a relationship with late-Tokugawa Japan.

Before and after the Civil War, the United States was often strategically precocious, articulating sphere-of-interest doctrines it could have fulfilled only in a happy convergence of circumstance and luck. The republic prospered in a world characterized by the unrivaled naval dominance of a Great Britain whose colonial interests in Canada could be held hostage to good behavior; Westminster’s attitude toward the

United States was circumspect, while that of the City of London was often proprietary.⁴ As long as these two factors obtained, geographic distance from conflict zones across oceans patrolled by the Royal Navy meant that Americans could have national security and prosperity on the cheap. In 1883 Britain could put thirty-eight battleships to sea, and even Italy had seven. Few Americans at that time were aware either of this absurd asymmetry or of their country’s particular dependency on British sea power. One of the few was Theodore Roosevelt, who in his senior year at Harvard had begun work on his first book, *The Naval War of 1812*, published in 1882.⁵

Roosevelt had therefore demonstrated an interest in naval affairs long before his recommendation by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge to the attention of the newly elected Republican President William McKinley in 1897. Lodge correctly recognized in Roosevelt the “battering ram he needed to achieve a powerful navy and a muscular policy of expansion,” but he also appreciated Roosevelt’s formidable intellect and coherent views on urgent matters of national interest.⁶ Among these was the conviction that the United States required a navy capable of supporting an assertive foreign policy. While Roosevelt routinely cited Alfred Thayer Mahan’s *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*, published in 1890, he often did so in order to legitimate conclusions he had drawn prior to the book’s appearance. This is not to say that Roosevelt was uninfluenced by Mahan—the book’s vogue, both in the United States and internationally, made this impossible—but rather that as assistant secretary of the navy in McKinley’s administration Roosevelt made use of Mahan’s reasoning to vindicate his own on the imperatives of American sea power.⁷

Mahan was more responsible than any other single figure for the “new navalism” of the 1890s, the notion that the possession of an oceanic navy represented an indispensable attribute of great power status.⁸ This was a product both of the scholarly rigor Mahan brought to his study of the history of sea power and of the universal and timeless claims he made on behalf of it. Although the means by which England had achieved and maintained sea power was the central theme of the book, its introduction turned to Rome’s victory in the Second Punic War, holding that “it is as defective to omit sea power from the list of principal factors

in the result, as it would be absurd to claim for it an exclusive influence.⁹ Mahan sought and found in national character an explanation for "England's unique and wonderful success as a great colonizing nation,"¹⁰ but the book's concluding remarks turned from character to commerce in a fashion calculated to strike a chord with an American audience:

For two hundred years England has been the great commercial nation of the world. More than any other her wealth has been intrusted [*sic*] to the sea in war as in peace; yet of all nations she has ever been the most reluctant to concede the immunities of commerce and the rights of neutrals. Regarded not as a matter of right, but of policy, history has justified the refusal; and if she maintain her navy in full strength, the future will doubtless repeat the lesson of the past.¹¹

The argument linking expanding commerce and national prosperity with naval capacity, however, found a special resonance in Germany. Germany was already in possession of the most formidable army in the world, a gross national product which doubled every decade, and a population growth of a million a year, yet it lacked access to the blue water which lapped on American Atlantic, Pacific, and Caribbean coasts. Bismarck regarded colonialism as a business for other nations which would hopefully divert enough of their attention and energies away from his plans for Europe, where Germany's position was (industrial and military strength notwithstanding) inherently vulnerable. By the 1880s some of his conservative supporters nevertheless held that the acquisition of overseas colonies was fast becoming an economic necessity, while others observed that the vision of a colonial empire aroused sufficient popular enthusiasm to be of political advantage. Bismarck was additionally advised that tariff protection alone could not revitalize a German industry hungry for new markets; commercial policy needed an entirely new direction. He therefore declared the official protection of the Reich over Lüderitzland, soon to become German South-West Africa, in April 1884, followed promptly by Togo and, in February 1885, German East Africa.

After Bismarck's dismissal in 1890, Wilhelm II put Germany on a more adventurous course.¹² Prodded by nationalist liberals such as Otto Michaelis in the Reichstag and academics such as Max Weber, Wilhelm embraced *Weltpolitik*, the project of transforming Germany from a European to a world power. Germany already had a plan for the development of a fleet in 1873, assigning to its navy the protection of overseas trade and the defense of Germany's limited coastline. The development of a fleet with an offensive capability would require vastly greater expenditure; yet by 1896 the national debate over the construction of battle cruisers prompted from Freiherr von Marschall, secretary of state for foreign affairs, the assertion that "the question of whether Germany should pursue *Weltpolitik* is inextricably linked to another: whether Germany has global interests or has none. This question was decided some

time ago."¹³ In the eyes of the man tasked with the development of a battle fleet, Alfred von Tirpitz, appointed by Wilhelm to the Reich Navy Office in 1897, such a fleet had not only to secure for Germany a status equal to that of Great Britain, but was necessarily to be directed against a Royal Navy whose dominance in the Atlantic Ocean and North Sea could block German access to the high seas. Both Tirpitz and Wilhelm claimed to have devoured Mahan's writings, and in the latter case one wonders whether this may have been literally true.



Großadmiral Alfred von Tirpitz, Secretary of State of the Imperial Naval Office from 1897 to 1916, in 1903.

The U.S. Navy of the 1880s was constituted similarly to the German fleet. It served maritime trade and was supposed, in the event of war, to raid merchant ships of the enemy. Monitors, mines, coastal artillery, and shallow draft warships defended American ports against either invasion or coastal blockade, but warships capable of breaking blockades of oceanic trade were not considered necessary. In 1888 a three-cornered dispute over the Samoan Islands in the South Pacific—involving American, British, and German warships—ended diplomatically yet underscored for Americans the fact that their interests were transoceanic, and that warfare with a European navy in the far Pacific was a possibility.¹⁴ It was in this atmosphere that Lodge set up a map of the Pacific in the Senate chamber and declared that "it is sea power which is essential to every splendid people."¹⁵

The Navy, Spain, and the Caribbean

As assistant secretary of the navy under the phlegmatic John Long in McKinley's administration, Roosevelt consulted with Mahan on a confidential basis and routinely poured forth his ideas regarding American annexation of Hawaii and difficulties with Spain over the Caribbean. History was important in this case. The most decisive naval engagement of the Napoleonic Wars, in which a Royal Navy fleet of twenty-seven ships under Admiral Horatio Nelson routed a combined French and Spanish fleet of thirty-three at Cape Trafalgar off the southwestern coast of Spain on October 21, 1805, gave Britain almost a century of naval predominance. This enabled Britain to preserve and extend its own imperial interests, a fact that had moved Mahan to cite Trafalgar in making the case for the influence of sea

power.¹⁶ Furthermore, Spain's loss of its fleet emboldened its colonies to rebellion and hastened the demise of its vast empire in the Americas. At the time of its articulation in 1823, the Monroe Doctrine was one part sphere-of-influence diplomacy and one part national conceit. Intending to finish the work Nelson had begun, Roosevelt told Mahan that until the United States finally turned Spain out of the Western Hemisphere altogether the U.S. would never be free of trouble. Equally aware that in 1897 the United States would have to put substance behind its hemispheric claims, he noted the need to "serve notice that no strong European power, and especially not Germany, should be allowed to gain a foothold by supplanting some weak European power."¹⁷

Serving notice meant, Roosevelt and Mahan agreed, building battleships. Roosevelt was curious about literally every variety of emerging technology with military implications—magazine rifles, three-inch artillery pieces, heavier-than-air flying craft, machine guns, even the shape of the spur on cavalry boots—but he regarded the battleship as the very cornerstone of national military power. Warships for shore defense were irrelevant. A navy worthy of the name must be capable of destroying other navies, possibly or even preferably in a distant theater of conflict. On this point as on others, Roosevelt was as much a



Alfred Thayer Mahan in 1904.

professor as a student of the new naval thinking.¹⁸ This placed a premium on offensive operations, even in the prosecution of a fundamentally defensive strategy, and the abandonment of what Mahan called a "war of posts," the protection of national coastline, harbors, and coaling stations. Offensive sea control, by contrast, would involve battleships in fleet formation which could meet an enemy force at sea, destroy it, and thereby break up even a distant blockade of the ocean approaches to the United States, thus ensuring coastal security, commercial freedom, and the capacity for retaliation.¹⁹ Moreover, because the United States was a transcontinental economic power with extensive Atlantic and Pacific approaches, the Caribbean Sea represented the nation's naval center-of-gravity and the key to its maritime frontiers, east and west. As the repression of a popular rebellion in Spanish Cuba stirred up public opinion in the United States to a bellicose froth—with the help of the yellow press reporting the horrors of the Spanish government's *reconcentrado* policy—progressive sentiment and strategic calculation combined to make the Spanish-American War among the most popular and well-conceived small conflicts waged by a major power in modern times.²⁰

Roosevelt used his position to influence strategy, and he exploited the temporary absence due to hypochondria of his superior to put the case for a belligerent stance directly to President McKinley. Long complained that his assistant acted "like a bull in a china shop" to an extent which was discourteous. Cautioned by Long to refrain from any action affecting policy without consulting either himself or the President, Roosevelt nonetheless took initiatives that far exceeded consultation.²¹ His personal participation in the campaign at the head of the First United States Volunteer Cavalry assured Roosevelt-the-Rough-Rider nationwide popularity, the political base for his subsequent election as Republican governor of New York, and ultimately the vice presidential nomination alongside McKinley. More important over the long term than the promotion of national and personal splendor, however, were the implications Roosevelt drew from the swift victory over Spain. These were that the Caribbean was and should remain an American lake; that the destruction of the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay vindicated an offensive naval posture; that the acquisition of colonial possessions including Guam, the Marianas, and the Philippines (in addition to Puerto Rico) projected the American presence into the western Pacific; and consequently that the construction of an inter-oceanic canal across Central America must now be a national priority every bit as vital as the construction of a U.S. Navy second only to the Royal Navy.

Panama and Strategic Alignment

Indeed, while still in the New York governor's office, Roosevelt concluded that an inter-oceanic canal was needed to release the navy for offensive action. Without it a large fleet would be confining too many warships to Caribbean waters. Such a policy necessarily involved the abandonment of a long-

standing Anglo-American agreement on the neutrality of a prospective isthmian waterway.

But the potential for Anglo-American tension over the issue was in large measure mitigated by the very intensification of great power competition at the turn of the century. Specifically, Great Britain found itself bogged down in a costly colonial war in South Africa at precisely the juncture where the passage of legislation for the radical expansion of the German High Seas Fleet posed a challenge to the Royal Navy's strength overseas and in the home waters of the North Sea. Anglo-German antagonism prompted London to rationalize its commitments in part by liquidating outstanding diplomatic issues, so in 1901 the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty conceded fortification rights of a canal to the United States.²² Assuming the presidency in the wake of the McKinley assassination, Roosevelt then put his executive leverage behind the effort to secure Senate approval to build, control, and fortify an inter-oceanic canal. In other words, his administration began with a treaty which opened the way to the two greatest building projects of their time, a United States Navy worthy of the name and a canal linking the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Simultaneously, it accelerated a tilt of American diplomacy in favor of Britain and against Germany.²³

Of the reasons given for Roosevelt's attitude—a "community of interests," an "affinity of cultures," and "ethnocentric imperial vision" prominent among them—an unsentimental reading of international circumstance is the most convincing. Roosevelt's conviction that the "Bismarckian attitude toward war" was "something civilized nations should outgrow" was wide of the mark. Bismarck's understanding of the force of arms had been remarkably similar to Roosevelt's, and *Weltpolitik* under Wilhelm II was vastly more ambitious than anything contemplated by Bismarck. The central place given by this perspective to the buildup of the German High Seas Fleet was deeply disturbing not only to Britain, but to France and Russia as well. Intended to drive them apart, it was destined to pull them together.²⁴ What's more, the Kaiser's adventurism was popular with the German public, despite the fact that his determination to seize a naval base at Kiaochow on the Chinese coast met with opposition from Tirpitz as unduly provocative to Russia.²⁵ For Roosevelt it required no special regard in favor of Britain to begin to take measures against Germany:



Kaiser Wilhelm II of
Germany.

Image from the public domain

It was to meet Germany's world policy that the U.S. Navy divided its fleet between the Atlantic and the Pacific. We can believe that the German government did not seek a

conflict with the United States at Manila Bay and still recognize that the Germans intended to take whatever territory they could in the Pacific. Who knew whether the German government might not have taken control of the Philippines if Dewey's squadron had been defeated or had withdrawn?²⁶

Despite this newly acquired vulnerability in the Pacific, circumstance dictated that Roosevelt give priority to Atlantic and Caribbean waters, in the latter case to demonstrate American determination to uphold the Monroe Doctrine. In the Venezuelan crisis of 1902-1903, this required boldness leavened by discrimination. When Britain and Germany, joined later by Italy, blockaded Venezuela, seized its navy, and bombarded the fort of Puerto Cabello in punishment for Venezuela's delinquency in meeting its financial obligations, Roosevelt faced the dilemma of how to condemn partners in crime without acknowledging their partnership. He was in part aided by an outcry in the British press and Parliament against the Anglo-German action, in some instances based on the argument that Berlin sought to poison Anglo-American relations by involving Britain in gunboat bullying in the Americas.²⁷ The Conservative government of Arthur Balfour defended itself in Parliament with words to the effect that British actions intended no offense to the Monroe Doctrine, as no country was more anxious than Britain that the United States should defend its principles. Appeasement of the United States with statements of this kind was a reflex which London had long since decided was in the best interest of British security.²⁸ When Venezuelan President Cipriano Castro proposed arbitration of the dispute, Roosevelt promptly supported the proposal and sent a fleet of warships to Venezuelan waters to underscore his position. In conversation with the British ambassador he expressed dismay at Britain's actions, and later offered to Lodge that London had permitted itself to be "roped in as an appendage of Germany" in the affair. To Berlin he conveyed the message that any violation of the Monroe Doctrine by way of territorial acquisition in South America would mean war with the United States.²⁹ His Roosevelt Corollary, announced to Congress in December 1904, subsequently staked an American claim to the role of "international police power" in the Caribbean in cases of "wrongdoing or impotence." It was a happy coincidence for Roosevelt that public opinion in Britain at the time was increasingly anti-German, but the positive outcome of the Venezuelan crisis also owed a great deal to his own determination to see Albion as only accidentally perfidious. In the meantime he asserted that the best way to deliver Germany from temptation was to "keep on with the upbuilding of our navy."³⁰

The war with Spain had prompted Congress to authorize a program of shipbuilding which included funding for eight new battleships, and in his first annual message Roosevelt cited naval expansion as the most important item on the executive agenda. His second annual message then asserted that there should be no halt and cautioned that naval strength and the completion

of an inter-oceanic canal were necessarily linked, because "if we have an inadequate navy, then the building of the canal would be merely giving a hostage to any power of superior strength."³¹ In this he clearly was not indulging in alarmist speculation. By 1890 all the major powers had begun to construct ironclad warships, while Britain had passed the Naval Defence Act setting the "two-power standard," according to which the Royal Navy's strength should equal that of the next two largest navies combined, at the time those of France and Russia. Moreover, the Royal Navy's HMS *Collingwood*, launched in 1882 and featuring a high freeboard and guns mounted on barbets, set the standard for the basic configuration of battleships completed during the pre-dreadnought era, roughly 1890 to 1905. The *Royal Sovereign* class of battleships constructed in the late 1880s and early 1890s weighed in at 14,150 tons of displacement, 410 feet in length against 75 in width, with four 13.5-inch guns, ten 6-inch quick-firing guns, and eighteen inches of armor amidships. It is widely considered the first pre-dreadnought class.³² Other classes followed: the *Majestic* class between 1895 and 1898; the *Canopus* class, 1896-1902; *Formidable*, 1898-1902; *London*, 1899-1904; and *Duncan*, 1900-1904. Between 1890 and 1905 Britain built a total of fifty-two pre-dreadnoughts. France began building pre-dreadnoughts in 1889, Russia in 1892; between 1890 and 1905 they launched a combined total of thirty-eight. The first pre-dreadnought in the United States Navy was the USS *Indiana*, BB-1, laid down in 1891 and completed in 1895; by 1907 twenty-three more had been added. The significantly larger *Virginia* class displaced 15,000 tons, the *Vermont* class 17,600 tons. For its part, Japan ordered two *Royal Sovereign* class warships from British shipyards in 1893 and then four of the *Majestic* class in 1896.³³

In a cumulative sense this pace of shipbuilding had already added up to an informal naval arms race, when in 1896 Germany laid down its first pre-dreadnoughts and the competition acquired a new earnestness. In 1898 the First Naval Law committed Germany to the construction of nineteen battleships, while the Second Naval Law in 1900 set the bar at thirty-eight. The number of ships of itself challenged Britain's two-power standard, but under Tirpitz German naval strategy also developed a "risk fleet theory," according to which the High Seas Fleet need not be as strong as the Royal Navy. In the event of war, the theory argued, Britain would not be in a position to concentrate its fleet against Germany in the home waters of the North Sea and simultaneously meet the burden of the defense of a worldwide empire. Since the German Navy need only inflict enough damage to compromise the Royal Navy's ability to confront and defeat other enemies, it concluded, Britain would never risk a major naval engagement with Germany. Even in victory the potential damage to Britain's overall strategic position would be prohibitive. Risk theory was offensive and defensive, a lever and a deterrent.³⁴ The facts of geographic proximity and Germany's military-industrial capacity posed a terminal threat to British naval supremacy. Roosevelt understood that the United States could not stand aside while a global balance

of naval power which had hitherto been preponderantly to American advantage was overthrown.

The Naval Revolution

It was therefore in response to the aspirations announced in German naval legislation of 1900 generally, as well as in the interest of defending the Monroe Doctrine specifically, that in 1903 the U.S. Navy's General Board envisaged a building program for a comprehensive force of forty-eight battleships, supported by armored cruisers, light cruisers, scout cruisers, destroyers, and colliers, to be ready in 1920, the year when Germany was to have forty-one battleships and twenty large cruisers. This vision actually went beyond the imperative of being able to stand up to Germany and set the goal of establishing American sea power in two oceans. Not surprisingly, it was in 1903 that Roosevelt decided that the building of an American-controlled canal connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific ought to be undertaken in Panama rather than Nicaragua, and additionally that the Colombian government's changing position on the terms of American rights to the canal was so cynical as to justify American support for Panamanian independence. Roosevelt took the low road and claimed the high ground in defending his policy, likening press critics of his actions to "a small body



President Theodore Roosevelt in 1904.

of shrill eunuchs" and upholding his Panamanian policy as "in accord with the fundamental laws of righteousness"—all in the same breath. In the political fray to secure approval of the pact with the new Panamanian government—a government in part a creature of his own ambition—Roosevelt compared himself with Lincoln during the Civil War. His actions were in substance closer to those of Jefferson in the purchase of Louisiana. Political adversaries threatened to make trouble over the treaty yet ultimately "couldn't bring themselves to reject such an obvious bargain."³⁵

The outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War on February 8, 1904, radically enhanced the political validity of the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, and the Senate approved it only two weeks later. The importance of a Panama Canal for the United States, protecting its Caribbean backyard against German encroachment and pondering a possible threat to its new possessions in the Pacific, was then underscored by Japan's spectacular naval victory over the Russian fleet in the Tsushima Strait on May 27, 1905. The Japanese triumph was apparently even more vital to the final outcome of the war than Trafalgar had been to the Napoleonic Wars a century earlier; whereas Bonaparte lasted for a decade following Trafalgar, Russia sought peace terms within three months of Tsushima.³⁶ Scrambling to make sense of an encounter Roosevelt called "a slaughter rather than a fight," naval architects such as Vittorio Cuniberti in Italy felt vindicated by Tsushima in their conviction that fast-moving ships armed with only big guns were the key to the decisive sea power of the future. Theretofore, it had been assumed that engagements between modern fleets would take place at ranges between 3,000 and 5,000 yards, involving primary and secondary batteries. At Tsushima the opposing fleets had opened fire at almost 19,000 yards and had scored hits in the 13,000 to 14,000-yard range with their big guns. This experience ran counter to Mahan's standing argument that close-range engagements which permitted the more rapid fire of the smaller calibers enabled an aggressive fleet to disrupt the enemy's command and thereby secure victory. A Japanese fleet had defeated a Chinese formation in this way on the Yalu River in 1894, and the American fleet had used its eight-inch rather than its thirteen-inch guns to decisive effect in the Battle of Santiago de Cuba four years later.³⁷ Mahan's own review of Tsushima, indeed, told him that in 1905 the superiority of mixed-caliber ships had been vindicated rather than refuted.³⁸

This put Mahan in conflict with naval officers such as Lieutenant Commander William Sims and Admiral George Dewey, both enthusiasts of all-big-gun design. Roosevelt was similarly predisposed, in part influenced by Sims's argument that when other powers launched all-big-gun warships the United States would find itself completely outclassed, but also because Sims sought to improve American naval gunnery. Roosevelt's reading had told him that superior gunnery as much as seamanship was critical for successful naval engagements. Still, hesitation at making the case to an anti-imperialist and cost-wary



HMS Dreadnought.

Congress without preparing the political ground moved Roosevelt to demand further technical assessments. A twenty-six-page document drafted by Sims decided the matter. By that time the Royal Navy's launch in October 1906 of HMS *Dreadnought*, the first all-big-gun warship, had forced the hand of the United States and all other powers who sought to be taken seriously in the naval arms race.³⁹ At 18,100 tons, 527 feet long by 82 feet wide, and carrying ten 12-inch guns with no secondary batteries, yet capable of twenty-one knots, *Dreadnought's* comprehensive superiority over any other ship afloat revolutionized Britain's naval arms race with Germany by making all existing battleships obsolete and thereby increasing radically the cost of staying in the competition.⁴⁰

Dreadnought had been anticipated by American naval planners. In fact, the United States had approved construction of USS *Michigan*, BB-27, in March of 1905. *Michigan* was in some respects more advanced, in others less, than *Dreadnought*. It featured all center-line gun turrets, whereas the *Dreadnought* retained some side turrets, and it integrated elevated turrets in the center-line configuration; yet it had eight 12-inch guns to *Dreadnought's* ten, and its reciprocating engines gave it a slower maximum speed than *Dreadnought's* turbines. Consistent with the intent of the legislation mandating it, *Michigan* was nonetheless a "first-class battleship." Its principal weakness as an American contribution to the naval arms race was that it



Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Fisher, Great Britain's First Sea Lord, 1904-1910, 1914-1915, photographed as a captain in 1883.



U.S. Naval Historical Center

USS Michigan entering Honolulu Harbor in March 1920.

was laid down in 1906 but not completed, like its sister *South Carolina*, until 1910. In the meantime Britain laid down two more classes—the *Bellerophon* and *St. Vincent* classes, with three ships in each—and in 1910 went on to bigger, more heavily armed “super-dreadnoughts.” For its part, Germany shook off initial shock and responded to the *Dreadnought* challenge by laying down the 18,500-ton SMS *Nassau*, armed with twelve 11-inch guns, in 1907 and followed up with the heavier *Helgoland* and *Kaiser* classes in 1908 and 1910.⁴¹

As Roosevelt saw them, these developments required the President of the United States to speak more softly than ever yet keep still bigger cudgels within reach. On the diplomatic front he combined peacemaking between Japan and Russia at Portsmouth with official enthusiasm for the principle of arms limitation. In the case of the Portsmouth settlement, Roosevelt strove to acknowledge Japan’s emergence and the legitimacy of its claims while preserving a balance of power in northeast Asia which did not reflect the decrepit state of Tsarist Russia, in 1905 going into the first phase of the revolutionary spasms that ultimately destroyed it. Japan dropped its demand for financial compensation and was rewarded with the acquisition of the southern half of Sakhalin, a concession in Guangdong which included Port Arthur, and the Russian rights to the South Manchurian Railroad. Russia retained the northern half of Sakhalin along with control of the Kharbin-Changchun Railroad in northern Manchuria yet recognized Japanese dominance in Korea. Russia remained an Asian power with a foothold in China, and its presence there would be a check on an assertive Japan to an extent advantageous to both Britain and the United States. Roosevelt was personally pro-Japanese and thought the Japanese delegation at Portsmouth far and away the more reasonable; but against pro-Japanese sentiment stood the fact that at the Yokosuka Naval Arsenal work was proceeding on

the 19,372-ton battleship *Satsuma*, at the time of her launch in November 1906 the largest battleship in the world. Propping up the Russian presence in Asia made the Philippines, Hawaii, and the California coast more secure.⁴²

Roosevelt rightfully deemed his diplomacy at Portsmouth as beneficial for the security of the United States. But he could not adopt a similarly optimistic attitude towards arms limitations, especially in light of the sarcasm hurled against so many of the disarmament proposals tabled at the Hague Conference of 1907 by the German chancellor, Bernhard von Bülow. At the time Germany was in fact secretly planning an acceleration of its naval construction program, so the observation by the British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, that “Bülow has now come into the open” was only half right.⁴³ Roosevelt favored arms limitations in principle but doubted that in the current circumstances “England and the United States should impair the efficiency of their navies if it is permitted to other Powers, which may someday be hostile to them, to go on building up and increasing their military strength.”⁴⁴ By 1907 his pairing of Britain with the United States was explicit, because relations between the two countries had reached a stage where by Roosevelt they could be considered “special.” This had as much to do with strategic convenience as with the cultural affinity of “Anglo-Saxon peoples,” a notion which Roosevelt nonetheless took seriously. He therefore instructed the chief American delegate to the conference that if any European power proposed naval limitations he was to do everything reasonable to support it; equally, if no other delegation raised the issue, neither should the Americans.⁴⁵

Between 1900 and 1907 Britain accomplished a diplomatic encirclement of Germany. In April 1904 Paris and London agreed to the *Entente Cordiale*, recovering from the low in Anglo-French relations occasioned by the Fashoda incident of 1898. This turn was confirmed following the Morocco crisis of 1905—in which Kaiser Wilhelm declared support for Moroccan independence, and Britain backed France at the Algeiras Conference the following year—when the Admiralty began to draw up plans for war with Germany.⁴⁶ France had already constructed an alliance with Tsarist Russia between 1891 and 1894, based on a mutual apprehension of Germany. The effect of the Russo-Japanese War was to make St. Petersburg anxious about the exposure of its vulnerability and London doubly nervous over the continental balance of power. These neuroses converged in the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907. Unsettled disputes in Central Asia were papered over, because, as in the case of the *Entente Cordiale*, the overriding priority was a truce on imperial rivalries in anticipation of a crisis in Europe. To these changes in Europe Britain added a mutual assistance pact with Japan in 1902. It was this alliance which in part emboldened Japan to challenge Russia’s occupation of Manchuria and led to the war of 1904-1905. Its utility to Britain, however, was that it permitted the Royal Navy to recall squadrons from their bases in China to concentrate in home

waters and balance the growing strength of the German fleet.⁴⁷

The Great White Fleet

Fleet concentration, in fact, was a key lesson Mahan had drawn from the Russian debacle at Tsushima. Troubled by Japan's diplomatic protests of the treatment of Japanese immigrants in California—protests which evolved into a diplomatic crisis in the summer of 1907—Mahan expressed his concern that Roosevelt might divide the fleet between the Atlantic and the Pacific. He was brought up short by the response that his President was no more likely to do this than to go to the Pacific himself in a rowboat.⁴⁸ This was a less-than-honest response. At the time Roosevelt was considering sending the entire battleship fleet to the Pacific, and his naval policy was now developed to the point where he gave lectures on the subject rather than receiving them. The substance of a meeting at Oyster Bay on June 27, 1907, in which he discussed the disposition of American warships with Secretary of the Navy Victor Metcalf, Captain Richard Wainwright of the General Board, and Colonel W. W. Wotherspoon, acting president of the Army War College, was leaked to the *New York Herald*. It began the public discussion of prospective and possibly radical changes to naval policy which culminated in the world cruise of the sixteen battleships later referred to as the Great White Fleet.⁴⁹

Seizing the notion that crises often represent first-class opportunities, Roosevelt remained vague as to the purpose of the cruise. At one end of the spectrum of opinion, alarmists warned that it might deepen the crisis with Japan; at the other end, a celebratory press thought the crisis sufficient reason to support the project of the American navy parading around the world. Roosevelt himself was happy to use the Japanese immigration crisis for multiple purposes, pointing to evidence of Japanese truculence, citing the need to popularize the navy with the American people, and noting the fact that the battle fleet had reached such a size that a sustained naval exercise had become imperative in the practical interest of testing its strengths and identifying its weaknesses. Indeed, the navy had been considering such an exercise for two years. Edmund Morris notes that the cruise appealed to Roosevelt in many ways, "as diplomacy, as preventive strategy, as technical training, and as a sheer pageant of power."⁵⁰

In the attraction to pageantry there was plenty of company. In the late nineteenth century, fleet visits between Russia and France were widely thought simultaneously to cultivate international understanding and demonstrate deterrent might. At Queen Victoria's Jubilee fleet review in 1887, only one international newspaper sought admission from the Admiralty, but by 1911 that number had jumped to fifty. Naval reviews had become regular events choreographed to excite the public imagination over the possibilities of new technologies, while stoking the blue flames of patriotic fervor. At the launch of *Dreadnought*, a Portsmouth (England) priest had prayed that the

ship's guns might penetrate German steel plate.⁵¹ As countries such as Russia and France fell behind in the naval arms race, British and German naval reviews took on an institutionalized quality involving ever more spectacular displays of imperial swagger. In July 1909 the Royal Navy brought to the banks of the Thames at the invitation of the Lord Mayor of London 150 warships, "stretching from the very heart of the capital eastwards towards the sea, a floating chain of forty miles," a week-long event consciously designed as mass entertainment. In reaction to the overwhelming pomp of British fleet reviews, Wilhelm II insisted that Germany's navy was not for ceremony but rather for war. Although German reviews typically involved training exercises and maneuvers, the elaborate protocol given to the visual effects of annual *Flottenparaden* modeled after the Prussian army's repertoire of public parades was unapologetically that of an entertainment for His Majesty, his subjects, and such foreign guests as were disposed to be impressed or intimidated.⁵²

The world cruise of the Great White Fleet fit into this tradition, although imperfectly. Roosevelt's purposes in ordering it were mixed. Impressing Japan at a time of tension was surely a factor, but so too was impressing the American public with the fruits of the battleship authorizations made early in his presidency in order to build broad support for continuing fleet construction. Roosevelt was happy to involve himself in a public quarrel over the issue. When critics in Congress threatened to withhold funds for the cruise, he replied that he had enough money to get the fleet to the Pacific coast and might have to leave it there if no money was available to bring it back. This was a bluff. At the time the navy's support facilities were concentrated on the Atlantic coast, and only short-term support could be provided on the Pacific coast. An alternative charge from congressional enemies was that Roosevelt intended to leave the fleet in the Pacific and then demand extra funding for an Atlantic fleet—an idea he must have found tempting. He was, in any event, confident that his navy would be more popular with the public than with Congress. A cruise conceived first and foremost as a naval war plan therefore evolved into a tool of domestic public relations to popularize naval power. Still, that did not diminish its fundamental strategic logic:

Having built a battleship fleet and concentrated it on one coast, the navy had to know whether it could move from coast to coast and arrive prepared to fight. After its long voyage from the Baltic, the Russian fleet had reached Tsushima in exceedingly poor condition, a lesson that impressed on American naval planners the need for a considerable period of maintenance and repair on the Pacific Coast before the fleet would be ready for possible combat operations.⁵³

Time was also important. As the Anglo-German naval race intensified and drew the attention of the potential combatants to the North Sea, the U.S. Atlantic fleet could temporarily transfer to the Pacific without leaving the east coast exposed to threat. But there was no telling how long such conditions



courtesy of Bill Stewart

President Theodore Roosevelt saluting the departing Great White Fleet from the deck of the presidential yacht Mayflower on December 16, 1907. (This image also appeared on the front cover of the Summer 2008 edition of the TRA Journal.)

would prevail, and Roosevelt did not yet know of what his navy was capable. When the Great White Fleet's sixteen battleships sailed from Hampton Roads, Virginia, on December 16, 1907, to great fanfare, it had an earnest mission. The circumnavigation of the globe would tell the navy what it needed to know about equipping, deploying, and servicing a concentrated surface force for action far from home. This mission was entirely appropriate for a President who believed in the strenuous life, and the navy's exertions and celebratory receptions at Port of Spain, Punta



photo by C. E. Waterman

The Great White Fleet setting out from Hampton Roads, Virginia, on December 16, 1907.

Arenas, Magdalena Bay, San Francisco, Honolulu, Auckland, Sydney, Melbourne, Yokohama, Manila, Ceylon, Suez, Messina, Gibraltar, and numerous other locations afforded Roosevelt favorable publicity during his last full year in office.⁵⁴

Comparatively unpublicized were the difficulties inherent in the cruise. Not surprisingly, it was the German naval critic, Graf Ernst von Reventlow, who remarked that the "most interesting technical aspect" of the cruise was the problem of supplying coal for the fleet over such a distance—a problem which could be overcome only provisionally by the use of British colliers. If current difficulties with Japan were to become more serious, that country could invoke its alliance with Britain to undercut the mobility of the U.S. Navy.⁵⁵ Although the Navy Department had sought a congressional commitment to the construction of fleet colliers, appropriations for them were consistently subordinated to the construction of more battleships. It was estimated that the fleet would require 125,000 tons of coal and that, aside from the supply available at coaling stations, some 100,000 tons would have to be shipped to it in transit. The lack of adequate auxiliary vessels and supply infrastructure represented a vulnerability to be amended over time. Roosevelt was nevertheless determined that it should neither prevent the completion of the cruise nor restrict its ambition, so he arranged for eight naval colliers and thirty foreign vessels to carry coal for the trip to San Francisco.⁵⁶

Ultimately, the Great White Fleet's fourteen-month and 45,000-mile world tour was a naval, political, and diplomatic triumph, not least of all because it went ahead when it did. It produced improvements in engineering reliability and fuel conservation and demonstrated that the U.S. Navy's battle fleet could steam to the western Pacific and arrive in fit condition to engage an enemy formation. Naval planners reduced their estimates of the time required to mount operations against Japan from 120 to 90 days and decided that the main American naval base in the Pacific should be located at Pearl Harbor.⁵⁷ What's more, the reception accorded the U.S. Navy in Yokohama was determinedly warm, as domestic unrest over the tax burden of military expansion forced the Japanese government of Kimmochi Saionji onto a course of fiscal retrenchment and diplomatic rapprochement. In the Root-Takahira Agreement of 1908, the United States acknowledged Japan's vital interest in Korea in exchange for an affirmation that Japan had no designs on the Philippines.

Just ten days after the fleet had arrived in Yokohama, Wilhelm II gave an interview to the *London Daily Telegraph* in which he declared the British "mad as March hares" and given over to suspicions unworthy of a great nation. He then went on to confirm the validity of such suspicions by fulminating on Germany's worldwide interests and powerful navy. This was the same year the Habsburg annexation of Bosnia was to initiate a chain of events in the Balkans which ultimately led to war in Europe. In the meantime an American understanding with



Postcard celebrating the return of the Great White Fleet in February 1909. (This image also appeared on the back cover of the Summer 2008 edition of the TRA Journal.)

Japan was made all the easier by the U.S. Navy's announcement that, as a result of an accelerated program in dreadnought construction, Germany had become the world's second naval power and the most formidable prospective antagonist of the United States. For the time being, then, the U.S. fleet should be concentrated in the Atlantic.⁵⁸ Whatever that fleet's limitations, it was by this time a wholesome thing that American naval power—actually second to two foreign navies—was at least in a wholly different league than eight years previously.

Conclusion

It is a sobering thought that a President who spent so much of his political capital and his nation's fiscal resources on rectifying his country's negligence regarding naval power came to office by the accident of assassination. The timing was nonetheless fortunate in that Theodore Roosevelt was perfectly suited to an era when the naval arms race was shifting from a jog to a sprint. By the time he left office in 1909, he had created a fleet capable of controlling the waters of the Western Hemisphere and set in motion the building of a canal to ease the inter-oceanic strategic dilemma. The momentum in naval shipbuilding

thereby created permitted him to supply the U.S. Navy with four dreadnought-class battleships—USS *Florida*, *Utah*, *Arkansas*, and *Wyoming*—before leaving office. His successor, William Howard Taft, managed to build four more—among them the 31,400-ton USS *Arizona*, now a memorial in Pearl Harbor to a conflict the scale of which Roosevelt could never have anticipated.⁵⁹ What Roosevelt rightly recognized in the fever of the inter-oceanic naval arms race was the likelihood of conflict on one or both of America's oceanic frontiers. For while sea power was in many respects an optimistic doctrine implying prestige and prosperity, the fundamentally optimistic Roosevelt detected a whiff of cordite in the coming decades every bit as accurately as he guessed at the demise of the passenger pigeon.⁶⁰

It was the fact, more than the form, of the new American naval power that mattered. Roosevelt believed in the modern battle fleet not only as the cornerstone of military capability, but also as a visible manifestation of power vital to national unity and international diplomacy. In this he was entirely in tune with the politico-military mania of his time that linked security with national unity. In Germany the notion that naval power was a political project to cultivate national unity eventually produced its

own cottage industry of historical interpretation.⁶¹ For Roosevelt the Great White Fleet certainly had this function. Still, Roosevelt the realist was essential to its creation; Roosevelt the romantic was incidental. His strategic imagination exceeded Mahan's, both in its understanding of the evolution of surface warships and in its sense that the invisible and unromantic submarine had implications for the strategic future—although he and others wrongly guessed that these had to do with coastal defense rather than commerce-raiding.⁶² The battleship itself did not have the future assumed for it. The Anglo-German clash off Jutland in 1916 had a strategic impact on the outcome of World War I yet was neither a Trafalgar nor a Tsushima. America's greatest naval victory, at Midway in 1942, was a triumph not of battleships but of carrier-borne airpower. Thereafter, the U.S. Navy's central role was not as a battle formation on the British model but "to place on foreign shores and support over oceanic distances large numbers of soldiers."⁶³ The warships Roosevelt built would in time be regarded as "antediluvian monstrosities," but the fact of their construction and circumnavigation of the globe was of itself an irreversible commitment to the defense and extension of the American empire of which he had been a cofounder.⁶⁴



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Endnotes

¹ Slightly revised from the original, this article was first published in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 19, No. 4, December 2008, pp. 712-731, under the title "A Whiff of Cordite: Theodore Roosevelt and the Transoceanic Naval Arms Race, 1897-1909." Its foundation was a paper presented on July 8, 2008, in Dundee, Scotland, at the annual conference of the Transatlantic Studies Association. It is reprinted here with permission from Taylor & Francis Group, the publisher of *Diplomacy & Statecraft*.

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⁶² Oyos, "Roosevelt and the Implements of War," pp. 642-643.

⁶³ Weigley, *American Way of War*, p. 189.

⁶⁴ Robert K. Massie, *Castles of Steel: Britain, Germany and the Winning of the Great War at Sea* (New York: Random House, 2003), pp. 668-669; Weigley, *American Way of War*, pp. 270-273; Lawrence C. Allin, "An Antediluvian Monstrosity: The Battleship Revisited," in William B. Cogar, ed., *Naval History: The Seventh Symposium of the United States Military Academy* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1988), pp. 284-292.

VISION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Theodore Roosevelt Association of Oyster Bay, New York, is to perpetuate the memory and ideals of Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th President of the United States, for the benefit of the people of the United States of America and the world; to instill in all who may be interested an appreciation for and understanding of the values, policies, cares, concerns, interests, and ideals of Theodore Roosevelt; to preserve, protect, and defend the places, monuments, sites, artifacts, papers, and other physical objects associated with Theodore Roosevelt's life; to ensure the historical accuracy of any account in which Theodore Roosevelt is portrayed or described; to encourage scholarly work and research concerning any and all aspects of Theodore Roosevelt's life, work, presidency, and historical legacy and current interpretations of his varied beliefs and actions; to highlight his selfless public service and accomplishments through educational and community outreach initiatives; and, in general, to do all things appropriate and necessary to ensure that detailed and accurate knowledge of Theodore Roosevelt's great and historic contributions is made available to any and all persons.

FORGOTTEN FRAGMENTS (#4)

a column by Tweed Roosevelt

ONE HUNDRED TR FIRSTS



Tweed Roosevelt.

Many years ago I began collecting what I call "TR Firsts." In 1989, when the list was relatively short, I sent letters to a number of prominent Theodore Roosevelt biographers soliciting suggestions. I received replies from David McCullough, Edmund Morris, Nathan Miller, and Frederick Marks. As was always the case in those days, John Gable was an inspiration. Since that time the list has grown considerably. Now it has reached one hundred entries, and I have no doubt that it will continue to grow.

I thought I would share this list with you. Some of the entries are whimsical, some important. Some are more about TR the man and some more about the period in which he lived. They cover a great many areas. Some are personal, such as TR being the first President to wear eyeglasses. Some are technological, such as TR being the first to live in an electrified White House. There are many other categories, as you may surmise for yourself

when you look through the list, which is presented more or less in a random order. Just reading it will give you a very good idea about the man and his times. I hope you will enjoy it. And I look forward to hearing from those of you who have additions!

* * * * *

THEODORE ROOSEVELT WAS THE FIRST:

- > American to win a Nobel Prize.
- > member of Harvard's Porcellian Club to bring a woman into the clubhouse.
- > Harvard student to own a dog cart.
- > New York assemblyman elected as minority leader before reaching the age of 25.
- > governor to allow the execution of a woman in an electric chair.
- > national candidate of a major party to accept the nomination in person.
- > person (other, of course, than the driver) to cover the sixteen miles between Aiden Lair and North Creek in the Adirondacks in a horse-drawn wagon in one hour and forty-one minutes (during which, unknown to himself, TR became President upon William McKinley's death).
- > Vice President to be elected President in his own right after initially being elevated to the presidency upon the death of his predecessor.

* * * * *

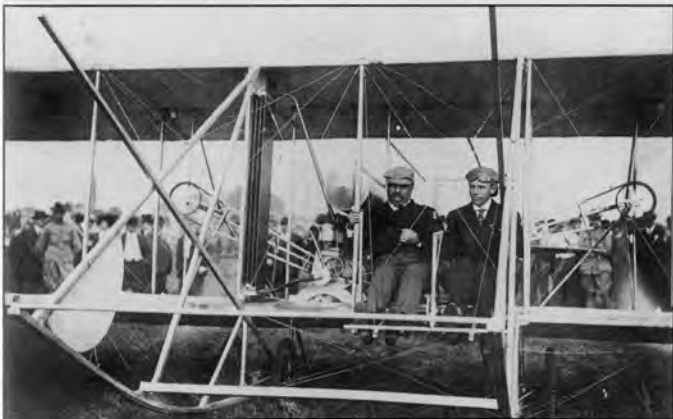
THEODORE ROOSEVELT WAS THE FIRST PERSON WHO SERVED AS U.S. PRESIDENT:

- > to be sworn in on a Bible.

- to ride in and drive an automobile.
- to ride in and drive a submarine.
- to fly in an airplane.
- to ride a subway.
- to ride a camel.
- to be photographed while jumping on horseback.
- to leave the country while in office.
- to live in an electrified White House.
- to be awarded both the Nobel Peace Prize and the Medal of Honor.



Theodore Roosevelt getting into an automobile for the first time, Hartford, Connecticut, 1902.



TR and pilot Arch Hoxey preparing for a flight, St. Louis, 1910.



TR and daughter Ethel riding camels, Luxor, Egypt, March 1910.



President Roosevelt on horseback in Rock Creek Park in 1902.

- to send a printed message to Congress.
- to shoot a mountain lion while hanging upside down from a tree.
- to work extensively in a Washington office outside the White House (during renovations).
- to call his official residence the White House.
- to have a White House family that included six dependent children.
- to have a presidential flag.

Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library

Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library

Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library

Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library

- > to liberate a former colonial dependency.
- > to report on national cultural institutions.
- > to wear eyeglasses.
- > to have served as a cavalry officer.
- > to be twice married.



President Roosevelt in the Panama Canal Zone in 1906.

- > to be wed outside of the United States.
- > to report to Congress using illustrations (about erosion in China).
- > to receive an electoral vote cast by a woman.
- > to deliver an inaugural address without once using the first-person singular personal pronoun.
- > to use the word "lust" in a state of the union speech (then called an annual message).
- > to swim naked in the Potomac with members of his cabinet.
- > to have a Secret Service member killed while protecting him.
- > to be born and raised in a big city.
- > to be born on Manhattan Island.
- > to hold the Guinness record for the number of hands shaken in a day (8150).
- > to ski.
- > to play tennis.
- > to box in the White House.



Theodore Roosevelt at Breton Island, Louisiana, in 1915, visiting the federal bird reservation he had established there in 1904.

- to enter a boxing ring while in office with the reigning heavyweight champion of the world.
 - to engage in jujitsu.
 - to establish a national bird reservation.
 - to establish a national wildlife preserve.
 - to establish a national monument.
 - to establish a federal irrigation project.
 - to convene a national conference of governors.
 - (and the only U.S. President to date) to take the oath of office before his forty-third birthday.
 - to be an ex-President at such a young age (fifty years and four months).
 - to send a message around the world via cable.
 - to send a transatlantic radio message.
 - to send a message via transpacific cable from San Francisco to Manila.
 - to publish a book while in the White House.
- to publish an article on a scientific topic for a scholarly journal while in office.
 - to publish dozens of books in his lifetime.
 - to author a book that became required reading for naval officers (*The Naval War of 1812*).
 - to write an autobiography that covers his life through his presidency.
 - to become president of the American Historical Association.
 - to go to Africa.
 - to visit South America.
 - to hunt and explore in Africa and South America.
 - to shoot African big game animals.
 - to record an African safari on film.
 - to bring a daughter out in the White House.
 - to have a daughter married in the White House.
 - to dine with an African American in the White House.



TR and his first bull elephant, East Africa, 1909.



The Roosevelt-Rondon Scientific Expedition beginning its descent of the Rio da Dúvida (the River of Doubt) in Brazil in February 1914.

Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library

- to appoint a Jewish cabinet member.
- to be known by his initials.
- to be called "Mr. President" instead of "Your Excellency," "Your Honor," etc.
- to study bushido, the ancient Japanese code of chivalry.
- to read Japanese poetry.
- to take an active leadership role in world affairs.
- to give the head of a foreign country a war ultimatum with a precise deadline.
- to negotiate a "gentlemen's agreement" with the head of another country.
- to have a foreign river named in his honor (the Rio da Dúvida became the Rio Roosevelt).
- to receive a formal commendation from a congress of a Latin American nation.
- to sponsor conservation and consumer protection legislation.
- to have a press office in the White House.
- to meet informally with the press on anything like a regular basis.



TR encounters a Teddy bear in Cambridge, England, in 1910.

Theodore Roosevelt Collection, Harvard College Library

- to smile frequently when having his picture taken.
- to involve himself evenhandedly in a labor-management dispute (successfully).
- to keep an open door for union officials and meet with them many times.
- to be on the cover of *Time* magazine.
- to have a popular toy named after him.
- to have coins of fine artistic quality designed and minted.

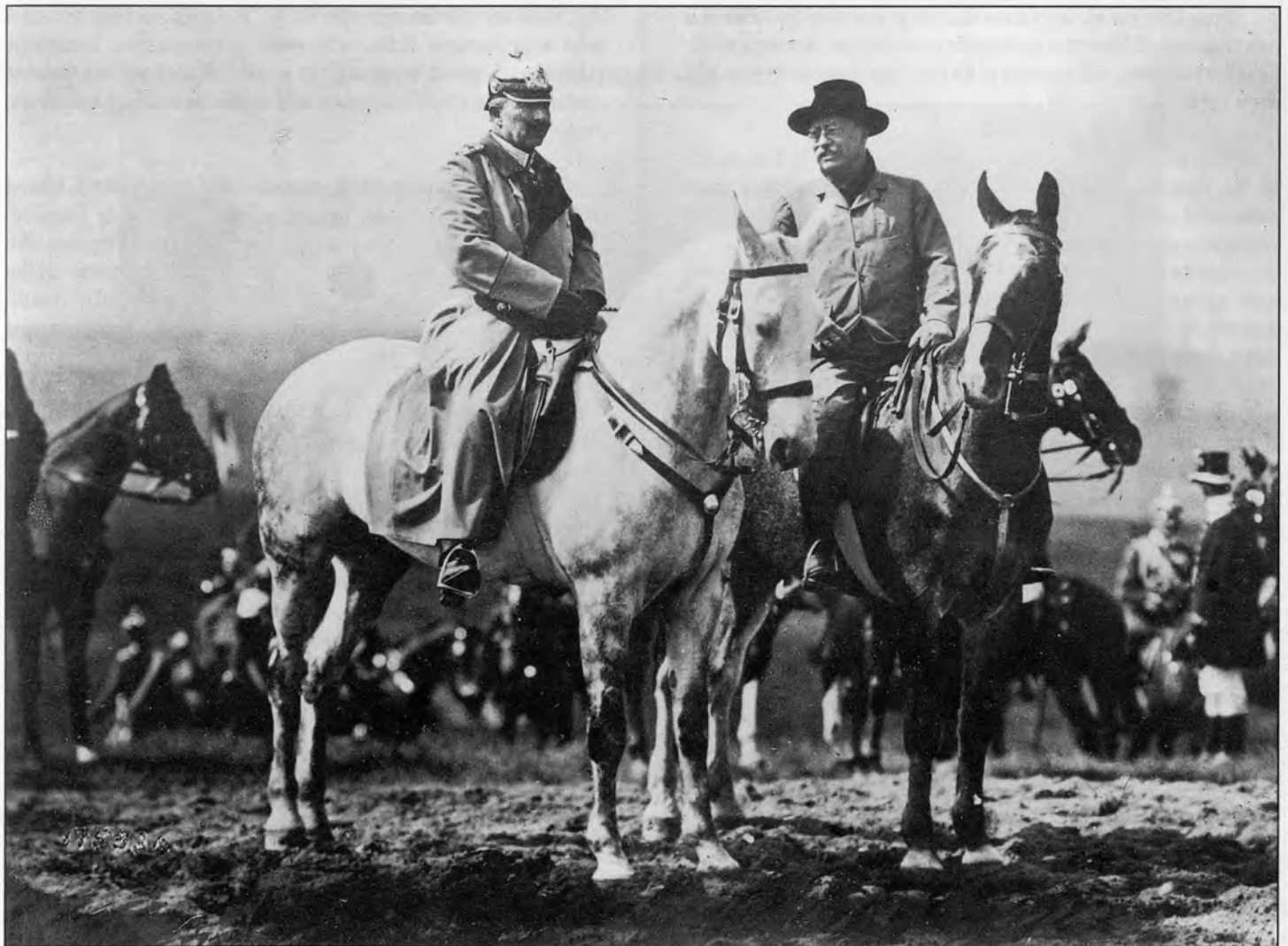
- to use his own mixed ancestral heritage to form ties with new immigrants coming to America.
- to have an East Room piano, a concert grand by Steinway & Sons.
- to have a noted pianist perform, an opera presented, and the clavichord played in the White House.
- to meet a Pope in person.
- (and the only U.S. President) to serve in the Spanish-American War.
- to review German troops.
- to drink coffee and smoke cigars as a child.
- to arrest thieves as a deputy sheriff in a western

territory.

- to give a poet a government job, which was intended to support his writing.
- to eat piranha, lion, and elephant.
- to practice the art of taxidermy.
- to have a wife travel abroad while he was President.
- to have a wife sail at sea in a battleship.



Tweed loves to hear from his readers. He can be reached at tweedr@sprynet.com.



Kaiser Wilhelm II and Theodore Roosevelt on the day they reviewed German troops in 1910.

PRESIDENTIAL SNAPSHOT (#9)

PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT RECOUNTS HIS SUCCESSFUL MEDIATION OF THE GREAT ANTHRACITE COAL STRIKE OF 1902

excerpts from a long confidential letter of October 22, 1902, to Winthrop Murray Crane (in Morison et al., eds., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, Vol. III, pp. 359-366)

"Now that the strikers have definitely accepted the offer of a commission and that this particular great danger is over, I think I shall write you a full account of all that has happened since you were here. . . .

"The position of the operators, that the public had no rights in the case, was not tenable for a moment, and what most astounded me therein was their ignorance of the fact that their violence and unreason and their inability or refusal to consider the terrible nature of the catastrophe impending over the poor were all combining to produce a most dangerous feeling in the country at large—a feeling which might have effect in great social disturbance. . . .

"Root told me that there were 10,000 regulars which I could put in at once, and I had seen old General Schofield and told him that if I put in the regulars I intended at the same time to seize the mines and to have him take charge and run them as receiver for the government. I do not know whether I would have had any precedents, save perhaps those of General Butler at New Orleans, but in my judgment it would have been imperative to act, precedent or no precedent—and I was in readiness. . . .

"[United Mine Workers President John] Mitchell came here and I saw him on the morning of the 15th. I had a very satisfactory interview. He complained of the character of the operators' proclamation and of the seeming effort to pack the commission, but after a good deal of conversation agreed that he would stand by it if I would put on two other members whom I should choose freely. This seemed to be reasonable, and I told him I would try. . . .

"That night Bob Bacon and Perkins came on from Morgan, both of them nearly wild. The operators were balking. They refused positively to accept the two extra men, and Morgan said

he could not get them to accept it. It appeared that the men who were back of them, who were in the narrow, bourgeois, commercial world, were still in a condition of wooden-headed obstinacy and stupidity and utterly unable to see the black storm impending. . . .

"A most comic incident ensued. For two hours I talked with Bacon and Perkins, both of whom were nearly frenzied. They begged me to make the miners yield, asserting that the operators would not, and freely acceding to my view of the danger of the situation. In fact, they said they believed we would have anarchy and social war; but that under no circumstances would the operators ever consent to have an additional man put upon the commission who was a labor man. During these two hours it never occurred to me that the operators were willing to run all this risk on a mere point of foolish pride; but Bacon finally happened to mention that they would not object at all to my exercising any latitude I chose in appointments under the headings that they had given. I instantly said that I should appoint my labor man as the 'eminent sociologist.' To my intense relief this utter absurdity was received with delight by Bacon and Perkins, who said they were sure the operators would agree to it! . . . Messrs. Morgan and Baer gave their assent by telephone, and the thing was done. The names of the commission were given to the press at once. I telegraphed Mitchell and got his assent. . . . I have by wire summoned the commission to meet here at once. I shall direct them to investigate and decide on all points at issue between the two parties and also to advise action to be taken which will prevent the recurrence of such a calamity in the future, so far as is possible. Neither side can hereafter say I have deceived them, for before either side acted they had the names of the commission which I had appointed before them. . . .

"So this is the end of this long and confidential letter!"

TR-ERA IMAGES

Image #2

Art Koch

Image #1



Theodore Roosevelt was keenly aware of the powerful and positive publicity to be gained by attractive photographs of his children. He understood just as clearly the dangers to his administration of inappropriate images. This is one of a series of pictures of Alice Roosevelt taken at Benning Race Track by an enterprising news photographer. The photos show the First Daughter exchanging money with her bookie in the company of her beau, Rep. Nicholas Longworth. TR was incensed. Fearing a political backlash, the President negotiated with two New York newspapers in order to make sure the photos were not published. The newspapers complied, but Alice disregarded her father's command to stay away from the races. (The editor and the photographer extend their thanks to Professor Stacy Cordery.)

Art Koch received three winning responses. These were supplied by Ginny Uhlinger, Charles Snyder, and Lowell Griffin. Congratulations!

Image #2



Can you identify this photograph? When and where was it taken? Who are the individuals pictured? Is there a story behind this image that makes it more significant or more interesting? Readers are invited to send their responses to Art Koch by e-mail at Rooseveltimages@gmail.com (or by mail at One West View Drive, Oyster Bay, NY 11771). Mr. Koch will identify the writer of the best response on his TR-Era Images page in the next issue of the *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal*.

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TRA JOURNAL INDEXES

As of this edition, the *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal* has now published indexes covering all issues through Volume XXIX, Number 4 (that is, through calendar year 2008). Previous indexes have appeared in Volume XIX, Number 3 (Winter 1993), in Volume XXIV, Number 3 (2001), and in Volume XXVIII, Number 3 (Summer 2007). These indexes have been prepared, with great diligence, by volunteers at the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site in Buffalo, New York. The index appearing here has been assembled by Shirley Hudders and Marie Hewett. In appreciation of their efforts, the Theodore Roosevelt Association is making a contribution to the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site Foundation. Shirley and Marie—thank you!

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