

Robert Barnwell Roosevelt On the Great South Bay

"Ah, my boy," laughed the commodore, triumphantly, "you are not acquainted with the wonderful resources of this magnificent bay. We are never short of anything here - it is the grandest sporting resort in the world."

*Robert Barnwell Roosevelt,
"Love and Luck."*

*Richard Harmond
and
Donald H. Weinhardt*

ROBERT BARNWELL Roosevelt (1829-1906), sportsman, lawyer, politician, congressman, author, and pioneer conservationist, was born and raised in New York City.¹ It is not known when he first visited Long Island. But sometime before the Civil War (and almost certainly by the early 1850's), he had hunted on the Island, and fished in its fresh, and its briny waters. In time he became especially fond of the South Shore of Long Island; and in the post-Civil War years, when his father, Cornelius Van Shaack, nephew, Theodore Roosevelt, and other members of the Roosevelt family, were summering at Oyster Bay, RBR established a country estate on the Great South Bay.

This estate, which he called Lotos Lake, was the source of much pleasure for RBR, and his family, as well as the site of a number of impressive social events. And though he remained a true-blue New Yorker all his life, by the ownership of Lotos Lake RBR also became, in his way, a Long Islander.



Theodore Roosevelt Association

Turn of the century photo-portrait of
Robert Barnwell Roosevelt.

As a young sportsman - and though never more than a fair shot, RBR developed into a superb fly-fisherman - RBR travelled widely about Long Island. He fished for trout in brooks and ponds on the North as well as the South Shore; and he angled for mackerel on Long Island Sound. Again, Rob hunted for ducks and bay-birds, pursuing, for instance, the Golden Plover amidst what he aptly characterized as "the wild sand hills of Montauk."²

Yet, in RBR's experience, sporting opportunities were richer and more

varied on the Great South Bay than elsewhere on Long Island. And so, along the shore of what RBR once called "our noble bay," he enjoyed snipe and duck hunting. As for fishing, there were eels and crabs to catch. At other times, cruising about the bay, he cast his hook for sea bass, bluefish or sheepshead and always with a sense of being out of harm's way, for as Rob observed, he "never knew of a place that was safe but that Great South Bay was a little safer."³

Despite pleasurable sporting trips to

his "noble bay," RBR did not decide to establish an estate on the South Shore until after the Civil War. He left no written records concerning his decision, but it is not difficult to perceive at least some of the factors that went into that determination.

Without question, an important element in his decision was the construction, after the Civil War, of a railroad along the South Shore of Long Island. This line, which reached Babylon in 1867, and was extended to Sayville and Patchogue the following year, considerably reduced the travel time between New York City and the South Shore, and removed much of the inconvenience that had previously attended a journey between the two locations.⁴

Beyond the improved railway transportation, there were doubtless other considerations in RBR's decision to purchase a country estate. New York in the summer - with its filth, epidemic diseases and oppressive heat - surely provided a strong inducement, for those who could afford to do so, to gather their families and abandon the city in favor of a rural retreat. Moreover, for those like RBR, who took delight in entertaining, and who found the city habitation rather cramped for such purposes, a commodious country house and grounds offered ideal surroundings for welcoming relatives and friends.⁵ Nor, lastly, could it have escaped RBR's notice that a country estate in a desirable location, such as the one on the Great South Bay, was a good investment. And since in 1872 he had inherited a portion of his father's very substantial fortune, he was presumably in a position to make such an investment.⁶

And that is precisely what he did about a year later. In July, 1873, RBR paid \$14,000 for a farm house, 215 acres of land, plus two ponds, in the Sayville-Bayport area.⁷ Subsequently,

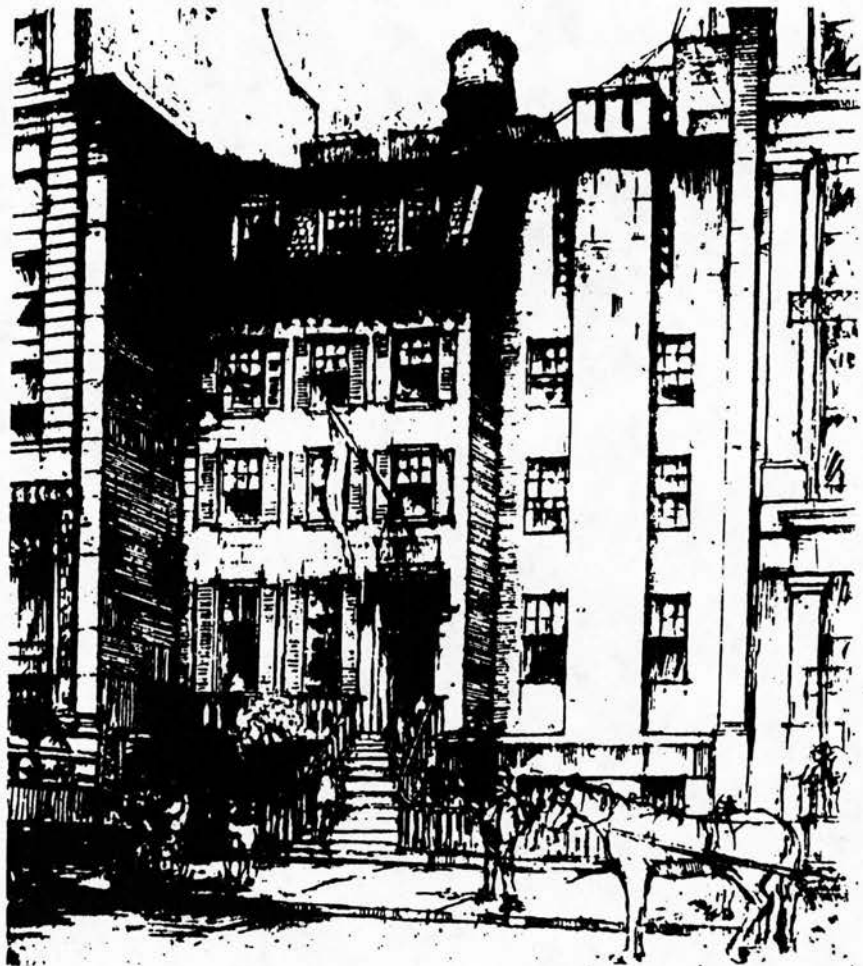
the farmhouse was converted into a guest cottage, while for himself and family RBR built what the *Suffolk County News* described as "a comfortable but unpretentious villa."⁸

Needless to say, RBR's estate was within hailing, if not quite sailing distance of the "noble bay." His affection for the bay was such that 13 years after he bought his estate he published a novel, entitled *Love and Luck*, about the bay.⁹ Ostensibly a love story, the real subject matter of this delightful book was contained in its subtitle: *The Story of a Summer's Loitering on the Great South Bay*.

At any rate, when RBR purchased Lotos Lake there was only a handful of

country estates in the vicinity. Over the next quarter of a century other estates, and some much larger than RBR's, were set up on the Great South Bay. Among them were properties belonging to William K. Vanderbilt, grandson of the Commodore, and Frederick G. Bourne, president of the Singer Sewing Machine Company. Evidently RBR was not friendly with Vanderbilt, Bourne or, save for the Suydam and Post families, his other wealthy, summertime neighbors.¹⁰

Nor, with a couple of exceptions, does RBR appear to have developed any close relationships with the local elite. One of the exceptions was the Reverend John H. Prescott, rector of Saint Ann's Episcopal Church in Sayville. RBR



Theodore Roosevelt Association

Theodore Roosevelt Senior's residence, and the birthplace of President Theodore Roosevelt on East 20th Street, Manhattan. The Robert B. Roosevelt home was next door, at right.

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does not seem to have been particularly religious, much less an avid church-goer. But when he needed a man of the cloth for a baptism, wedding, or funeral, he called upon his good friend, the rector of St. Ann's.¹¹

For the most part, RBR also failed to evince a sustained interest in Sayville-Bayport affairs. From time to time he contributed sums of money to community projects, like the library, and, prudentially, the fire department.¹² Occasionally, he attended local functions, (once, for example, as a marshal at a "driving parade"). Now and then RBR also participated in a local celebration, perhaps most notably when he delivered an oration at Sayville, on July 4, 1876, commemorating the Centennial of the Declaration of Independence.¹³ And he was known to be generous in permitting local residents the use of his property (from picnicing in the summer to ice-skating on his ponds in winter).¹⁴

In the final analysis, however, most of RBR's basic attachments, from his Knickerbocker family to his political associations, were to be found in New York City. As a result, RBR, like many of his generation of estate owners,

never did forge strong bonds to the local community.

Nonetheless, his Long Island estate came to occupy a significant place in RBR's style of life. Such at least seems a fair conclusion from the amount of time he spent at Lotos Lake. In a typical year, for example, having previously shipped his horses and carriages by rail, from New York to Sayville, he, and his family, (plus servants) arrived at Lotos Lake sometime in May. And under normal circumstances, with the exception of a few weeks in August when he migrated to the mountains, RBR remained at Lotos Lake until late October. On at least one occasion, he tarried until early December¹⁵

During his annual stay at Lotos Lake, RBR had much to keep him occupied. In the first place, he had an estate to run. A man with a practical turn of mind, RBR seems to have derived pleasure from the "nuts and bolts" side of managing his property. Thus, he took an active interest in the operation of the farm though, of course, employing others to do the actual labor. A scrapbook of RBR's reposing at the Theodore Roosevelt Association, in Oyster Bay, reveals that Rob, who was a lifetime member of the Suffolk

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County Agricultural Society, kept rather detailed records of planting schedules, fertilizers used, crops planted, and yields. For example, for a few days in July, 1875, RBR's entries read as follows:

July 10 - Had our first cucumbers and black wax yellowpod beans. The cucumbers were raised in hot-bed and set out and being covered grew well. The same might be done with melons...

Turkeys ate up all the cabbages and cauliflowers that the greenworm left.

July 17 - Potatoes were first dug July 17th...

Had some supposed to be chili red, good, handsome and prolific. wheat cut July 18. A fair crop.

July 26 - Early Narragansett was the earliest sweet corn; had the first July 26th, but it was poor...

Of course, if RBR tired of keeping track of bean, corn and wheat yields, there were other activities to engage his attention. He might fish the bay, or in either of his own trout ponds. In season he could go duck-hunting.

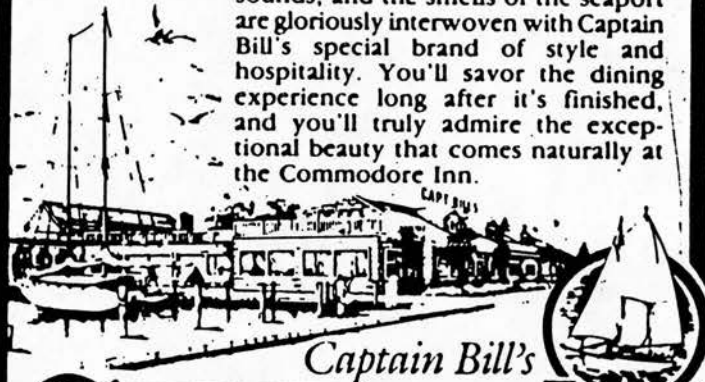
Another pastime RBR enjoyed was sailing on the Great South Bay. And so also did his two sons, John Ellis (whose estate, Meadow Croft, was adjacent to Lotos Lake), and Robert, Junior (who owned a summer house near his father's). The three were serious enough about boats, and sailing, to be among the founding members of the Southside Yacht Club (predecessor to the current Sayville Yacht Club).¹⁶

Rivaling such pleasures as sailing and fishing for RBR, was the opportunity to entertain at Lotos Lake. And though the evidence is scattered and sparse, it is fairly apparent that RBR spiritedly availed himself of that opportunity. Certainly, over the years, some famous people were received at Lotos Lake.

The earliest of these celebrities, as far as we know, was Oscar Wilde. The

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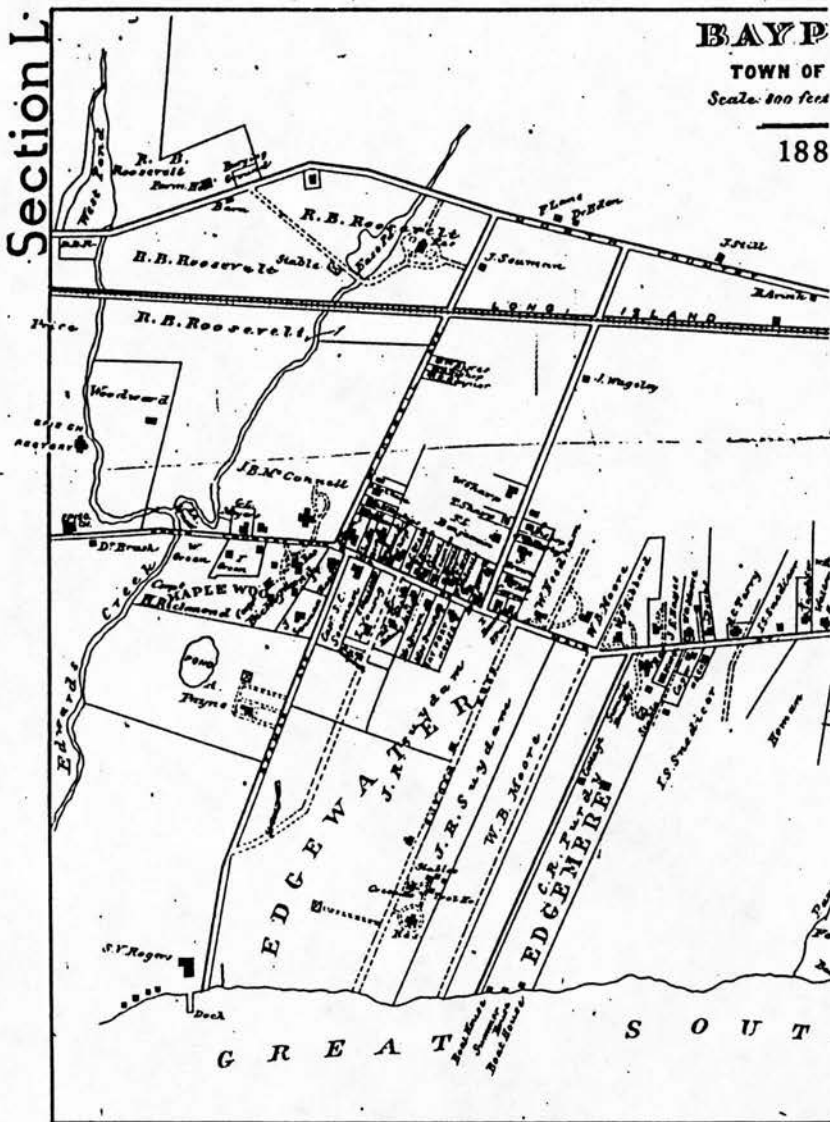


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The area of Sayville/Bayport as mapped in 1888, showing the extensive land holdings of Robert Barnwell Roosevelt.

English poet - booked to give a series of lectures in this country - arrived in New York in early January, 1882. RBR, as he did at times with celebrated people, sent Wilde a small gift. Thereafter, the two met one evening at a reception for Wilde.¹⁷ And an invitation, we can assume, was offered to the Englishman, and accepted, for in July, according to the *Babylon Signal*,

Quite a sensation was experienced in Babylon on Saturday (22 July) by the somewhat unexpected appearance of Oscar Wilde, who came up in R.B. Roosevelt's yacht in company with

Seth Green¹⁸ and several other gentlemen. The party dined at the Argyle.¹⁹ O. W. was a conspicuous figure - his chief adornment being a wreath of daisies worn in his hat. In the Afternoon the party proceeded east through the bay.²⁰

The party was, of course, headed for Lotus Lake.

A few years later, in June 1885, RBR, a loyal Democrat, and staunch supporter of Grover Cleveland, invited the newly elected president to Lotus Lake to "spend part of the summer,"

and "try the fishing in the South Bay of Long Island." As RBR wrote the president,

If you like you can stay on the yacht provided you are willing as all good fisherman should be to rough it and can get along in a stateroom eight feet by seven feet wide. Then you can defy all bores for we will let no one up the gangway till we know just what he is after and how agreeable he will be... If you find the seafaring life too severe we can go to my house where we will have comparative quiet. As to the fish if you will let me select the bate I think I can make sure of fair sport and if the sheepshead should favor again as they did last year I can give you such fishing as few persons have enjoyed...

You will have to lay aside the cares of state for a time or you will be sick. The country does not expect you to kill yourself in its service.²¹

It would seem that the president declined RBR's alluring offer. Rob persisted, though, and over the years submitted other invitations to Cleveland.²² And while we cannot be sure, it is entirely possible that Cleveland, a man as partial the fishing rod as RBR, eventually joined Rob at Lotus Lake.

Cleveland's presence at Lotus Lake proved all but impossible to validate. This was not the case, though, with the Russian Archduke Michaelvitch, and Admiral Kaznakoff, as the press did not overlook the reception given them and their officers at Lotus Lake in July, 1893. According to the *Suffolk County News*,

A special train conveyed the Russian Admiral and his officers, (and the Archduke) also other invited guests, from Long Island City at 11:45 A.M. The train stopped at the

entrance to the spacious grounds of the host, at which spot an arch was draped with the national colors of the United States and Russia...

The Russian officers were dressed in full uniform and a very fine looking robust set of men they are. They heartily enjoyed their outing, indulging in fishing, boating, playing lawn tennis, croquet and other outdoor sports and games...

The Sayville Concert Band was present all afternoon and discoursed suitable music for the occasion. Refreshments were under the supervision of Louis F. Maxzeti, 49th Street and Sixth Avenue, New York, and it was an elaborate spread, being thoroughly enjoyed by the guests, about 200 partaking of it.²³

Little more is known about what transpired that July day.. We do, however, have a thank-you note from Admiral Kaznokoff to RBR. As he wrote,

I am much obliged for your photographic portrait which will remind me of the amiable host and of my very agreeable time spent at Lotos Lake. My picture will be sent to you immediately when I shall have them (sic) ready.

And then, suggesting at least one topic of conversation that day, the Admiral added:

By the express today I send to you a box with the examples of Caucasus and Bookhara wines, I spoke (sic) you of. I hope you like them.²⁴

Though much more modest in its dimensions than the fete for the Archduke, surely no social gathering at Lotus Lake gave RBR greater satisfaction than that for his nephew, President Theodore Roosevelt. RBR had invited Theodore to his estate on several earlier occasions, but each time

TR begged off because of the press of public business. Finally, he accepted his uncle's invitation to visit Lotus Lake. The date agreed upon was 23 July 1903.²⁵

Accompanied by his eldest son, Theodore Jr., and two young sons of his cousin, Emlyn Roosevelt, TR left Oyster Bay at 2:00 A.M. Riding horseback, the little party arrived in Sayville about 7:00 A.M. Welcomed by RBR, Theodore and his charges breakfasted "heartily" at Lotos Lake. In the afternoon, TR was given an automobile tour of Sayville; and that evening had an informal dinner at his uncle's villa. Early the next morning, the president and his three young companions departed Lotos Lake, and rode their horses back to Oyster Bay.²⁶

RBR, who was immensely proud of his nephew, renewed the invitation to TR in each of the following two summers. But these were busy times for the president, and he was unable to join his uncle at Lotos Lake.²⁷

There were, alas, to be no further invitations. In failing health since the previous winter, RBR arrived at his



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summer home on the bay in late May 1906. His condition deteriorated in the next few weeks, despite the efforts of his doctor and two nurses who were in constant attendance.²⁸ On 12 June, a concerned TR wrote to his uncle, that,

I wish I were where I could get over to see you myself. I just send you this line of affectionate remembrance so that you may know you are always in my mind, and in Edith's (TR's wife).²⁹

We cannot be sure that RBR ever read this letter, as he died at Lotos Lake on 14 June, 1906.

To review RBR's life and career, as the obituaries did the day or two following his death, is to realize once again that he was very much a man of the city. He began his career as a young New York City lawyer in 1850; represented a Manhattan district in Congress in 1871-1873; was involved in city politics almost to the end of his days; belonged to a variety of New York-based clubs (including the Holland Society); and had important business interests in the city.

But that is far from the full story, as we have seen. In his fashion RBR was a Long Islander, too. Over 30 seasons of fishing, hunting, sailing, entertaining - and living - on the Great South bay had seen to that.

(We wish to thank Ron Beaudrie and Virginia Sparl of the Dowling College Library, for their assistance, and Rodney Marve and Eileen Kavanagh of the Bay Shore-Brightwaters Public Library for their help in acquiring material, and their friendly interest in this project.)

Footnotes

¹For fuller biographical information see the article "The Forgotten Roosevelt," by Bill Bleyer, *Newsday Magazine*, October 6, 1985.

²Robert Barnwell Roosevelt, *Game Fish of the Northern States of America* (New York, 1862), pp. 30, 36, 44, 46, 149; Robert B. Roosevelt, *The Game Birds of the Coasts and Lakes of the Northern States of America* (New York, 1866), p. 189.

³Robert B. Roosevelt, "The South Bay of Long Island," *The American Angler VII* (March 28, 1885), 198; and Seth Green, "About the Great South Bay, L.I." *ibid.*, VII (March 7, 1885), 149.

⁴Charles G. Stevenson, *But As Yesterday: The Early Life and Times of St. Ann's Church, Sayville, Long Island, New York* (New York, 1967), p. 19.

⁵Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York, 1985), pp. 57-8, Barr Ferree, *American Estates and Gardens* (New York, 1904), pp. 2, 5.

⁶For a brief discussion of land speculation on the South Shore, see Schuyler Livingston Parsons, *Untold Friendships* (Boston, 1955), p. 3.

⁷*Suffolk County Deeds*, Liber 197, p. 303.

⁸*Suffolk County News*, June 15, 1906. We have accepted the view of the *Suffolk County News* that RBR built a new villa. However, old maps indicate the existence of more than one farmhouse on RBR's property. Did he, then have one of these structures refurbished to use as his villa? We cannot be sure and it is unlikely that this issue will be resolved.

⁹(New York, 1889).

¹⁰It seems likely that RBR had first known the Suydam and Post families in New York City.

¹¹We have surveyed the St. Ann's *Parish Register* and the *Parish Treasurer's Book, 1875-1915*, to obtain a sense of RBR's connection to St. Ann's, and his relationship with the Reverend Prescott.

¹²*The Patchogue Advance*, October 16, 1880, August 16, 1881; *Suffolk County News*, October 9, 1889.

¹³Stevenson, *But As Yesterday*, p. 79.

¹⁴*The Patchogue Advance*, June 15, 1906; Stevenson, *But As Yesterday*, pp. 79-80; *Suffolk County News*, December 30, 1898, August 11, 1899.

¹²This account of RBR's seasonal comings and goings is based on a review of the local press. See, for example, *Suffolk County News*, May 15, and December 4, 1896, and July 30, 1897.

¹⁶*Suffolk County News*, July 24, 1886.

¹⁷Henry Justin Smith, *Oscar Wilde Discovers America (1882)* (New York, 1936), p. 45; *New York Tribune*, January 10, 1882.

¹⁸Seth Green, a friend of RBR's, was a professional fisherman.

¹⁹The Argyle was a luxuriously furnished summer hotel that opened in June 1882.

²⁰*South Side Signal*, July 29, 1882.

²¹Robert B. Roosevelt to Grover Cleveland, June 18, 1885, Cleveland MSS (Library of Congress: microfilm edition).

²²Roosevelt to Cleveland, March 17, 1886, July 7, 1893, Cleveland MSS.

²³*Suffolk County News*, July 15, 1893.

²⁴N. Kaznakoff to RBR, July 27, 1893, Robert B. Roosevelt Scrapbook (Theodore Roosevelt Association, Oyster Bay).

²⁵Theodore Roosevelt to Robert Roosevelt, July 6, 1903, Theodore Roosevelt MSS (Library of Congress: microfilm edition) Hereafter cited as T.R. MSS.

²⁶*Suffolk County News*, July 24, 1903; Theodore Roosevelt to RBR, July 27, 1903, T.R. MSS.

²⁷Theodore Roosevelt to RBR, July 26, 1904, July 31, 1905, T.R. MSS.

²⁸*Suffolk County News*, June 15, 1906.

²⁹Theodore Roosevelt to RBR, June 12, 1906, T.R. MSS.

Richard Harmond is in the History Department at St. John's University and previously contributed "A Quiet Estate," which he co-authored with colleague Gaetano Vincitorio. Mr. Weinhardt, a founder of the Bayport Heritage Association, is importantly involved in the current restoration by Suffolk County of Meadowcroft, the former estate of John Ellis Roosevelt, son of Robert B.

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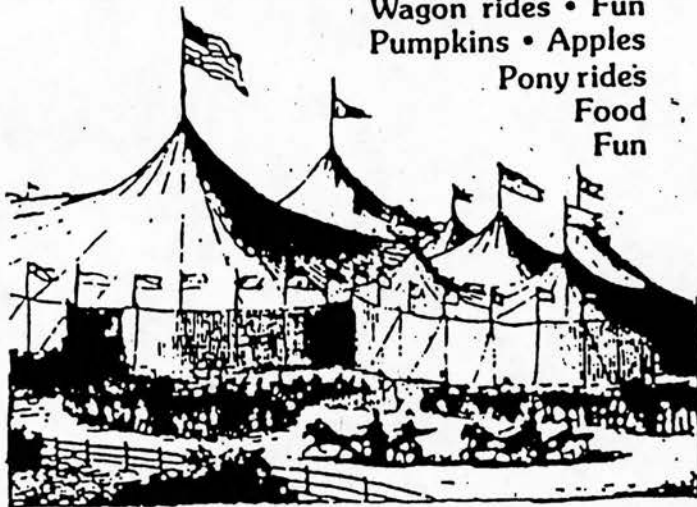
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John Ellis Roosevelt of Meadow Croft

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THE ROOSEVELTS have produced an impressive number of successful merchants, bankers, inventors, lawyers, artists, writers, journalists, and of course, politicians. Indeed, having provided the United States with two Presidents, a number of diplomats and sub-cabinet officers, four Congressmen, and numerous local office-holders, the Roosevelts must be ranked with the nation's leading political families.¹

But not all of the Roosevelts have basked in the limelight. Many members of this patrician family have avoided politics, displayed little ambition for public acclaim, and in fact led or at least attempted to lead pleasant, comfortable, unobtrusive lives. Among these retiring Roosevelts was John Ellis Roosevelt who though the grandnephew of one

Congressman, the son of another, and the first cousin of a President, lacked any political ambition. He was content to be a lawyer, a sportsman, and a country gentleman.

The story of JER illustrates another experience one finds with distressing frequency in the history of the Roosevelt family: a life marked by the pain and sorrow of personal tragedy.²

John Ellis was born on 25 February 1853, the second of three surviving children of Robert Barnwell and Elizabeth (Lizzie) Ellis Roosevelt. Save for a few family anecdotes concerning her love of animals - she kept guinea pigs, chickens, pigeons, and even a monkey in her house - little of substance

is known about Lizzie Ellis. We are not even sure what she looked like. Her husband, on the other hand, was a public figure, and a colorful and sometimes controversial one at that. During his lifetime, RBR was a lawyer, newspaper editor, author (he wrote or co-authored eight books), politician, congressman, diplomat, conservationist, sportsman, and popular after-dinner speaker. A talented, forceful, energetic and witty man, he was, unlike John Ellis, one of those Roosevelts who enjoyed the spotlight.³

And Gotham provided his stage. The city was the center of RBR's professional and political activities, and more than marginal to his social and recreational interests. Manhattan was also the location of his main residence.

For many years RBR owned a house on East 20th Street. A narrow-fronted brownstone, the house was a gift from Cornelius Van Shaack Roosevelt, RBR's father. (CVS presented his five surviving sons with houses when they were married.) And it was here that JER was born and reared.

Doubtless, nannies and tutors figured prominently in JER's early upbringing and training. Such was the customary arrangement among wealthy New Yorkers of the period. But then, as now, a youngster also required the companionship of other children. To help fill that need, John Ellis might have visited the brownstone next door. In this house, presided over by Theodore (Sr.) and Martha Bulloch Roosevelt, RBR's younger brother and sister-in-law, lived Anna, Corinne, Theodore, and Elliott.⁴ They were of course JER's first cousins, and the latter two became his friends.

No extensive documentation survives to flesh out the relationship between John Ellis and his cousins. But it is apparent that, aside from family ties and



John Ellis Roosevelt

common background, the relationship - which seems to have been quite close in their youth - was built on mutual experiences. Among these experiences was a memorable hunting expedition to Texas shared by John Ellis and Elliott. Although Theodore did not accompany his cousin and brother, he was so impressed by their adventure that he included a description of it in his book, *The Wilderness Hunter*.

According to Theodore's account, in the early part of 1877, John Ellis, Elliott, and six other men - "hardy, vigorous fellows, eager for excitement and adventure" - set out on a buffalo hunt in northern Texas.⁵ In the course of this expedition, they travelled through rough country, being forced on a couple of occasions "to cross wild, barren wastes, where the pools had dried up and they suffered terribly from thirst"; they encountered some "rough customers," becoming involved "in several savage free fights, in which, fortunately, nobody was seriously hurt"; and they succeeded in killing a great deal of game, including numerous buffalo. John Ellis also had a few encounters of the nearly fatal kind. At one point he and Elliott were almost trampled to death by a huge herd of stampeding buffalo. Another time, in the words of Theodore,

my cousin, a very hardy and resolute hunter, had a narrow escape from a wounded cow which he followed up a steep bluff or sand cliff. Just as he reached the summit, he was charged, and was only saved by the sudden appearance of his dog, which distracted the cow's attention. He thus escaped with only a tumble and a few bruises.

In 1883, a half dozen years after the Texas enterprise, Theodore ventured to the Dakota Bad Lands. But his brother, who had journeyed West with him three years earlier, did not join Theodore on this trip. Nor did his cousin.

By that date John Ellis had graduated from Columbia Law School and had embarked on his career as a lawyer. Moreover, he had acquired family responsibilities. In 1879, he married Nannie Mitchell Vance, daughter of Samuel H.B. Vance, a former acting Mayor of New York City. The

Roosevelts were, it seems, pleased by the match. Elliott was his cousin's best man; and Theodore, who was fond of her, averred that Nannie was a "little treasure of a wife."⁶

In August, 1881, Nannie gave birth to the first of the couple's three daughters, Anita Blanche, also known to the family as "Pansy." Theodore, who had married Alice Lee in 1880, and was on a delayed European honeymoon at the time of Pansy's birth, warmly congratulated "Dear Old Father John."

"I am heartily glad," Theodore wrote from Paris,

but I can't as yet quite get used to the idea of your being a *father*. You, the old time Texan hunter, as father of a family! Well, nobody is more delighted than I am. I am wild to see you, and Nannie, and the little new Roosevelt. Just to think of it! Her career in life will be a success if good wishes can ensure it; and with such a father and mother as she has I know



The Roosevelt children: Anita Blanche "Pansy", born Newport, August 8, 1881; Gladys, born New York City, March 10, 1889; and Jean Schermerhorn, born at Meadow Croft, July 15, 1891.

there is no doubt about it.

With warmest love to Nannie, to whom Alice is soon going to write, I am, my dear old friend,

Your Aff Coz
Thee 7

While John Ellis savored the joys of family life, and practiced at the bar, Theodore, who had once considered a legal career (and even studied briefly in JER's office),⁸ became disillusioned with the law. "The *caveat emptor* side of the law, like the *caveat emptor* side of business, seemed to me repellent," he wrote in his *Autobiography*, "it did not make for social fair dealing."⁹

Abandoning the law, Theodore shifted some of his abundant energies to politics. During the 1880's he served three terms in the New York Assembly, ran unsuccessfully for Mayor of New York City, and accepted an appointment as a United States Civil Service Commissioner. Busy as he was with politics, Theodore nonetheless found time to be a rancher, to have a family,

caption seems backwards

and to write books (including *The Naval War of 1812*, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, and *The Winning of the West*).

And so, as it turned out, Theodore and John Ellis chose different callings, and, in certain important respects, followed divergent life styles. The two men remained friends, and they corresponded. John Ellis even offered his cousin political advice now and then. There is no question, either, that he took great pride in Theodore's political achievements.¹⁰ Still, from the 1880's on, their relationship seemed to lack some of the intimacy of earlier years.

Elliott, too, began to drift out of JER's orbit. In this case, though, there appeared to have been a falling out. According to the recollections of Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, "There was some little incident between John and Elliott," and "it was hard on John because they had been so much together when young and then they went off different ways."¹¹ Perhaps the "incident" had something to do with Elliott's heavy drinking. In any case, Elliott, who married Anna Hall in 1883, lived the life of a Victorian gentleman. He enjoyed the Manhattan social whirl. He also joined the fashionable Meadow Brook Country Club, rode to the hounds, played polo, and became

recognized as a fine horseman. And in 1888 he acquired a ten-acre estate near the Meadow Brook Country Club.¹² Significantly, his property was some thirty miles to the west of JER's future estate.

For many years, first as a youngster and then as a married man with his own family, JER had summered at his father's estate, Lotus Lake, situated in the Sayville-Bayport area.¹³ Familiarity with the locality - and its opportunities for sailing and other summertime activities - bred affection. When the occasion arose, therefore, and property near Lotus Lake became available, JER did not dally. In November, 1890, he purchased, for \$4500, some 15 acres of land adjacent to his father's estate.¹⁴ This holding, formerly the possession of the Woodward family, contained a farmhouse which JER was apparently loath either to discard, or to retain as his own dwelling. Instead, he hired Isaac H. Green, a locally prominent architect, to design a whole new front facade for the farmhouse, which JER would use as a living space for himself and his family (with the original farmhouse to be utilized as guests' and servants' quarters).¹⁵

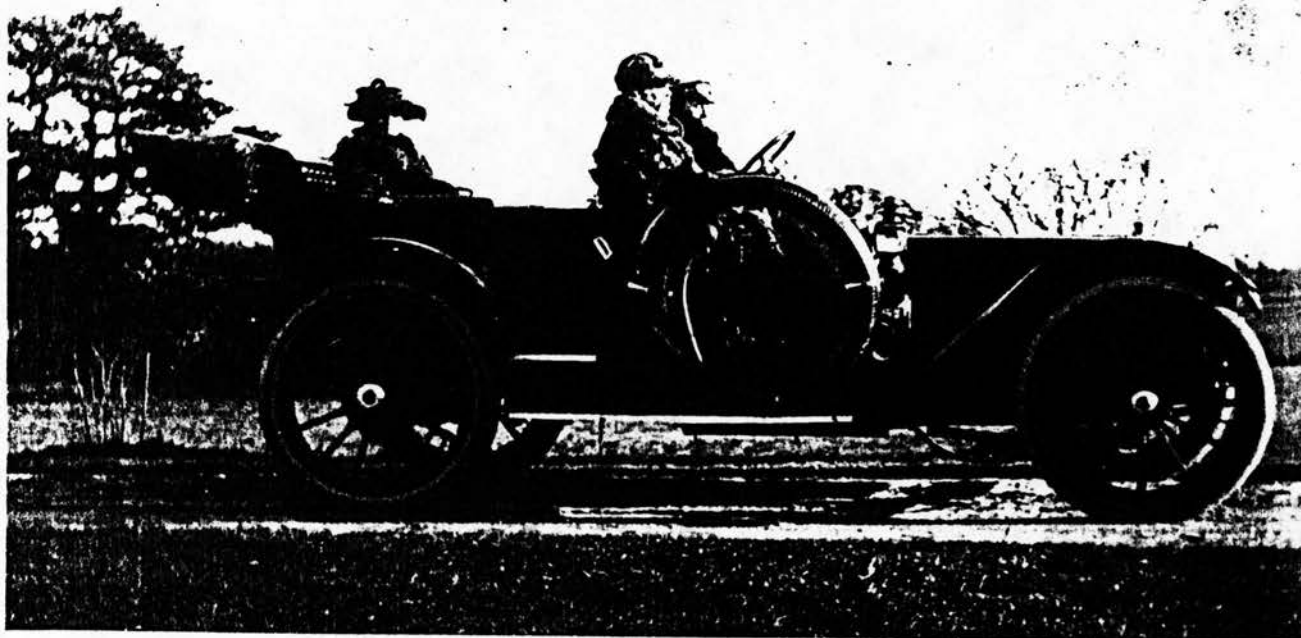
The work was done with dispatch, for in June 1891, JER and family moved in.¹⁶ Records kept by John Ellis at the time, and now located at the Theodore Roosevelt Association, indicate that the

cost of the original Green-designed Colonial Revival structure was roughly \$9,800. Of course, there would be future expenditures for improvements and additions, both to the main house (such as papering the walls), and to the area around it (such as constructing a boat house, garage, coach house and concrete swimming pool).¹⁷

Today it is difficult not to be impressed by Meadow Croft, as John Ellis called his country estate. But his contemporaries were equally struck by its beauty. For instance, a reporter for the *New York Herald* wrote in July 1897 that,

the John Roosevelt estate is thought by many to be one of the handsomest country estates in this vicinity [i.e., Sayville-Bayport]. The fine colonial house is built at the edge of a forest of pines and commands a view of forest and meadows, and winding streams. A long avenue of willow trees leads from the distant country road to the cottage.¹⁸

When JER first moved into his "cottage," he was not yet 40 years of age. Being relatively young, and physically active, he was able to pursue a variety of past-times during his summers at Meadow Croft. Indeed, in the words of a cousin, John Ellis "enthusiastically indulged in every form of recreation that anybody told

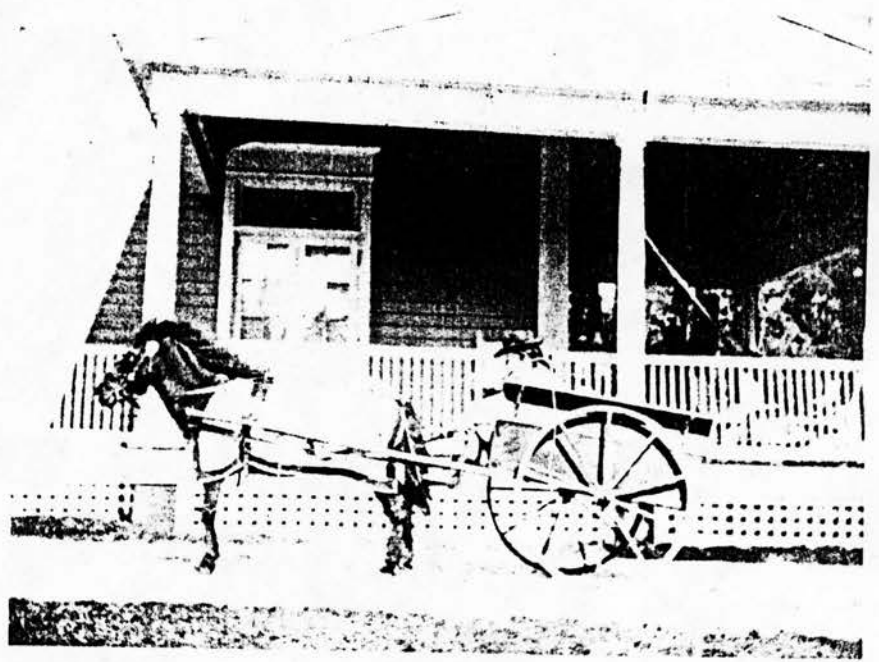


John Ellis Roosevelt at the wheel on the Meadow Croft entrance driveway.

him was amusing." He was, for example, a devotee of ice boating, a golfer, and, according to his cousin, "a reckless horseman."¹⁹

Probably JER's favorite sport, however, was sailing. He was an early and active member, as well as an officer, of the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club (founded in 1871). Later, he joined some neighbors, including his father and brother, Robert Sr. and Robert Jr., in establishing the South Side Yacht Club, of which he was Commodore from 1901 to 1907.²⁰ Like many good sailors, John Ellis also had an interest in boat design, and he gained some local fame for "Mary and Lamb," a proa which he devised and had built. Explaining the attraction of the proa - a boat of Malaysian origin with a single sail and outrigger - he asserted that,

I have owned and sailed about every kind of boat, from a canoe to a schooner yacht, but give me a proa for both comfort and sport. It is iceboat sailing on the water. Although the Mary and Lamb, as I call my proa, has not a single speed line in her design, this being sacrificed to attain light draught and utility, under certain conditions she goes like a whirlwind. When the ordinary boat is staggering under two reefs my proa



"Pansy" Roosevelt in Merry Legs.

wakes up and shows such a desire to get there that it is truly exhilarating.²¹

Along with being an avid yachtsman, JER was, at least during his first decade or so at Meadow Croft, a keen cyclist. A member of the Michaux Club of New York (an organization whose members enjoyed playing polo matches and do-

ing the Virginia Reel on bicycles) and a local consul of the League of American Wheelmen, John Ellis was, in the estimation of one observer, "the most graceful bicyclist in Sayville." Eager to promote his sport, JER participated in a number of local events during the 1890's. For instance, in 1895 he led a Sayville bicycle flower parade.

Holiday Greetings

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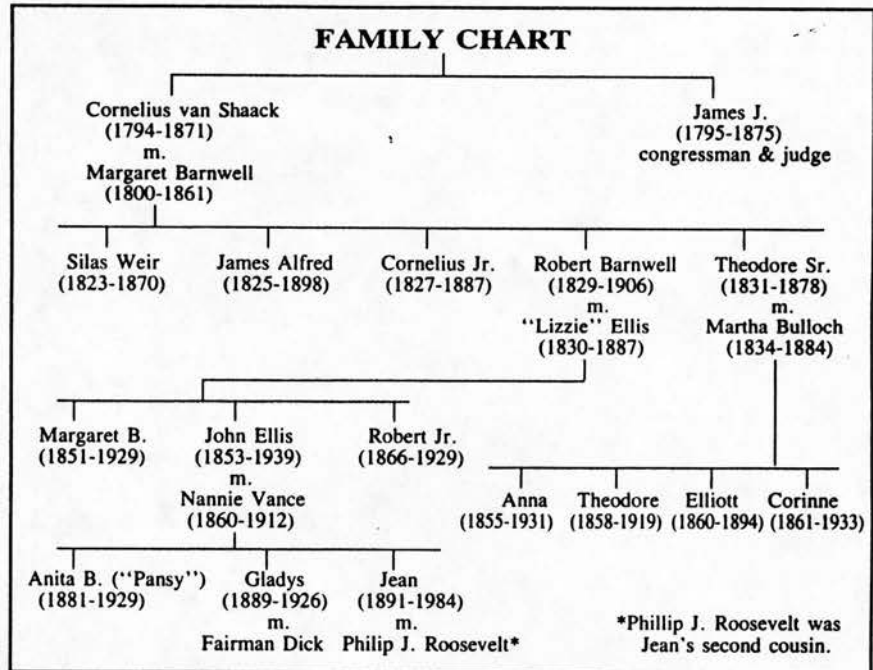
Moreover, at his own expense, he built a bicycle path along the highway fronting his estate.²²

When, early in this century, the auto began to compete for road space with the bicycle, John Ellis promptly bought a car. In fact, he was one of the first New Yorkers to own an automobile. And as early as 1904, according to the *Suffolk County News*, he drove from his home in New York to Meadow Croft.²³ More extensive trips followed. In 1910, while wintering with his family in southern California, he motored from San Bernardino to San Francisco. The next year, apparently unimintimidated by the roads of that era, he drove his Oldsmobile from New York City to Cape Cod, thence north through New England to Montreal, and returned home through the Adirondacks! That the journey was not trouble-free we can gather from a little poem written by JER and entitled, "Ode to Mendon Mountain,"

*There once was a man with a car
Who went off to tour very far,
Car got hot climbing mountains,
Kept him looking for fountains,
And he found the road very bizarre.*²⁴

John Ellis lived a privileged existence - as our references to nannies and tutors, travel and estates, sailing boats and motorcars suggest. But social and economic advantage did not exempt him or other Roosevelts, including Theodore and Elliott, from personal tragedy. Thus, in 1884 Theodore suffered a devastating loss when his wife and mother both died on the same February day. And Elliott, who lost his young wife to diphtheria in 1892, and his three-year-old son to scarlet fever in 1893, himself fell victim to illness, alcoholism and despair in 1894.²⁵

As for JER; his wife, Nannie, succumbed to typhoid fever at Meadow Croft in April, 1912. In 1914, he was married at his brother's house in Washington D.C. to Mrs. Edith Hammersly Biscoe. She was the sister of Robert's wife. Two years later this marriage ended in an acrimonious separation suit, which in turn, served to deepen a rift between the brothers. Nor was this the end of his travails. His daughter, Gladys, the wife of Fairman Dick, was thrown from her horse and killed while riding to the hounds with



the Meadow Brook Club, in November, 1926. This was the first such fatality in the history of the Club. And his oldest daughter, Pansy, who was a victim of dementia praecox, died three years later.²⁶

Yet despite his personal sorrows, JER maintained his psychological equilibrium. As he grew older he gave up the more physically demanding diversions of his younger days, and found satisfaction, and perhaps solace, in painting. He fashioned a studio for himself in the carriage house, and during the summer season repaired to the building to paint. He was quite serious about his art, and at times he painted "all day" (that is, except for the few days each week he commuted to his law office in Manhattan). Not surprisingly, the subject matter of many of his canvasses and water colors were the sea and sailing boats.²⁷

While John Ellis continued to pass his summers at Meadow Croft, in the last years of his life he spent his winters at Delray Beach, Florida. And it was there, after months of deteriorating health, that he died on 9 March 1939. He was 86 years of age.

JER was survived by his daughter, Jean, who in a letter to a cousin, penned a brief but loving portrait of her father. As Jean wrote to John Ellis,

He was quite a remarkable feller in many ways. He could do almost

anything he tried better than average well, and he tried about everything. Any sport you like to name he was good at. He made quite a pretty pile in the law, starting at the age of 21, with no special help from his father. He sang well enough to be in a church choir in his youth, he could tune and repair musical instruments, he could paint, he could dance... he was athletic, he was a carpenter, he was a first class mechanic and electrician, [and] a yachtsman as we know. And always he could crack a joke and have a merry comeback.²⁸

In short, JER was a man of physical vigor and varied talents, who surmounted his personal misfortunes and led a life of quiet privilege. If John Ellis was not the "typical" Roosevelt, he was, we would suggest, typical of a good many of his clan.

NOTES

1. The best history of the family is, Nathan Miller, *The Roosevelt Chronicles* (Garden City, New York, 1979).
2. We wish to acknowledge our debt to Mr. P. James Roosevelt, who shared with us his recollections and impressions of his grandfather, John Ellis Roosevelt.
3. For background on Robert B. Roosevelt see Richard Harmond and Donald

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Weinhardt, "Robert Barnwell Roosevelt On The Great South Bay," *Long Island Forum*, L (August/September 1987), 164-71.

4. David McCullough, *Mornings On Horseback* (New York, 1981) discusses the four children of Theodore Sr., and their early education.

5. *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt: National Edition* (20 vols., New York, 1926), II, 183-92.

6. Theodore Roosevelt to John Ellis and Nannie Roosevelt, 4 September 1881, Jean S. Roosevelt Collection (Theodore Roosevelt Association, Oyster Bay).

7. TR to John Ellis Roosevelt, 28 August 1881, Jean S. Roosevelt Collection.

8. Carleton Putnam, *Theodore Roosevelt: The Formative Years* (New York, 1958), p. 276.

9. Theodore Roosevelt, *An Autobiography* (New York, 1925), p. 54.

10. John Ellis Roosevelt to Theodore Roosevelt, April 23, 1900 and November 1, 1907, Roosevelt MSS (Library of Congress; microfilm edition).

11. Cousin Edith Roosevelt's Reminiscences, January, 1941 (copy at Theodore Roosevelt Association).

12. J. William T. Youngs, *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Personal and Public Life* (Boston, 1985), p. 15.

13. See, for example, *Suffolk County News*, April 7, 1888.

14. *Suffolk County Deeds*, Liber 336 p. 361 (November 13, 1890). Subsequently, JER acquired another, roughly, thirty acres from his father.

15. *Meadow Croft: The Former John E. Roosevelt Estate, Sayville, Long Island* (Suffolk County Parks Department, Division of Cultural and Historic Services, 1985), p. 1.

16. *Suffolk County News*, June 13, 1891.

17. *Ibid.*, June 8, 1892, October 15, 1897, June 16, 1905.

18. John E. Roosevelt Scrapbook (Theodore Roosevelt Association).

19. Extract from Letter (of George Emlen Roosevelt) to Mr. Leary A. Lincoln, March 25th, 1953 (copy at Theodore Roosevelt Association).

20. W.P. Stephens, *The Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club: Origins and Early History, 1871-1896*. (New York, 1963), pp. 28-9, 32, 114, 139; *Sayville Yacht Club, 1901-1976* (privately printed pamphlet).

21. H.G. "Mary and Her Little Lamb," *The Rudder* (undated article found in a John E. Roosevelt Scrapbook at the Theodore Roosevelt Association).

22. John E. Roosevelt Scrapbook (Theodore Roosevelt Association); *Suffolk County News*, May 29, 1896.

23. *Suffolk County News*, June 10, 1904.

24. "Automobilia" (John E. Roosevelt Scrapbook at the Theodore Roosevelt Association).

25. McCullough, *Mornings on Horseback*, p. 283; Youngs, *Eleanor Roosevelt*, p. 49.

26. The data in this paragraph was taken from the John E. Roosevelt file at the Theodore Roosevelt Association. For the separation, see *New York Times*, June 7, 8, 9, and 27, 1916.

27. We are indebted to Mr. Barney Loughlin for giving us a sense of JER's later years at Meadow Croft.

28. Jean Roosevelt to George Emlen Roosevelt, April 6, 1939. John E. Roosevelt File (Theodore Roosevelt Association).

The authors collaborated previously, as mentioned in a Long Island Forum article, see Note 3.

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inevitable lie destroyed in the wake of their own "foul dust." You could not foresee it, old sport, but, as the West declined, the East collapsed.

NOTES

1. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), 4.
2. *Ibid.*, 48, 3, 5.
3. For the origin and growth of Great Neck and the Manhasset peninsular, see Henry Isham Hazelton, *The Boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens Counties of Nassau and Suffolk, Long Island*, 7 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing, 1925) 2:900-902, 913; for the estates, see Dennis P. Sobin, *Dynamics of Community Change: the Case of Long Island's Declining "Gold Coast"* (Port Washington: Ira J. Friedman, 1968), and Robert B. MacKay, "Long Island Country Houses and Their Architects: 1860-1940," *LHJ* 6 (Spring 1994):168-90; Fitzgerald, *Gatsby*, 6.
4. Fitzgerald, "How to Live on \$36,000 A Year," *Saturday Evening Post*, 5 April 1924, 94.
5. Fitzgerald, *Gatsby*, 41, 47, 63; Hazelton, 2:913. Ring Lardner was Fitzgerald's neighbor, drinking companion, and closest Great Neck friend.
6. John Held Jr., *The New Yorker*, 16 July 1927, 17.
7. Matthew J. Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 176; Fitzgerald, "How to Live on \$36,000 A Year," . 94.
8. Fitzgerald, *Gatsby*, 6.
9. *Ibid.*, 26, 34, 69, 171, 73, 69.
10. *Ibid.*, 13; Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 263, 297-98.
11. Fitzgerald to Edmund Wilson, May 1921, in Andrew Turnbull, ed., *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 417; Stoddard, "Kindred Britain," *Saturday Evening Post*, 5 April 1924, 19, 89-90, 93, and *The Revolt Against Civilization: The Menace of the Under Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921).
12. Fitzgerald, *Gatsby*, 130.
13. Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West (Der Untergang des Abendlandes)* (1918-1922; authorized translation with notes by Charles Francis Atkinson, 2 vols. [New York: Knopf, 1926-28]; T[homas] S[tearns] Eliot, *The Waste Land, and Other Poems* (1922; reprint, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1934); Fitzgerald, *Gatsby*, 23; Marius Brewley, "Scott Fitzgerald's Criticism of America," *Sewanee Review* 62 (Spring 1954), 223.
14. Richard J. Harrison, *L.I.R.R. Memoirs: The Making of a Steam Locomotive Engineer* (New York: Quadrant Press, 1981), 8. On the first New York World's Fair's opening day (30 April 1939) a *New York Times* supplement reported that 30,000 men worked 190 days on ash removal, replacing 7 million cubic yards of fill with 800,000 cubic yards of top soil and building two great artificial lakes; removing the ashes alone cost \$2,200,000 (Larry Zim, Mel Lerner, and Herbert Rolles, *World of Tomorrow: The 1939 New York World's Fair* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 31; see also Ron Ziel, *The Long Island Railroad in Early Photographs* (New York: Dover Publications, 1990), 48, and Helen Harrison, "From Dump to Glory: Robert Moses and the Flushing Meadow Improvement," in Joann Krieg, ed., *Robert Moses: Single-Minded Genius* (Interlaken, NY: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1989), 91-100.
15. Fitzgerald, *Gatsby*, 182.
16. Bruccoli, 161.
17. Fitzgerald to Maxwell Perkins, 6 June 1940, in Turnbull, ed., 289-90.

Roosevelt Family

"Lost and Found"
**Love and Luck: The Story of a Summer's
Loitering on the Great South Bay, by Robert
Barnwell Roosevelt**

Editor's note: "Lost and Found" is an ongoing series of reviews of worthwhile but all-but forgotten novels, memoirs, and other books about Long Island and Long Islanders.

By Richard P. Harmond

Robert Barnwell Roosevelt was a man of varied interests and talents. For a number of years he owned and edited a newspaper, the *New York Citizen*. A reform Democrat, he was an active member of a famous Committee of Seventy that delivered the coupe de grâce to the Tweed Ring in 1871. He served a term in Congress (1871-1873), and was a New York City alderman (1882), minister to the Netherlands (1888-1889), and treasurer of the National Democratic Committee in 1892. He was a pioneer conservationist, who may well have helped shape the environmentalist views of his nephew, Theodore Roosevelt. He was a skilled fly fisherman, a yachtsman, and a hunter. And he was the author of eight books.¹

Several of these volumes dealt with fishing and hunting, and two, *Five Acres Too Much* (1869) and *Progressive Petticoats* (1874), were works of satirical fiction. The former was a clever satire on the amateur farming suggested by Edmund Morris's *Ten Acres Enough* (1864), while the latter poked gentle fun at the male-female relationship.²

Love and Luck, published in 1886, was his last book and only romantic novel. Although a work of fiction, it is useful to historians because it is filled with period details and observations. Robert B. Roosevelt, or RBR, as he was called, knew Long Island well—he fished and hunted on the Island for years and owned an estate in Sayville, on the south Shore.³

Love and Luck is structured around a group of people who spend a summer sailing about "delicious[ly] drifting," in the author's words) on Great South Bay in a sharpie named *Morning-Glory*.⁴ The ship companions, all of whom, we are assured, come from "good families," include Laughton Osborn, the "commodore" (clearly modeled on RBR himself); Mrs. Osborn, "fair, fat, and possibly forty"; and their offspring, Kate, a beautiful, headstrong brunette, and three younger children, Kenneth, Madge, and Granville. to this assemblage add Kate's blonde and giddy cousin, Dolly Belleville, and two eligible young bachelors, Jack Travers, a struggling artist, and Cecil Montague, a wealthy dandy.

As it happens, Jack Travers secretly loves Kate, who, however, is formally engaged to Cecil. But the latter, in turn, is strongly attracted to Dolly, who, it is assumed (at least by the commodore), will one day marry Jack. After several months together on the *Morning-Glory*, Kate discovers she really loves Jack, and Dolly falls into Cecil's embrace. Needless to say, since this is 1880's America, Jack and Cecil are perfect gentlemen throughout, and Kate and Dolly are proper Victorian ladies. A chaste kiss and hug now and then are about the only physical displays of affection shared by the young couples. And when the ladies retire to their bunks at night, they do so without male companionship.

Although the book lacks the sort of lusty action we have come to expect in a novel, RBR manages to hold our attention. He has a lively style, and the novel is spiced with good humor. Lest our attention flag, he includes a boat race (won by *Morning-Glory*), and a near-drowning, with the poor victim, Dolly, at one point rolled back and forth over a barrel to clear her lungs of water.

RBR conducts the reader on a tour of Great South Bay, the eastern segment of which was still fairly remote and isolated. "When they got under way," he informs us, "it seemed as though they had escaped into a watery desert and left human existence behind." "Instead of being shipwrecked on a desert island," he adds, referring to the eastern part of the bay, "they were afloat in a desolate bay."⁵

The western portion of Great South Bay was much less "desolate." Here RBR briefly describes a number of sights, like the Fire Island lighthouse, and a nearby cluster of buildings where vast quantities of the small bony fish called menhaden, or mossbunkers, were malodorously converted into manure and oil.

Here and there, RBR inserts his views on the locals. He makes a point, for example, of the provincialism and apparent lack of ambition of South Shore natives:

it was the rule among the workers in the South Bay of Long Island to attend strictly to their own business, and never go out of their way or waste time on visionary exploring expeditions. The clammer goes clamming, the fisherman looks to his nets, the owner of the pleasure-boat takes his party to the wrecks and the best "drops" for sport, but each confines himself to his own department...and makes no adventurous speculations in unknown waters. There are men who have sailed all their lives from some cove, where they keep their vessels, in as straight a line as they could go, to the spot where they raked clams in the summer and "tonged" oysters in the winter, without ever having travelled a mile in either direction away from these places...If the mussel man brings up a clam he looks at it askance, leaves it in his mussel heap, and adds it to the fertilizer he is composting. If the clammer takes an oyster, overboard it goes as rubbish; and if the bunker-boat makes a haul of Spanish mackerel, into the vat they are pitched, and out they come in the shape of oil and scrap. Long Islanders believe in the division of labor, and not too much of any sort.⁶

Reflecting his own culinary and alimentary interests--RBR was something of a gourmet and trencherman--considerable space in *Love and Luck* is devoted to food and eating. At one point, *Morning-Glory* puts in at Fire Island so that the commodore and his party can dine at Jesse Smith's, a well-known summer restaurant where they are served a solid Victorian meal,

as good a meal of its kind...as could be furnished by the Manhattan Club to its managing members. Among its prominent delicacies was an appetizing soup of the essence of clam, with the tough portions strained out, and just that combination of simple flavors which are the making, when they are properly commingled, of clam-broth. This was followed by a sheep's-head, split into two great steaks and boiled to a turn, over against which stood a dish of channel eels, similarly prepared and a golden brown. Then came the spring chickens, after the admirable style of Baltimore, and a loin of roast lamb, the whole closing with the famous corn-fritters, for which the establishment had a special name, and Camembert and Roquefort, the two kings of cheese. All was washed down with "*Cordon Rouge*," *frappé* to that condition so it would hardly come from its glass prison without a good shaking of the bottle. "There," exclaimed the commodore, "that dinner ought to satisfy the most unreasonable of souls and stomachs."⁷

Though the commodore, his family, and guests occasionally dine at restaurants in Babylon, most of their meals are prepared on board the *Morning-Glory*, with Great South Bay the main source of food. The commodore, Jack, and others in the party rake for clams a few times and do a great deal of fishing. Chiefly, they catch--and consume--blackfish, sea bass, bluefish, and sheepshead, so called "from the resemblance of their teeth to the round cobble-stones of the sheep's mouth" and, in RBR's opinion, "the very sovereigns of the salt-water."⁸

Not content with dining on fish all summer long, the commodore, Jack, and Cecil decide to go on a bay snipe hunt (along the way killing an owl and a sea gull so that Dolly and Kate might have feathers for their bonnets). Hiding patiently in a blind, they eventually succeed in their mission. Writes RBR,

the flight of birds had been good. Quite a pile of the slain had been collected in the shade of the bushes which constituted the stand. The commodore had been in rare spirits, having shot to his satisfaction.

Later, Mrs. Osborn uses the birds in a meat pie and once again, RBR shares the meal with his readers:

The birds were cooked to perfection, all the strong flavor, which often makes bay-birds rank, gone, qualified or dispersed by the corrective onion, and they were tender, delicate, and juicy. There were no leaded lumps of dough, balls of dyspepsia, purgatorial pot-pie pellets, to be found in it, but the crisp upper crust was light enough to eat as cake and took up the gravy like bread. Nevertheless, the pie was satisfying, and

the layers held out bravely.⁹

What strikes the modern reader in these sections of *Love and Luck*—aside from the author's preoccupation with food and its preparation—is the strong, and doubtlessly accurate, impression of the natural abundance of Great South Bay, and of its casual exploitation by the commodore and his party. Indeed, the commodore boasts of the bay's riches—much as Americans at the time boasted of and exploited the riches of the American West. As the commodore tells Jack, "We are never short of anything here—it is the grandest sporting resort in the world."¹⁰

Yet even then there were signs that Great South Bay was coming under environmental stress. The commodore, for instance, was concerned with the future of the menhaden, which he thought were overfished. And, after the success of the snipe hunt, Jack tells Kate that he, the commodore, and Cecil did "wonderfully good for these days." But then he observes,

there was a time when these birds were so abundant that they could be killed by hundreds almost every day, but their confiding nature was too fatal to them, and they are diminishing so rapidly that in a few years they bid fair to be extinct.¹¹

Still, neither the commodore nor Jack—and both obviously mirror the outlook of RBR—seems especially disturbed at the possible disappearance of the menhaden and the bay snipe. Since RBR was prominent in the nineteenth-century conservation movement, *Love and Luck* reminds us of how much more environmentally aware we have become since his day.¹²

In sum, *Love and Luck* is a novel to be valued for the instruction it provides and the pleasure it affords. Unfortunately, the book has been out of print for years. But a reader lucky enough to obtain a copy, perhaps at a garage sale or second-hand book shop, is in for a treat, drawn back to a time of environmental innocence, hearty eating, and Victorian propriety. And, if the reader also happens to appreciate Great South Bay (its resources, alas, somewhat diminished since the 1880s), so much the better.

NOTES

1. *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v., "Roosevelt, Robert Barnwell."
2. Robert Barnwell Roosevelt, *Five Acres too Much: A Truthful Elucidation of the Attractions of the Country, and a Careful Consideration of the Question of Profit and Loss as Involved in Amateur Farming with much Valuable Advice and Instruction to Those about Purchasing Large or Small Places in the Rural Districts* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1869), and *Progressive Petticoats, or Dressed to Death: An Autobiography of a Married Man* (New York: G. W. Carleton, 1874); Edmund Morris, *Ten Acres Enough: A Practical Experience Showing How a Very Small Farmer May Be Made to Keep a Very Large Family with Extensive and Profitable Experience in the Cultivation of the Smaller Fruits* (New York: J. Miller, 1864).
3. Robert Barnwell Roosevelt, *Love and Luck: A Summer's Loitering on the Great South Bay* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1886); for RBR's connection to Long Island, see Richard P. Hammond and Donald Weinhardt, "Robert Barnwell Roosevelt on the Great South Bay," *Long Island Forum* 50 (August/September, 1987): 164-71.

4. The sharpie, a flatbottom boat with one or two masts, and a shallow draught, was an ideal craft for Great South Bay.
5. Roosevelt, *Love and Luck*, 98.
6. *Ibid.*, 224.
7. *Ibid.*, 122.
8. *Ibid.*, 175-76; sheepheads still are caught, though rarely in Long Island waters.
9. *Ibid.*, 132, 147.
10. *Ibid.*, 67.
11. *Ibid.*, 138. Today, the menhaden in Long Island waters are used for bait for bluefish and other denizens of the deep; although not considered endangered, they are fished to the near-maximum limit for their species. The once abundant snipe were slaughtered indiscriminately by late nineteenth-century market hunters, but conservation measures have preserved this long-billed shorebird (John K. Terres, *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980], 784). Geese and ducks are the only water birds hunted on the Island today, in season, and with bag limits (I thank the staff of the Wildlife and Marine Fisheries Divisions of the Department of Environmental Conservation for information on shore birds and fish stocks of Great South Bay).
12. At the time *Love and Luck* was published, RBR was president of both the New York Association for the Protection of Game, a pioneer conservation organization, and the New York Fisheries Commission, the precursor of today's department of environmental conservation (see Richard P. Hammond, "Robert Barnwell Roosevelt and the Early Conservation Movement," *Theodore Roosevelt Association Journal* 14 (Summer 1988): 2-11.

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Roosevelt Family

SUMMER AT MEADOW CROFT

THE ARCHITECTURE
OF
ISAAC HENRY GREEN, JR.



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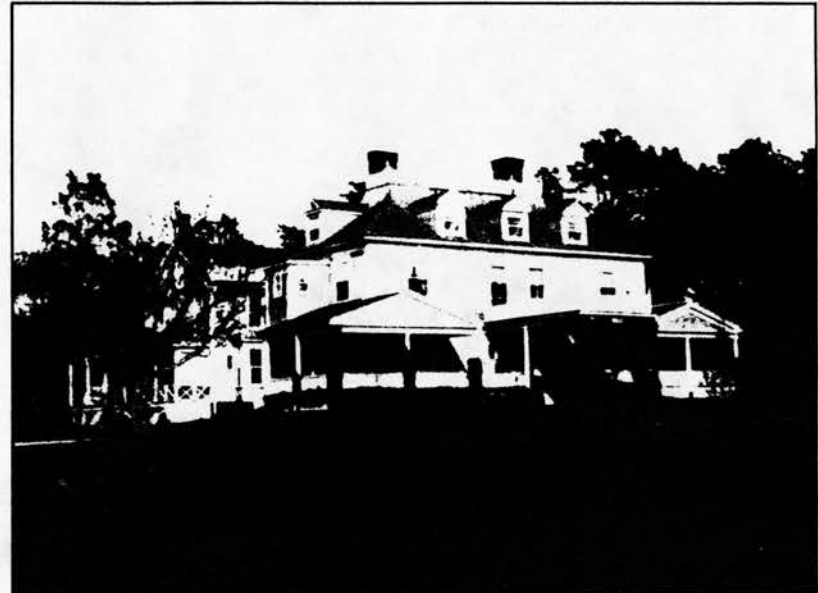
Curator: Constance Gibson Currie

Isaac Green's architecture creates pictures of gentle, comfortable Long Island summers. His shingle and tudor style cottages were built along the island's south shore during the late 1800s and early 1900s. We can find them in Sayville, Babylon, Bayport, Oakdale, Bayshore, Islip, East Hampton, Quogue etc. You can travel to Mt. Desert Island, Maine Irvington, N.Y. or coastal New Jersey and find more of architect Green's lovely houses.

Mr. Green was a devoted Long Islander. His work proved that he could have removed to Manhattan and worked with the "big" architects, but he chose to live and work in Sayville, the place of his birth, marriage and career.

At the time of Isaac Green's birth, Long Island was at a turning point. The LIRR was turning the south shore into a summer resort. As a result the building industry was booming. There was a need for housing and commercial, industrial and public buildings.

Young Isaac Green grew up with a successful entrepreneur father, a man he greatly admired. A maternal cousin, George Skidmore, who had become a successful architect, became mentor to Isaac Green. Isaac Green began his career while working with his father in the family's lumber yard in Sayville. His success was furthered by his family's influential friends and business associates, not to mention his position of influence in St. Anns Episcopal Church.



John Ellis Roosevelt Estate, "Meadow Croft"

This exhibit focuses on the variety of the architect's buildings, there are over 200 buildings documented. The photographs and information are part of an ongoing "work in progress" that will culminate in a biography and catalog of the architect's buildings by Constance Currie. Connie would welcome any additional information on Isaac Green's work.

CONSTANCE GIBSON CURRIE

Constance Currie received her bachelor of arts from Empire State College. Mrs. Currie majored in American History with a concentration in Long Island history. Isaac Green has been her ongoing project since she volunteered to help the Suffolk County Parks, Division of Historic Services research the authorship of Meadow Croft. This led to a study of Isaac Green's life and career. It is particularly rewarding to be back at Meadow Croft, where it all began.

Constance Currie would like to thank the following for their help along the way.

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The Bayport Heritage Association

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Natalie Arucci Stiefel, for her help in setting up the Photo Exhibit.

Mrs. Marge Tyson and Mrs. Jane Herring, Isaac Green's granddaughters who have given me wonderful descriptions of him that have helped bring him alive.

References:

The Suffolk County News, The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, The Longwood Public Library; Bayles Collection, The Patchogue Public Library; Long Island Room, The Smithtown Library; Long Island Room, The Three Village Historical Society, The East Hampton Public Library; The Pennypacker Collection, Lancaster, Stern, Hefner, "East Hampton's Heritage - An Illustrated Architectural Record", W.W. Norton & Company 1982, Emma S. Clark Public Library

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