

**HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT  
FOR  
MEADOW CROFT**

Former Summer Home  
of  
John Ellis Roosevelt

by

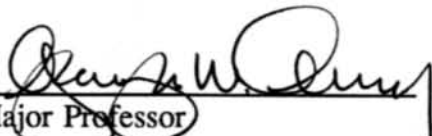
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A project  
submitted in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Master of Landscape Architecture Degree

State University of New York  
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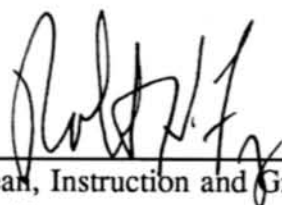
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Collins, Richard C. **Historic Landscape Report for Meadow Croft, Former Summer Home of John Ellis Roosevelt.** Typed and bound project, 137 pages, 8 maps, 39 figures, 1991.

The project presents results of research conducted during the completion of an Historic Landscape Report for the Suffolk County Division of Historic Services, which includes the past and present conditions of the grounds, surroundings, and environment of Meadow Croft, the former home of John Ellis Roosevelt (1853-1939), in Sayville, New York. The report provides a methodology for the development of the restoration plan, in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Archeology and Historic Preservation, and was designed to meet the plan requirements for the New York State Bureau of Historic Preservation.

The methodology of the report is divided into three sections; the first documents and presents the historic research of the landscape in order to determine its significance, to analyze its existing condition, and to evaluate its integrity. The second section evaluates and assesses the historic landscape preservation needs of the landscape and selects the appropriate treatment. The final section formulates a plan consisting of guidelines and recommendations that can be implemented to achieve the established objectives of a restoration of the landscape.

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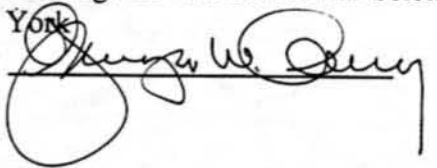
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HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT  
FOR  
*MEADOW CROFT*



SAYVILLE, L.I.

"MEADOWCROFT" RESIDENCE OF J.E. ROOSEVELT.

*we walked part this entrance last evening. Its beautiful*

FORMER SUMMER HOME OF  
JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Throughout the development of this report, many people have provided valuable insight and assistance. At this time I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee, Professors George W. Curry, S. Scott Shannon, and Matthew Potteiger, for their contributions, enthusiasm, and support of my work. Their insights and thoughtful questions contributed to the richness of my experience. Thanks are also in order for Richard Martin and Lance Mallamo of the Suffolk County Division of Historic Services, who provided me with every opportunity to successfully complete the necessary research during the internship portion of this project. Finally, I must thank my wife, Gina, for her computer and editorial skills, but more importantly, for her unfailing support, encouragement, and understanding, without which I would not have been able to complete this project.

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# INTRODUCTION

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## REPORT BACKGROUND

Over the past 50 years, the south shore of Long Island has undergone a tremendous growth of residential development, which has unfortunately had a highly negative impact on the surrounding environment. One major area of impact caused by the uncontrolled growth was the depletion and pollution of the tidal wetlands that stretch along much of the Island's south shore. Many of these fragile habitats, because of their perceived lack of usefulness, were filled in for new developments, while others slowly deteriorated due to the polluted runoff of the surrounding areas.

In the 1970's, Suffolk County, in response to heightened environmental awareness of the important nature of these fragile wetland environments, began to purchase lands that encompassed vital watersheds and tidal wetlands for the purpose of their preservation. The Sans Souci Preserve was the result of such a program to protect these lands. Unknowingly, the County in the process was protecting another valuable resource which also fell victim to residential development, Long Island's historic past.

Located within a portion of the land purchased for the Sans Souci Preserve was the 74 acre former summer estate of John Ellis Roosevelt. Although the estate was well-known throughout the local community, it was considered by most a derelict site with no value. In the 1980's, upon the urging of Donald Weinhardt, the President and founder of the Bayport Heritage

Association, the Suffolk County Division of Historic Services began to investigate the estate's historic integrity and value. The investigation eventually led to the discovery of Meadow Croft's historic significance, which resulted in its nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

A short time after its nomination, the County completed the Historic Structures Report (HSR) for Meadow Croft (1986) which documented and analyzed the building's initial construction and subsequent alterations, the current state of the building's architectural materials and structural stability, and selected appropriate preservation treatment for the structure: restoration. The HSR for Meadow Croft has provided the guidelines for the subsequent restoration which has occurred to the residence, and also provided enough pertinent information to warrant the further research and evaluation of the surrounding estate grounds. Thus, this Historic Landscape Report represents the next stage in the restoration of Meadow Croft.

## **ORGANIZATION OF REPORT**

The Historic Landscape Report for Meadow Croft consists of three components:

- 1) a Report which summarizes the results of research and analysis, and presents site specific preservation recommendations through the use of text, maps, photographs, and set of reduced 1/2 scale plans;
- 2) an appendix which supplements the report in more detail;
- 3) a full scale set of plans documenting the site's existing conditions, analysis, and recommendation.

The report is organized in five sections. Chapter 1 establishes the purpose, methodology, and procedure for the study and introduces the reader to the historical relevance of Meadow Croft and its location. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the site's history and its evolution through the present time and evaluates its historic significance. Chapter 3 is a comprehensive documentation of the current condition and visual character of the landscape. Chapter 4 assesses the relationships revealed between existing conditions and the results of historical research. And, finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the relevant findings about the landscape and outlines the philosophies, objectives, methods, and options for the site's restoration and management. Throughout the report in related chapters are 11" x 17" half scale copies of the plans included in Appendix D. These plans are located at the end of the chapters for the ease of reference.

The Appendix contains supplemental information and supporting documents including:

- A - History of property ownership: a chronological account of the ownership and acquisition of the Meadow Croft grounds beginning with the earliest known proprietor through current ownership.
- B - Timeline of Meadow Croft's development and related significant events: a detailed compilation of landscape references and sources found through historical research which are organized chronologically and contains other general references to the Roosevelt's family history.
- C - Oral history of Barney Loughlin: a recorded account of the separate interviews in which Barney, former caretaker of Meadow Croft, provides insight to the past conditions and the lifestyle of the estate from his earliest childhood memories to the present.
- D - References.
- E - Scaled drawings prepared for this study. Sheet 1 is a copy of the 1906 Roosevelt Family Compound property map. Sheet 2 contains the contextual map of Meadow Croft and the surrounding area (1" = 300'). Sheets 3 & 4 are the Existing Condition Plans (1" = 100', 1" = 50') documenting the as found conditions of the estate. Sheets 5 & 6 contain the Site Analysis plan (1" = 100', 1" = 50') and Sheets 7 & 8 contain Preservation Concept Plan (1" = 100', 1" = 50').

## **PURPOSE, SCOPE & METHODOLOGY**

This Historic Landscape Report presents the findings of a summer long study conducted by Richard Collins, a Masters of Landscape Architecture candidate, under the direction of Suffolk County Division of Historic Services of the past and present conditions of the grounds, surroundings, and environment of Meadow Croft, the former summer home of John Ellis Roosevelt (1853 - 1939), in Sayville, New York. The purpose of this study was to:

- 1) document and present the history of the Meadow Croft landscape and adjacent areas in order to determine its historic significance, to analyze its existing conditions, and evaluate the landscape's integrity;
- 2) evaluate and assess the historic landscape preservation needs of Meadow Croft and select the appropriate treatment;
- 3) formulate a plan consisting of guidelines and recommendations to achieve the established objectives that can be implemented by the Suffolk County Department of Parks, Division of Historic Services, in the restoration, site development, and maintenance of the historic landscape.

Meadow Croft had the unique attribute of being just one of the three contiguous estates that compromised the Roosevelt Family Compound; the other two estates were owned by John's brother, Robert B. Roosevelt, Jr., and their father, Robert B. Roosevelt. Thus, although Meadow Croft is the primary focus of this report, it was also necessary to research and document the

entire Roosevelt Family Compound so that a greater understanding of Meadow Croft's historic significance and relationship to its surroundings could be reached. Robert B. Roosevelt, an uncle of President Theodore Roosevelt, was the first Roosevelt to settle on the south shore of Long Island and develop a summer estate, while most of his relatives chose to reside in Oyster Bay on the Island's north shore (Figure 1.1).

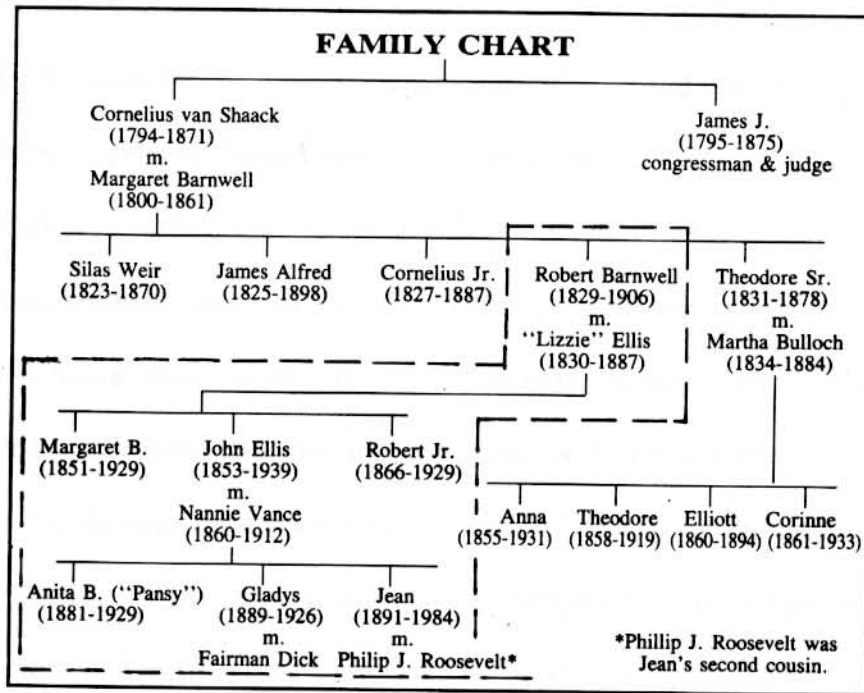


Fig. 1.1 Roosevelt Family Tree (Robert B. Roosevelt Family highlighted)

The study began with an in-depth review of all the previous research gathered during the completion of the Historic Structures Report for Meadow Croft (published 1986) by Suffolk County Department of Parks, Division of Historic Services. Additional research was conducted throughout the summer of 1990, gathering all information pertaining to the site's entire history and its historic significance. Because the landscape that exists today reveals only a small part of the rich and complex history of the landscape on which Meadow Croft was developed, it was

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

# 2 - HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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necessary to conduct extensive research in order to assess the historical appearance and significance of the landscape and to establish a chronology of the site's development throughout its occupation.

The various property survey maps developed by Suffolk County in 1971 at the time of the Meadow Croft purchase were used as base maps. Drawn at a scale of 1 inch = 100 feet with 1' contour intervals, the maps located most of the existing buildings and miscellaneous structures, drives, property lines, vegetation boundaries, and water features. Extensive field work was conducted in order to accurately document the existing conditions of the features noted on the base map. The field reconnaissance of the site's existing conditions relied primarily on the survey techniques of visual observation. The work not only encompassed plotting additional features not included on the base map, but also recording the location, identity, condition, and size of plant materials; determining the nature and extent of ecological succession of the tidal wetland and upland forest; and evaluating spatial relationships and visual character of the site. A limited archeological study was also conducted by Daria Merwin in May 1990 but it revealed little significant information. Although the primary focus of the field work was conducted on the Suffolk County-owned land at Meadow Croft, the larger context of the entire Roosevelt Family Compound, including the estates of Robert B. Roosevelt and his son, Robert, Jr., were also surveyed.

Among the historical materials used were the Roosevelt Family Collection at the Theodore Roosevelt Association, including family correspondence and published writings, ledgers, scrapbooks, photo albums, and oral histories. Titles to the land transactions were obtained in

order to complete a chronology of the occupants. Additional research conducted by other local historians also was gathered, including Connie Curry, Sayville Town Historian, and Don Weinhardt, Bayport Town Historian. The report is designed to meet the plan requirements of the New York State Bureau of Historic Sites and was formatted based on their preservation manual, The Landscape: Preservation and Restoration (NYS Bureau).

The preservation plan is the result of a thorough understanding of the site's history, existing conditions, and contemporary needs. It offers site specific recommendations for:

- 1) preserving and maintaining existent historic features;
- 2) restoring and/or reconstructing the overall form and detail of the landscape to the established historic period;
- 3) eliminating incompatible non-historic features or limiting their visual impact;
- 4) enhancing education and public programming opportunities as an historic landscape.

## **HISTORIC RELEVANCE**

Meadow Croft is one of the finest examples of a country house pleasure ground from the turn-of-the-century resort era on the south shore of Long Island. The north shore's "Gold Coast" development during the 1920's has and continues to receive a great deal of attention. However, it is little known that preceding its development, the south shore had evolved into a summer recreational playground for the New York City aristocrats. Clustered along the shoreline was a variety of elaborate country houses in a range of styles. Unfortunately, few of these estates have been able to resist the forces of suburbanization that followed in the ensuing years, resulting in their destruction.

The Meadow Croft estate is historically significant in recalling a broad pattern of development during an influential period in the history of the area. The transition of southeast Long Island from small agricultural villages to summer estates and resort communities of the wealthy was one of the dominant themes in local economic land use and development history during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries (c. 1807-1930). Meadow Croft is an excellent example of the type of informal summer estate which preceded the mansions built by the nouveau-riche on the "Gold Coast".

The grounds at Meadow Croft also contain a number of unique design features representative of the period. They are an excellent example of the popular style and function of many mid-sized estates whose layout is reflective of A.J. Downing's Victorian "country villa" concept, which encompassed both an ornamental pleasure ground and a small amateur working farm. The grounds at Meadow Croft were laid out by John E. Roosevelt, with a specific interest in maximizing the recreational features of the site. In doing so, he chose a somewhat common design concept of creating a picturesque water park, a style which was not only locally popular, but also was practiced throughout the coastal and inland wetlands of the Northeast. These wetland meadows were dredged to create not only usable solid ground, but also picturesque canals and ponds which were further enhanced for recreational purposes.

The 75.4 acre Meadow Croft estate was only part of a larger Roosevelt Family Compound comprised of two additional estates, Lotus Lake owned by John's father, Robert B. Roosevelt, and The Lilacs, owned by John's brother, Robert B. Roosevelt, Jr. The overall treatment and use of the entire Roosevelt Family Compound reflects the prominent family's interest in both

environmental conservation and a vigorous outdoor lifestyle, which was well-suited for the resort era. The family compound, as a whole, was unique and significant, and Meadow Croft lives on as a representative of the whole, telling a story much larger than its own. As one of the best preserved of the few remaining Nineteenth Century country estates, Meadow Croft is a unique example of a once popular estate design style and a vivid reminder of a transitional episode in the development of Long Island's south shore.

### **LOCATION OF MEADOW CROFT**

Meadow Croft is located on the southern shore of central Long Island fronting the Great South Bay in the Village of Sayville, Suffolk County, New York. The residential suburban community of over 12,000 people is approximately 45 miles east of New York City (Figure 1.2).

The 75.4 acre estate is situated on a peninsula-like tongue of land which lies in the midst of Suffolk County's Sans Souci Lakes Nature Preserve. The grounds are bounded to the south by Middle Road, which provides access onto the site, the Long Island Railroad to the north, and on the east and west sides by the two branches of Brown's River, which flow into the Great South Bay approximately one mile to the south. This section of relatively flat shoreline is part of the Long Island pine/oak barrens community and is composed of a tidal wetland meadow environment consisting of swampy tracts of land that follow along the stream beds to the bay.

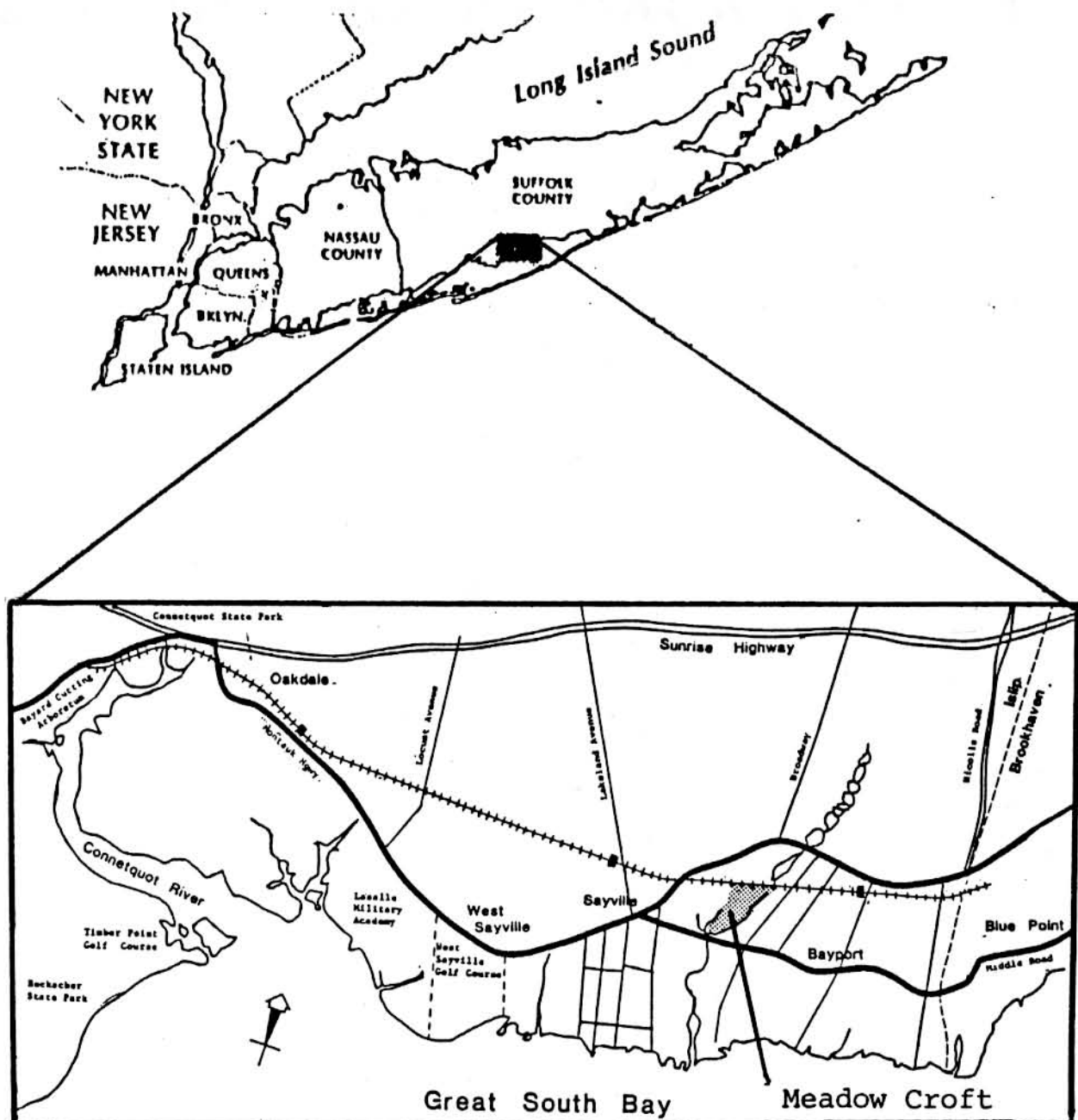


Fig. 1.2 Meadow Croft Location Map

# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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## SAYVILLE'S EARLY YEARS: 1683-1869

To have a complete understanding of the transition of the Roosevelt Family Compound from a farm into three country estates, it is necessary to review the land's early years. The land on which the Roosevelt Family Compound was developed, historically called "The Forks", had a long and diverse land use history starting with its initial settlement. The activities and events which occurred on various parts of the Compound remarkably trace the history, lifestyle, and evolution of not only Sayville, but much of the South Shore of Long Island during the 18th and 19th Centuries.

Prior to the 17th Century, the south shore of Long Island was apparently inhabited by the Secatogue Indians of the Algonquin nation, whose name interestingly translates to English as "black meadow lands", a good description of the area's topography (Dickerson, 1975). However, by the time the white settlers crossed the island from Connecticut, there was little Native American Indian activity in the area, and no additional information was discovered while conducting the research to suggest that there was any Native American activity on the Meadow Croft site. In 1683, William Nicoll of Islip, Northamptonshire, England, received a royal grant for land along the Great South Bay, almost the size of the current Islip township. For nearly 100 years this parcel of land remained intact, probably being worked by tenant farmers (Bailey, 1938). But, in 1786, William Nicoll, IV, (the original settler's grandson) found himself in debt following the Revolutionary War and was granted permission by the state to sell off some of his land.

The western portion of the Roosevelt Family Compound was part of a large tract of land purchased in 1786 by John Edwards, one of the first settlers of what was to become the Village of Sayville. His purchase encompassed the eastern portion of the original William Nicoll grant of 1697 (Figure 2.1). This land, now the eastern portion of Sayville, was farmed by the Edwards until John split up the farm among his family. His son, Stephen Edwards, was given the eastern portion of the farm along Brown's River including the western pond, which Stephen continued to farm for several years. In 1804, Stephen sold his portion of the farm to Nathan Woodhull, who built a saw mill on the pond giving it its name, Mill Pond (Edwards, pp. 1-3). During this period, the primary industries throughout the area were farming and fishing, but in the early 1800's, a combination of events - the temporary decline in the oyster industry and the increased rate of growth of New York City - forced the residents of Sayville to turn to another natural resource of the land in order to earn a living, the abundant pine woodlands. As the timber industry began to flourish, the people of Sayville went far and wide cutting down "not the short stunted pines seen at the present day surrounded by a dense growth of scrub oaks, but tall majestic trees" (Wood, p. 3). Much of this cut timber was brought to Nathan Woodhull's saw mill, where it was cut into cord and then shipped down Brown's River to the bay and taken to New York City to satisfy the growing demand (Edwards, p. 5).

The eastern portion of the Roosevelt Family compound was originally part of a purchase made by Jeremiah Terry in 1786, who constructed a mill on the pond on the east fork of Brown's River (Pelletreau, p. 247). During this period, the area in between the branches of Brown's River, "The Forks", became known as Terry's Swamp and the river was referred to as Terry's

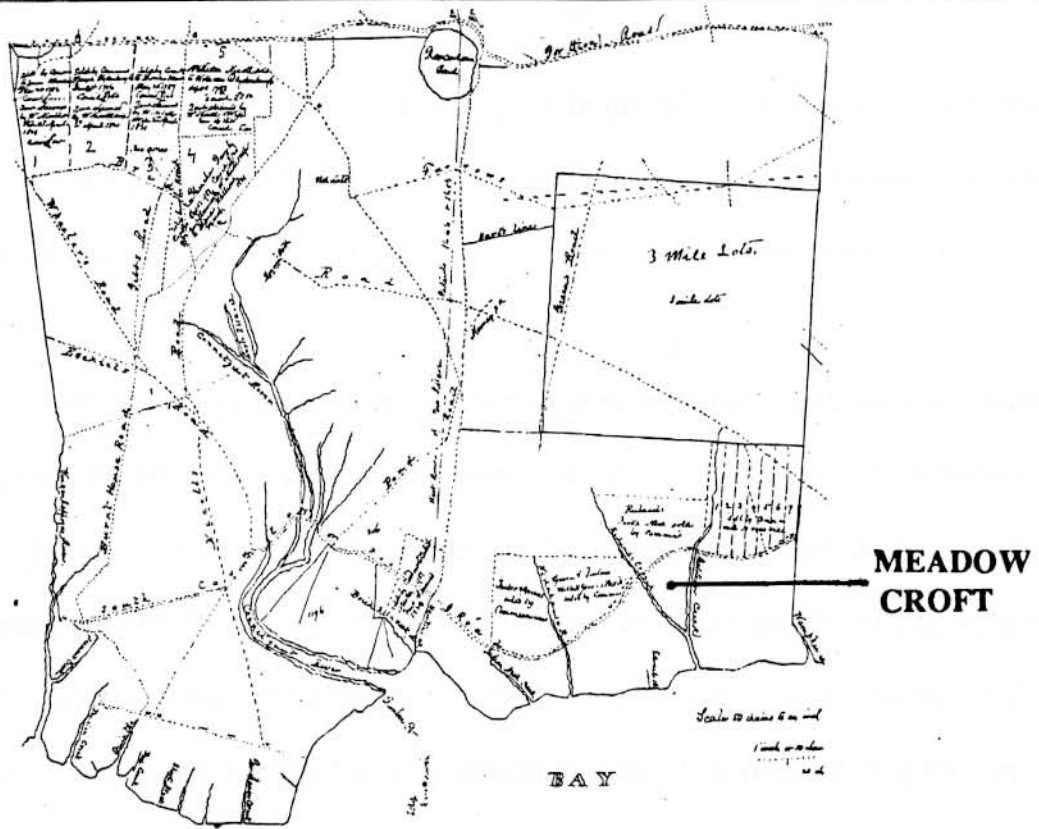


Fig. 2.1 Islip Land Grant Map, c. 1800. (Pelletreau, p. 243)

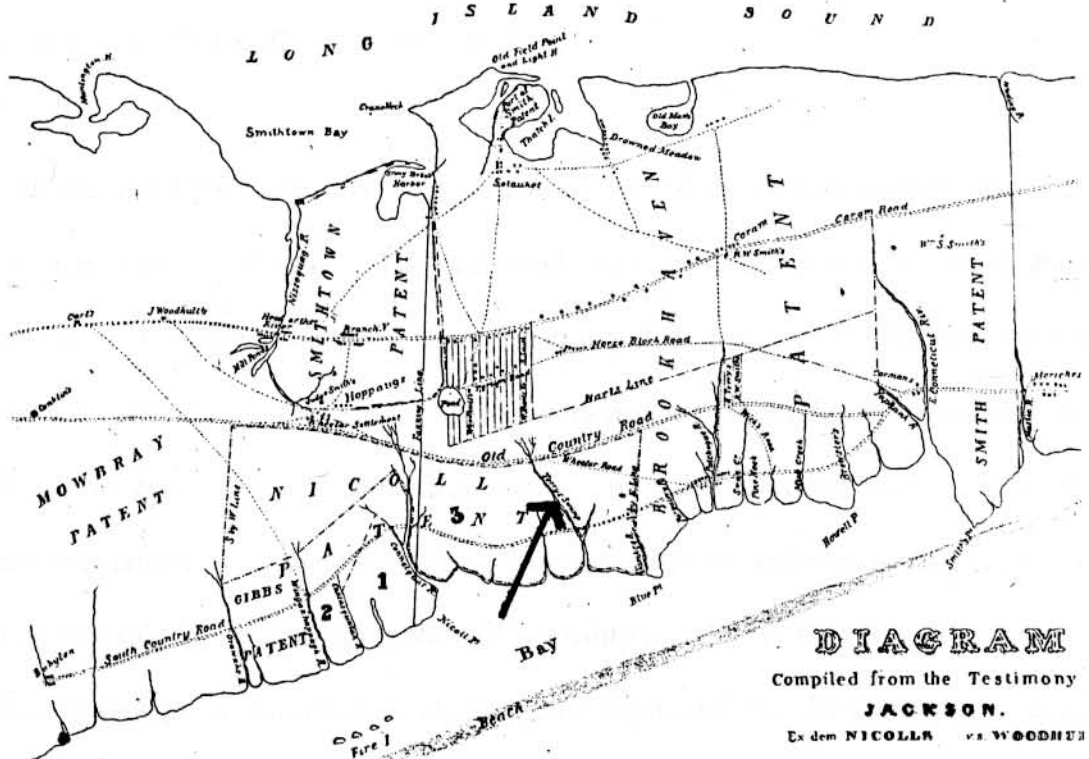


Fig. 2.2 Jeremiah Terry's property located in between "The Forks" became known as Terry's Swamp. (Pelletreau, 1903, p. 238)

Creek (Figure 2.2). The property boundary descriptions in the deeds for this period are often vague because Brown's River, which had various names (Terry's Creek and Edward's Creek), has two forks, east and west, and it is not always apparent which fork was being referred to.

Over the years, both John Edwards and Jeremiah Terry subdivided and sold off portions of their holdings, and by 1834, there were several farms and mills located on the future Roosevelt compound "The Forks" (Figure 2.3). The names of the rivers, ponds, and mills also often changed to correspond with the name of their present owner, so for a time, the east pond along Brown's River was called Willet's Pond during J. Willet's tenure on the property and Woodhull's Mill, located on the west pond, became known as Ruland's Mill. It also was during this period that Brown's River was named after the Edmund Brown Family, who operated an oyster and clam business at the river's mouth (Dickerson, p. 25).

Through the mid 1800's, the land continued to be farmed by various families, including the Willets, Youngs, Smiths, and Lanes. The traditional crops grown by these farmers and others along the south shore were grain, potatoes, turnips, and hay (Edwards, p. 13). Because the soil in this area, as with most of the south shore, was not very productive, the farmers needed to use the natural resources around them to amend the soil. From the adjoining bays, creeks, and meadows farmers obtained fish, mussels, oysters, seaweed, eel grass, and meadow-muck, which all proved to be valuable in supplementing the soil's fertility (Bayles, p. 80). The abundant salt meadows provided another natural resource which figured importantly for the farmers who would

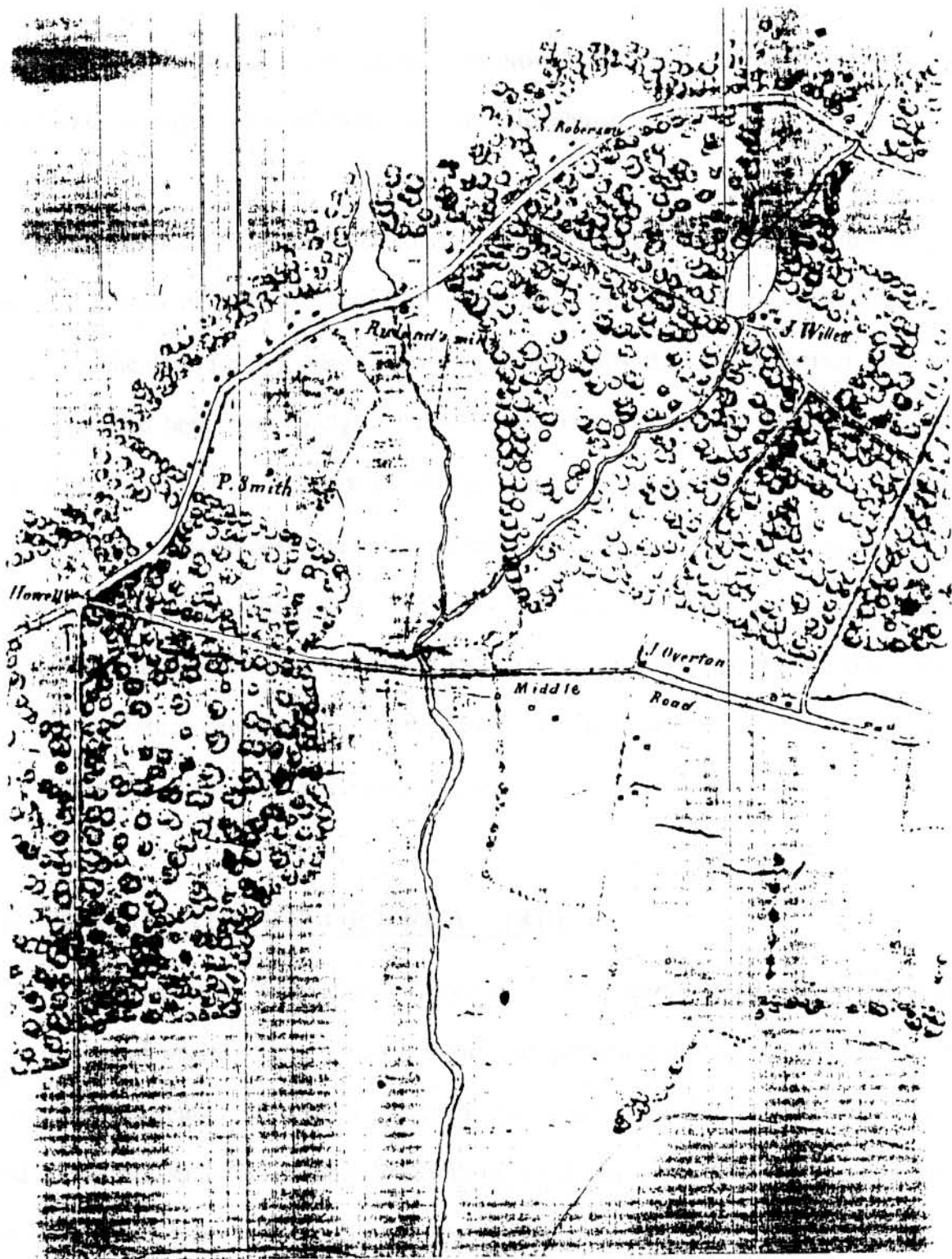


Fig. 2.3 1834 Map - Several additional farms were established around The Forks after Terry & Edwards sold off their land (U.S. Coast Survey, 1834)

harvest yearly the sedge salt and black grasses that grow in them. The immense quantities of salt hay provided a major source of fodder for cattle (Reichman, p. 126).

The salt meadows in between the forks of Brown's River must have provided ample fertilizers and hay for the adjacent family substance farms that averaged around fifty acres in size, which was the norm for the period. But between 1850-1873, the Lane brothers, Daniel and Frederick, expanded both their family farms to include almost all the land between the two branches of Brown's River. They handed down the farm to their children, who ran the farm and continued to purchased additional land until they sold over a 200 acre portion of it to Robert B. Roosevelt on July 1, 1873 (Liber #197). The Lanes were like many of the other local farmers who sold off their farmsteads in the 1870's and 80's in the wake of the arrival of the South Side Railroad in 1869, which paved the way for the Resort Era and began the transition of the many south shore farming villages into resort communities.

### **BEGINNING OF THE RESORT ERA - 1870**

In the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, many well-to-do New York City businessmen and other persons of wealth became aware of the natural splendor that Long Island's south shore afforded. The recurrent warm weather epidemics, increased congestion, and filth of the city, provided strong inducement for people of wealth to search out a more pleasant location for a summer retreat (McKay, p. 114-119). Robert B. Roosevelt echoed these sentiments in his book, Five Acres Too Much, written in 1869:

"The country, with its green leaves, its lovely flowers, its waving grass, its early vegetables, and its luscious fruits, is most attractive; and where a residence can be obtained which combines all these luxuries with pure air, and no chills and fever, and which is not too remote from city life and its attractions, it is as near to Paradise as this world permits." (Roosevelt, p. x)

Because, for the most part, the location of these summer retreats relied heavily on transportation available, the wealthy had to build their fine summer homes only as far from the city as could be conveniently reached by horse and carriage. This changed shortly after the Civil War, when a new era was opened for the people of Long Island. The South Side Railroad, later to become the Long Island Railroad, completed a line from Jamaica, Queens, to Patchogue, opening up to the people of New York City a new summer retreat (Dickerson, p. 13). The completion of the railroad brought many prominent New York City families, who had achieved substantial wealth during the Industrial Revolution, to the Town of Islip where they established beautiful country estates; William K. Vanderbilt, Henry B. Hyde, William Bayard Cutting, and Frederick G. Bourne were just a few. They selected the south shore not only because it was made easily accessible, but also to take advantage of the many advertised amenities that the surrounding countryside afforded. These included the picturesque beauties of the shoreline, as well as its more pleasant summer climate, usually 10-15 degrees cooler than New York City, and the vast recreational opportunities available such as boating, bathing, fishing, and hunting.

During the next five decades, between 1870 and 1920, many of the small agricultural villages along the south shore became very prosperous resort communities. The Village of Sayville was one such community that eventually rose to become the major resort area and leading shopping center in Suffolk County (Dickerson, p. 14). Throughout the late 1800's,

Sayville and the adjacent villages were developed with a vast array of, turn of the century, resort hotels and estates to accommodate the influx of the many prominent New York City families.

### **ROBERT B. ROOSEVELT'S "LOTUS LAKE": 1869 - 1906**

Robert Barnwell Roosevelt was just one of the many prominent individuals who decided to take advantage of the opportunities that the south shore presented. On July 1, 1873, he purchased a 215 acre portion of the Lane family farm, on which he decided to build a summer retreat for his family: wife, Elizabeth, sons, John Ellis and Robert, Jr., and daughter Margaret B. (Liber #197, p. 303). Although the main residence of the estate was constructed on the east side of Lotus Lake (east pond) in the Village of Bayport, the bulk of the property lay in Sayville bounded to the north by South Country Road and to the south by the forks of Brown's River (Figure 2.4). Both the construction of the railroad in 1869 and the inheritance of a portion of his father's estate in 1872 no doubt played a role in Robert's decision to purchase the property; but he also had a genuine appreciation for the qualities that country living had to offer, as he clearly expressed in his book, Five Acres Too Much:

"It is an immense satisfaction, of a hot evening in summer, even in the prematurely scorching days of June, to leave the city, after a long day of labor and trouble, and, rushing away with railroad speed into the country, to enjoy the delicious air and cool breeze, to sit beneath the outspreading trees, to wander through the woods, to bathe in the brook, to doze or smoke in the shade. The scent of the blossoms or the hay, or no smell at all, is such an exquisite relief from the customary odors of New York streets. The sun seems to lose half and the air to gain double its ordinary power. The pleasures are so innocent, the matters of interest so pure, the mind is braced but not wearied. The garden, whether kitchen or flower garden--those delightful adjuncts of a country place--is such an infinite source of health, improvement, and delight. Man, confined to the city by dire necessity of money-making, recognizing the country as the natural sphere of his existence, dreams of a neat, quiet, retired country place, and books such as "Ten Acres Enough" persuade him to convert these dreams into realities." (Roosevelt, p. xvi)

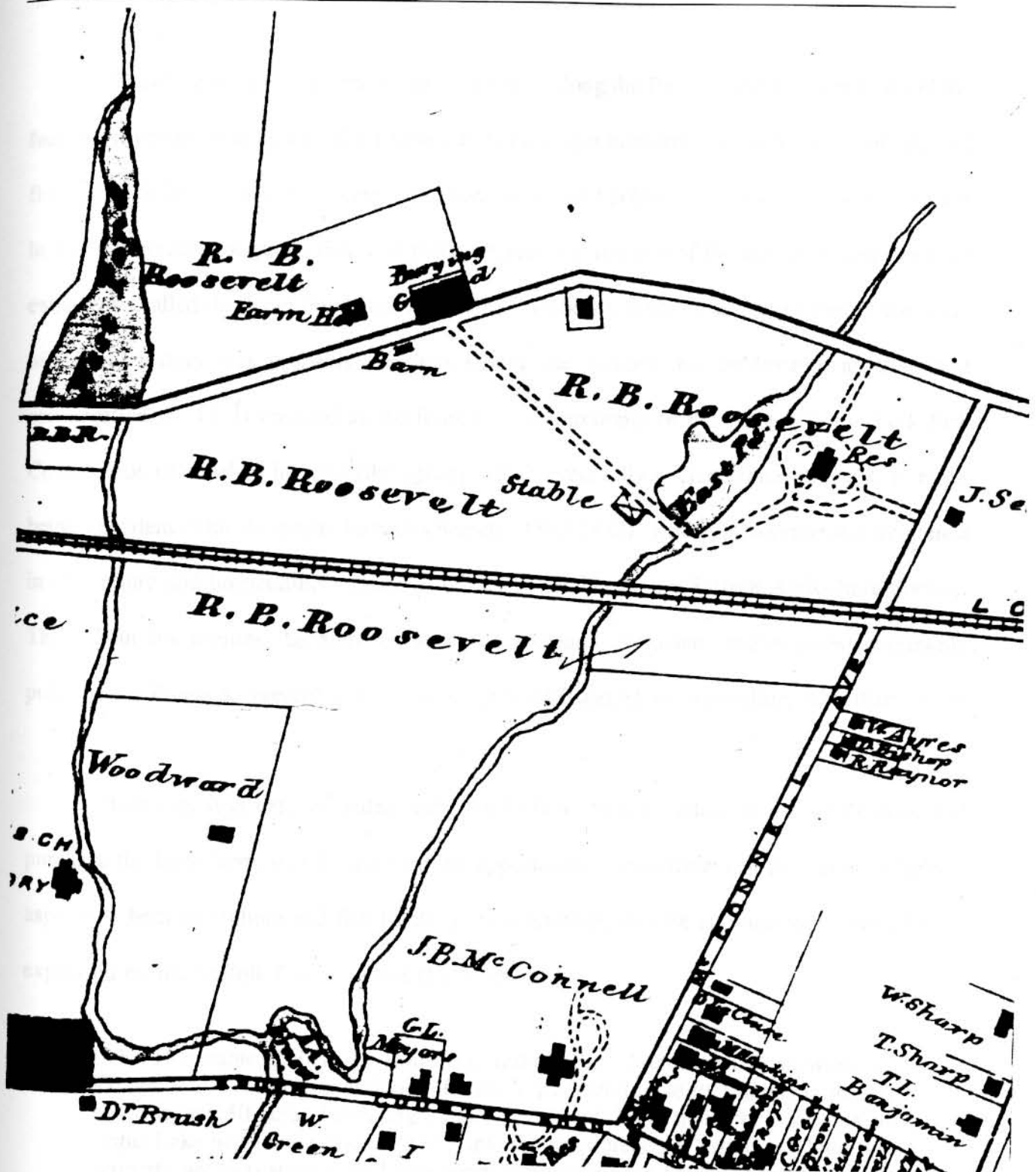


Fig. 2.4

Robert B. Roosevelt's purchase encompassed most of the land between "The Forks". Note that the Lane's farm house, barn, and stable were still maintained by Robert, along with the road (dotted) that connected them. (Wendelkyn & Co. 1888 Atlas of Towns of Babylon, Islip, & Brookhaven)

The selection of the specific property location along the Brown's River watershed and the fact that it was previously a working farm reflect the major interests in Robert's life, farming and fishing, aside from his political career as congressman and political reformer. He was a pioneer in the conservation of game, fish, and natural resources, and one of the earliest leaders in what came to be called the "environmental movement". Robert's devotion to fishing and to the study of natural history was probably foremost among the reasons that he became an important conservationist. He is credited as the founding commissioner of the State of New York Fish Commission established in 1868 (the agency which eventually evolved into the D.E.C.) and as being President of the American Fisheries Society (1873-1882). Robert also expressed an interest in agriculture and horticulture and was a life-long member of the Suffolk Agriculture Society. Throughout his lifetime, he authored several books and magazine articles (most commonly published in *Forest & Stream*) on both the subjects of fisheries and agriculture (Schullery, p. 9).

Therefore, it is easy to understand why Robert chose to settle on the south shore and purchase the Lane farm, which gave him the opportunity to experiment in the nuts and bolts aspects of both agriculture and fish hatching, two activities that the site was well-suited for, as expressed by the Suffolk County News (SCN) in 1873:

"The Honorable Robert B. Roosevelt (South Side Member) late member of Congress and Fish Commissioner of New York State (uncle to Teddy Roosevelt) has bought 150 acres belonging to the late Daniel Lane upon the east side of Lotus Lake in Sayville prior to going into the trout breeding business. Upon this property are two streams and two ponds well-calculated for this purpose which will speedily be put in order with all the improve appurtenances." (SCN, July 8, 1873)

Unlike many country gentlemen who established summer estates in the area, Robert did not make a major transformation to the landscape in creating his pleasure grounds, he instead chose to adapt his estate to the existing conditions. Robert transformed the farm into a country estate, but still maintained many of the previous features, functions, and uses. The farm house was converted into a guest house and, for his family, Robert constructed an Italianate style villa, which was sited on a bluff overlooking the lake that he named Lotus Lake, most likely after the varieties of water lilies found in it. Many of the out-buildings were converted to house the activities of his fish hatchery and the old mill was retained to run water-powered machinery (Figure 2.5).

Robert obviously made most of the decisions regarding the style and layout of the adapted farm. Based on a quote from his book, Five Acres Too Much, "If there is any one thing on which I do pride myself more than another, it is my ability to plan and layout a house. No matter how remarkable the shape of the lot may be, I can always devise an admirable arrangement..." (Roosevelt, R.B., 1869, p. 98).

The style of the estate was in keeping with Robert's interest and respect for nature. The area immediately surrounding his Italianate villa was maintained as a dense stand of pines contributing to the site's rustic simplicity (Figure 2.6). He employed the rustic style tradition in the many "summer house" (gazebos) which were located on his property, a style he most likely developed an appreciation for during his many hunting expeditions in the Adirondacks. He created a small island at the south end of the lake near the shore on which was sited a small



Fig. 2.5 View of water-powered mill house located on the southern end of Lotus Lake c. 1900. (Nassau County Museum Reference Library "NCMRL")



Fig. 2.6 Robert B. Roosevelt Residence at Lotus Lake c. 1890. (Theodore Roosevelt Association)

rustic summer house reached by a man-made land bridge (Figure 2.7). This was not a typical design style in Sayville for a country seat during the early Victorian period. Many other estates in the area were laid out following the more picturesque design style dictated by A.J. Downing, having a large manicured lawn on which were clustered a variety of specimen trees that enframed vistas to the residence. Instead, Robert chose a design layout for his country seat derived from the more natural rustic style commonly found in the Adirondacks and elsewhere, although he did maintain a few semi-formal carpet beds which he laid out in a style similar to what he described in Five Acres Too Much:

"It is well known that, according to the highest standard of the art, the great point in laying out a garden is to avoid the monotony of tame regularity; and in that line little more could be done. There were beds shaped like stars and ellipses, worms and circles, triangles and octagons; some were round on one side and flat on the other; some had big heads and little tails, and other diminished to nothing at each end; there were sinuosities and projections, sharp points and easy curves, imitation bays and promontories; large beds suddenly contracted, narrow ones expanded; what promised to be a long stretch was broken off unexpectedly, and there certainly was no danger of monotony." (Roosevelt, p. 112) [Figure 2.8]

The flower beds were most likely planted with varieties similar to the ones he planted at his previous country seat in Flushing, Long Island; a list including the following varieties: roses, pinks, carnations, lilies, fleur-de-lys, jasmines, peonies, verbenas, daisies, fuchsias, heliotropes, tulips, dahlias, crocuses, tube-roses, forget-me-nots, jonquils, wall-flowers, gillyflowers, mignonette, fox-gloves, and china-asters (Roosevelt, R.B., 1869, p. 116).



Fig. 2.7 Rustic Island Summer House on Lotus Lake c. 1890. (Bayport Heritage Association)



Fig. 2.8 Robert created a star-shaped perennial flower bed along side a rustic summer house similar to the description in his book, c. 1890. (Theodore Roosevelt Association)

Robert maintained an active interest in the operation of both the farm and hatchery during his summers at Lotus Lake, although he had to hire help to perform the labor. In a ledger, he maintained a list of crops he had grown, planting schedules, types of fertilizers used, articles on various planting techniques, and other sorted bits on the practical aspects of running a farm (Figure 2.9). Robert was in keeping with the Victorian practice of a country gentleman farmer and ran his country seat following the book he had written, Five Acres Too Much, in which he describes all of the workings of a small farm.

Beside experimenting in agriculture and fish hatching, other pastimes that Robert Roosevelt and family also took advantage of the many recreational opportunities available in the area. During his annual stay at Lotus Lake, Robert and his sons, John Ellis and Robert, Jr., would partake in the family past-time of sailing. They would set sail for the Great South Bay from Robert's boat house located at the mouth of Brown's River, which emptied Lotus Lake into the bay. They all were among the founding members of the Southside Yacht Club, which still exists today as the Sayville Yacht Club (SCN, July 24, 1886). Being a member of the Southside Sportsmen's Club, Robert would no doubt have frequently gone hunting for duck, pheasant, and fox through the local woods as he had done since he was a young man. But, it was the love of angling which occupied much of Robert's time. Not only did he fish for trout and other fish in the Long Island waters, but he authored several books on the subject and was considered to be a pioneer in the subject of angling entomology. Robert saw angling (fishing) to be a very technique-oriented sport and wrote several books on the subject, the most popular being, Fish Hatching & Fish Catching, both which he performed on his own property (Schullery, p. 10).

1875

June 23 Picked our first peas. The seed  
drought had existed for weeks & a  
& seeds had wholly failed & land was  
replanted with corn the last  
put in June 21<sup>st</sup> on lot back of old barn  
Center first crop peas were very good  
July 10 Had our first cucumbers & black  
wax (yellow pod) beans. The cu-  
cumbers were raised in hot bed  
& set out & being covered grew  
well  
The same might be done with  
melons  
The black wax beans were much  
the earliest although planted  
after the turtle soup they bore  
before them  
Turkeys ate up all the  
cabbages & cauliflowers that they  
green worm left  
July 26 Early Narragansett was the earliest  
sweet corn had the first July 26<sup>th</sup>  
but it was poor  
Early Minnesota corn is recommended  
by W. H. Ludlow  
July 17 Potatoes were first dug July 17<sup>th</sup> Early  
rose began to rot by July 27 but very little  
Had some supposed to be chili red, good  
handsome & prolific  
Wheat cut July 18. A fair crop  
Hay light  
Pots cut July 26. Were attacked by  
worm supposed to be army worm

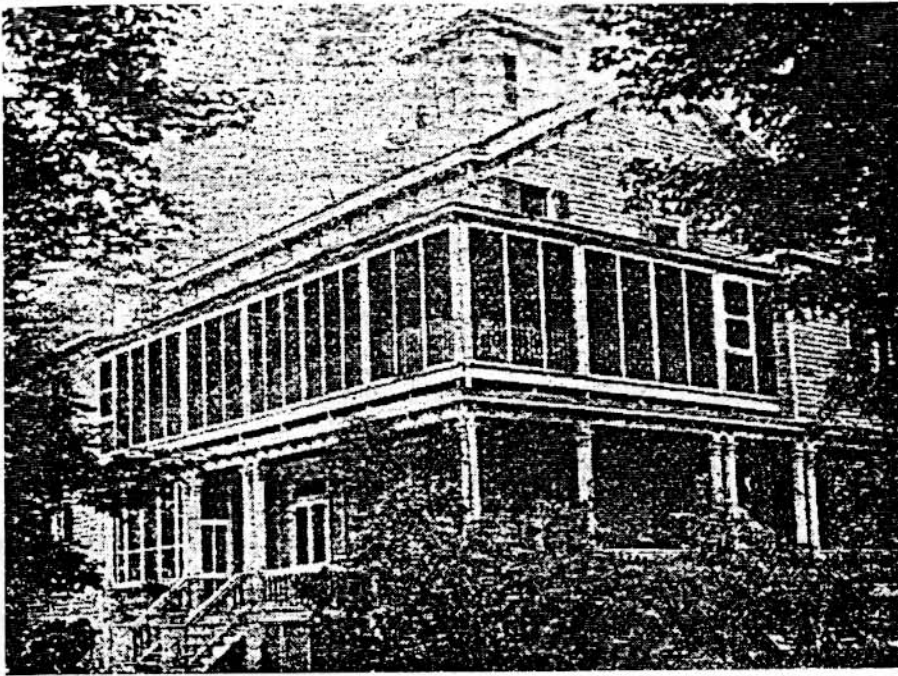
Fig. 2.9

A segment of Robert B. Roosevelt's agricultural records from his journal, provide a detailed daily account of his farming activities. (Theodore Roosevelt Association)

As would be expected, over the years Robert made many additions and improvements to the estate, all in an attempt to improve both its usage as a working country gentleman's farm and fish hatchery and pleasure ground. Together, these changes contributed to the creation of a magnificent country estate that reflects not only the unique and diverse interests of one man, but an entire era (Figure 2.10).

The many attractions at Lotus Lake often caused the estate to become the center of local attention. The estate was frequently used by the locals for skating and ice cutting in the winter, and for social events such as the St. Ann's Church picnic in the summer. Robert also maintained relations with the locals by trying to increase the community's awareness of environmental issues by often writing columns in the local paper. On one occasion, he suggested a project, the reforestation of Long Island, in which 100 men would plant 100 white pine trees throughout the area (SCN, March 30, 1906). On another occasion, he offered to educate any interested parties on the identification of the Canadian Thistle, a weed which he had found invading his estate (SCN, November 13, 1903).

Robert also took delight in entertaining famous guests at Lotus Lake, with its ample opportunity for recreation. Oscar Wilde, English poet (1882) was one of the earliest known celebrities to be entertained at Lotus Lake (Harmond, 1987, p. 168). Other guests of notoriety included Russian Arch Duke Michaelvitch and Admiral Kaznakoff, who attended a reception in July 1893 (SCN, July 15, 1893). Without a doubt, the most famous guest to visit Lotus Lake and the one who pleased Robert the most was his nephew, President Theodore Roosevelt, who



## A Magnificent Country Estate

COMPRISING 160 ACRES OF UPLAND AND MEADOW, GROVES AND GLADES, LAKES AND STREAMS ON SOUTH SHORE OF LONG ISLAND, 50 MILES FROM NEW YORK, and ONE MILE from the GREAT SOUTH BAY

Large Manor House of more than thirty rooms, newly plumbed, painted and papered, parquette floors, two-deck piazzas.

Bowling alley, billiard room, garage, stable, carriage house, boat houses, carpenter shop and mill with machinery run by water power.

Two beautiful lakes of seven acres each, over a mile of stream, superb shade trees, fine orchard, farmer's house and out-buildings, shooting and fishing, bathing, and boating, all on the premises.

Tranquil and secluded and yet within a mile of railroad station, etc.

The property makes continuous appeal to the artistic temperament, is ideal for a club, or rich man's preserve.

Will be sold, or rented furnished with privilege to cancel in case of sale.

Further particulars on application.

**Roosevelt & Kobbe, Attorneys** 46 WALL STREET  
NEW YORK CITY

Fig. 2.10

An enlarged copy of a newspaper advertisement appearing in a local paper attempting to sell or rent the Lotus Lake residence some time after Robert B. Roosevelt's (RBR) death in 1906. Roosevelt & Kobbe was the law firm of J.E.R.

attended the estate on July 23, 1903, accompanied by his eldest son, Theodore, Jr., and two young sons of his cousin Emlyn Roosevelt (SCN, July 24, 1903). Theodore Roosevelt lived next door to Robert B. Roosevelt in New York City where he grew up as a child, and many historians credit Robert for instilling Theodore with his love of the outdoors and politics and the low tolerance for corruption that later highlighted Theodore Roosevelt's public career (Bleyer, p. 11). R.L. Wilson wrote in his book, Theodore Roosevelt: Outdoorsman, that Teddy's instinctive enthusiasm for natural history was nurtured by the adventure stories of Robert B. Roosevelt and that he doubtlessly animated young Teddy's ardor for hunting and outdoor life and perhaps also inspired the boy's later writings on wildlife adventures. (Wilson, p. 12).

One person who definitely was influenced by Robert B.'s love of outdoor activities was his son, John Ellis Roosevelt, who spent many summers at Lotus Lake accompanying his father on boating and hunting trips. John obviously became fond enough of the recreational lifestyle and the vast opportunities that the Lotus Lake area afforded that he purchased a 15 acre parcel of land just south of Lotus Lake to build his own summer retreat.

### **JOHN E. ROOSEVELT'S MEADOW CROFT: 1890 - 1939**

After summering for many years at his father's Lotus Lake estate and enjoying all of the recreational/social activities that the resort community had to offer, John decided to develop his own country house. On November 13th, he purchased from the Benjamin Woodward Family for \$4,500 the 15 acre farm (directly adjacent to the south of his father's Lotus Lake estate) which consisted of an open meadow on which a mid-18th Century farm house and barn were set,

enclosed by a stand of pine trees (Liber 336, p. 361). It is the setting which must have inspired John to name his future country house "Meadow Croft", which is derived from the British or Scottish word "croft" meaning "a small piece of enclosed ground for pasture or tillage". An 1874 U.S. Coast Survey Map, the most detailed map of the Woodward property prior to John Ellis's purchase, shows the location of the existing house and barn and the presence of a road which led from Middle Road to the farm house and a second road extending up across the railroad tracks creating a continuous connection across the properties (Figure 2.11). This road was important for it was to become a legal right of way for Robert B. Roosevelt through his son's property. Only four days after purchasing the Woodward farm John purchased an additional 30+ acres adjacent to his property on the east for \$1 from his father, and keeping true to his profession as a lawyer, John had a right of way written into the deed which allowed his father legal access across Meadow Croft to Middle Road (Liber 336, p. 555).

John wasted no time in commencing the conversion of the farm into a country house. He set out to find an architect capable of converting the farm house structure to one worthy of one of New York's more socially prominent families. Selected for the task was Isaac Green, Suffolk County's foremost architect of Long Island country houses and whom John was associated with from the vestry at St. Ann's Episcopal Church (Harmond, 1988, p. 76). By January 17, 1891, Nelson Strong, a local contractor, had begun construction on the Colonial Revival Style house that Green designed (SCN, January 17, 1891). A new house, sited on a bluff, was added on to the existing farm house, the former becoming the living quarters for John E. Roosevelt and family and the latter as guest and servant quarters.

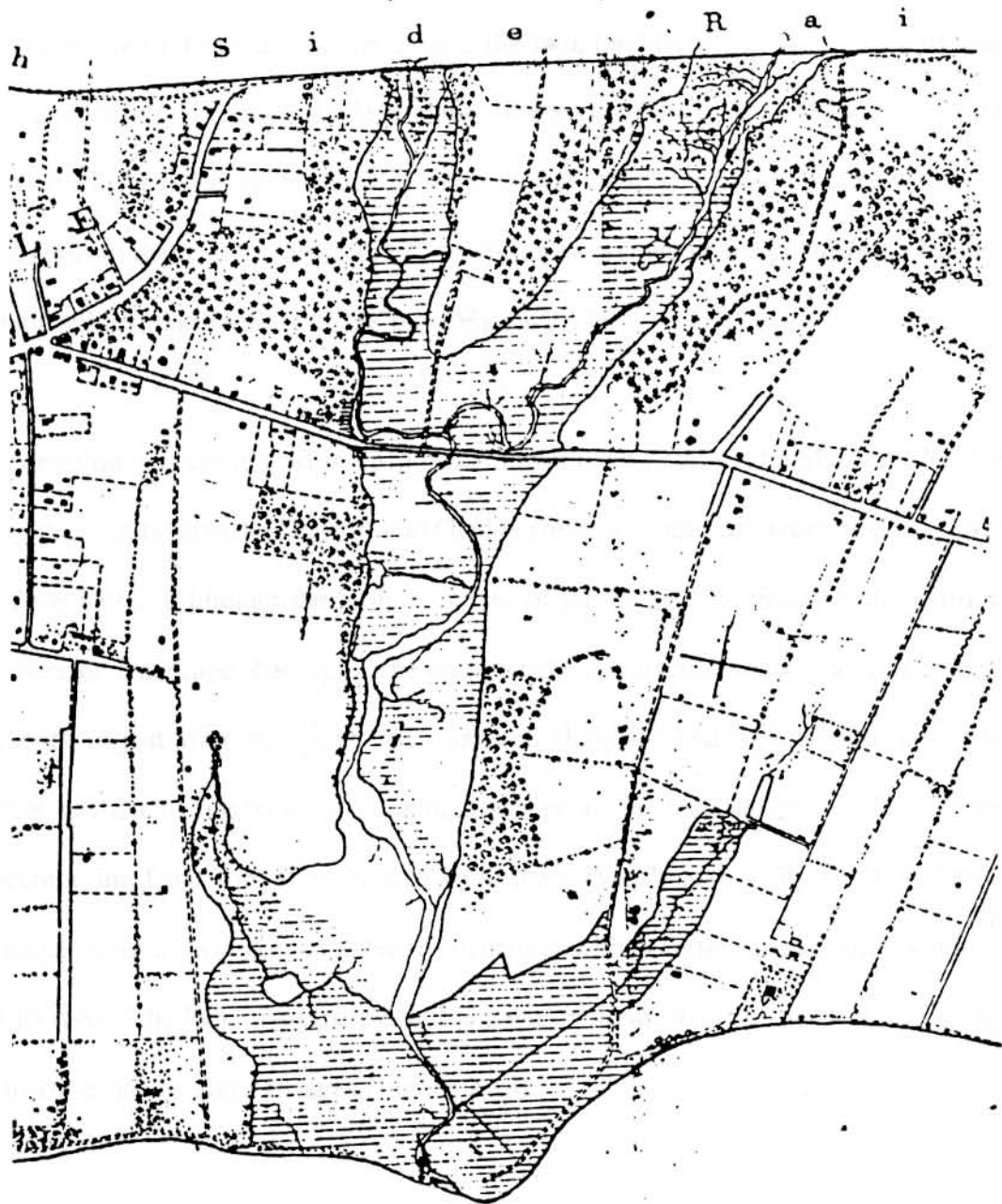


Fig. 2.11

This view of "The Forks" in 1874 shows the location of the original entry road (dotted) to the Woodward's farm house and barn, and also provides a detailed view of the geographic features such as the creek's alignment, field patterns, woodlands, and wetlands prior to Meadow Croft's construction. (U.S. Coast Survey, Long Island, NY, 1874 - SUNY Stony Brook Library Map Room)

With its deeply recessed verandas, which not only unified the different parts of the structure, but extended out into the landscape uniting the two, the house was well-suited to take advantage of the cooling effect of the seaside breezes. The style of the house reflected the intent of its use, not a lavish formal mansion built to impress, but rather a private country retreat to relax in and escape from the heat of New York City, taking advantage of the picturesque beauty, recreational opportunities, and breezes of the bay (Figure 2.12).

The construction was completed in such time to allow John and his family, wife Nannie Vance, and daughters Anita Blanche "Pansy" and Gladys (Jean was not born until July 15, 1891) to move in by June 1891. Although the basic structure of the house was finished, the interior, as well as the exterior landscape, had yet to be completed. A carriage house was constructed simultaneously with or just after the house and was sited alongside and well behind the house blocking the view to the existing barn from the main entrance. Its location helped to delineate what was to become the front formal entry area from the servant's and utility (farming) area. The carriage house was a two-story clapboard structure with a water tower and windmill constructed on its roof. The lack of stylistic detail and decoration reflect its function as a utility building used to store horses and carriages (Figure 2.13).

Except for the siting of the carriage house and residence, there is no evidence to suggest that the landscape was designed or laid out by a professional. Rather, it seems it evolved under the guidance and direction of John over the ensuing years. In an attempt to achieve a picturesque country estate, John chose to lay out his estate, unlike his father, following the more popular style



Fig. 2.12 A view of the main residence at Meadow Croft just after its completion in 1891. (Suffolk County Department of Parks)

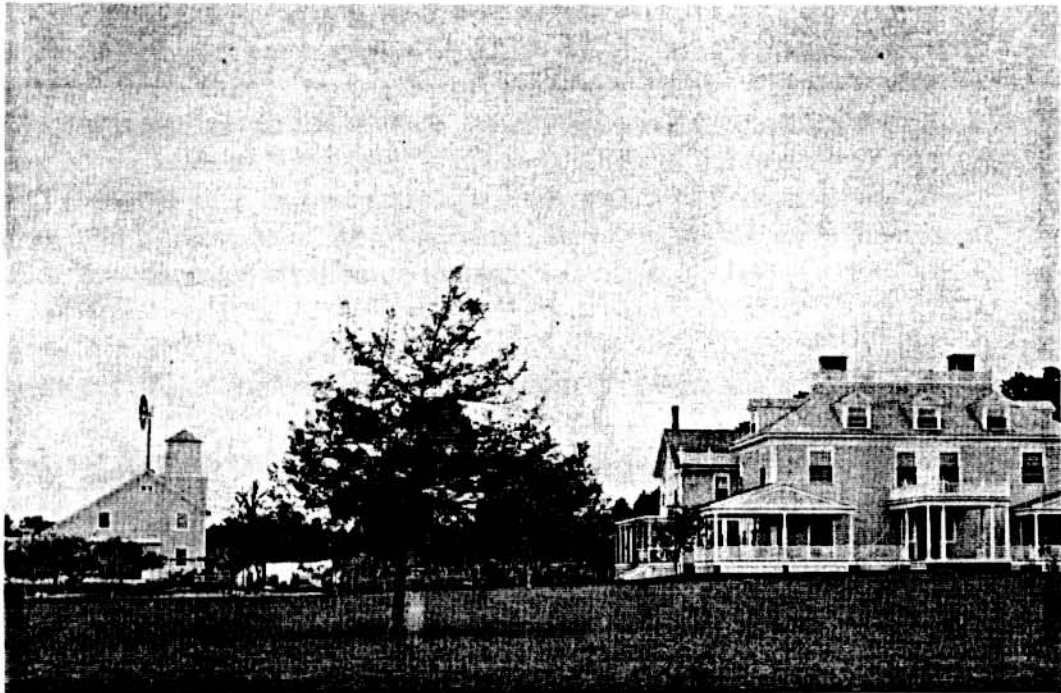


Fig. 2.13 The residence and carriage house viewed across the formal lawn c. 1891. Note the roof and cupola of the Woodward's barn just to the left of the carriage house. (Bayport Heritage Association)

advocated during the period. The "country house" design was essentially patterned after the English stately home or manor house. In America, the design and layout of the American hybrid country houses (an imitation of the English) were in large part dictated by Andrew Jackson Downing, who was greatly influenced by the naturalistic style of the English and especially that of Repton and Loudon. Downing outlined various style houses, furnishings, and garden layouts all based on the desire to achieve the picturesque in his book, A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, which was written in 1841, but influenced the development of the design style of country houses and cottages well into the next century (Wilson, p. 12). Much of the layout of Meadow Croft is reflective of the picturesque style that Downing advocated and which pervaded the late 19th Century, and which was described by Richard Guy Wilson in his book, The Country House Tradition in America, as follows:

"A country house must have a garden of some type either natural or formal, and it should have out buildings or support structures though they can be limited to a garage, pool house, or garden pavilion. A country house is built for show, but also for pleasure, relaxation, and sport, and in addition to the nearby country or hunt club, it should have its own sports facilities such as a pool or tennis court. A country house must have its own name, for it exists as an independent personality, a picturesque creation on its own." (Wilson, p. 41)

A major aspect of the property layout at Meadow Croft was the separation of functions into distinct areas, the front formal approach and receiving area, the informal recreation area, and the functional utility area; each received a different treatment based on its intended usage. The idea for the layout of the grounds was derived from A.J. Downing's concept of the "country villa . . . of which a large portion and often the whole is devoted to ornament in the case of small villa

residences, or a portion where there is considerable land is appropriate to amateur farming under the immediate superintendence of the proprietor". (Downing, p. 48)

The area which usually received a great amount of attention, as was the case at Meadow Croft, was the approach to the estate and its front lawn. The house was on a rise of ground against a backdrop of a pine grove, giving it prominence in the landscape, as well as a commanding view of the surrounding countryside. A large rolling lawn surrounded the front of the house and swept up to the foundation. Foundation plantings were not yet advocated by most designers during the early Victorian period because it was felt they detracted from the architecture of the house (Favretti, p. 43).

Especially important to the setting of the house was the approach, the most commonly advocated being a slow, long, curving drive which provided fine picturesque vistas to the house as it circled around the large open lawn scattered with artfully placed specimen trees often in clusters. Meadow Croft's approach adhered to these basic principles, but the house's location set far back off the road in the midst of a tidal meadow allowed John to enhance it even further (Figure 2.14).

One of the first and most significant additions to the estate was the creation of pond-like bulk-headed canals by dredging the meadows surrounding the estate, extending Brown's River up from the main entrance, alongside the entry drive up to the residence (Figure 2.15). This initial improvement was described by the Suffolk County News as follows:



Fig. 2.14

The entry drive circled around the front lawn, leading to the porte chere and was flanked on one side by ornamental shrubs. (Postcard View, Bayport Heritage Association)

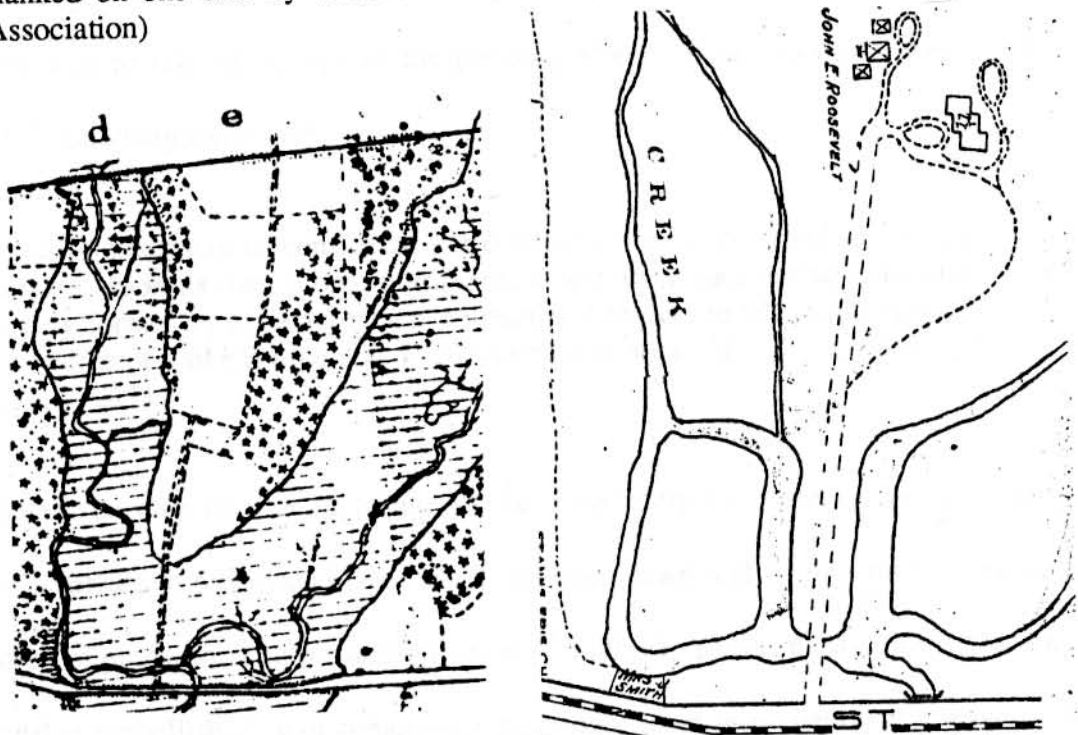


Fig. 2.15

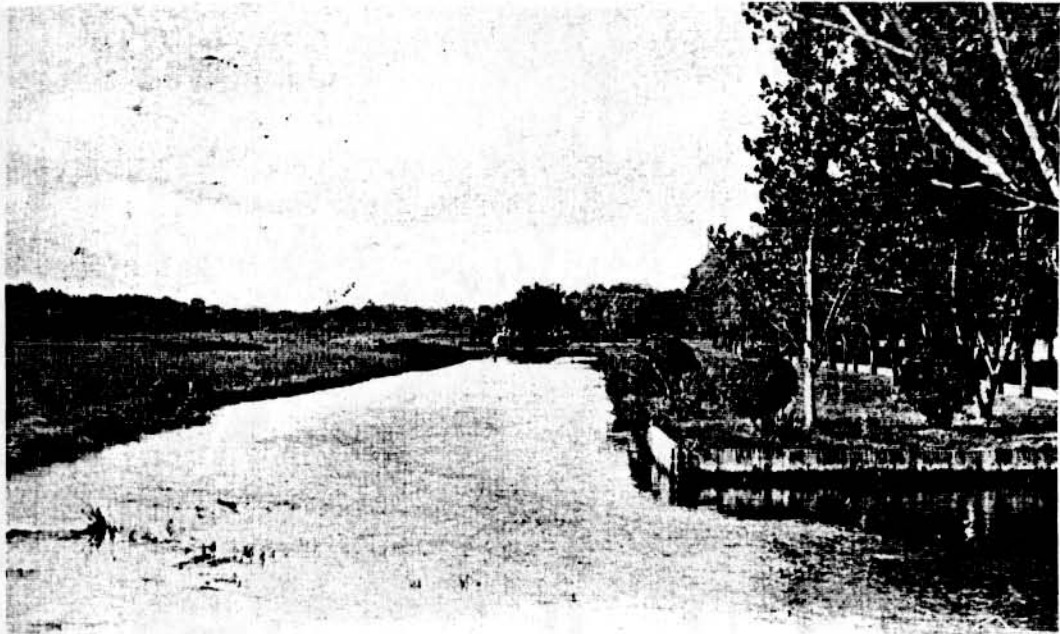
A comparison of the 1874 U.S. Coast Map (left) and the 1902 E.B. Hyde Ocean Shore Atlas (right) shows the extent of the river's alterations through the dredging of the canals.

"Mr. John Roosevelt resumes work on the creek and meadow improvement enterprise. Last winter the work of excavating the east side of his roadway leading from the public highway to his residence which opened up a fine water way 75' wide along said roadway was a very marked and admirable improvement. The same plans are arranged to accomplish the same result along the west side of the road." (SCN, October 8, 1892)

This account describes the creation of what was called by some landscape architects of the period as "picturesque ditching". (Lay 1912, p. 104) It was a technique used to make a functional improvement in a wetland meadow, creating solid ground where there was none, but done in such a way as to enhance the picturesque quality of the landscape. This was a somewhat widely practiced style along coastal tidal salt marshes, as well as inland fresh water marshes. Long Island's south shore, with its narrow strip of meadow between land and sea, provided ample opportunity to create artificial lakes and canals (Lay 1908, p. 446) [Figures 2.16, 2.17, 2.18]. A primary intent was to take advantage of the pleasing effects of water, which were highly considered as A.J. Downing expressed:

"In short as no place can be considered perfectly complete without either a water view or water upon its own property grounds, wherever it does not so exist and can be easily formed by artificial means no man will neglect to take advantage of so fine a source of embellishment as is the element in some of its varied forms." (Downing, p. 277)

John did not hesitate to take advantage of the opportunity to create lagoon-like ponds which provided a reflective foreground over which the open lawn and house could be viewed against a backdrop of pines, creating picturesque scenes for all who passed by (Figure 2.19). The scenery was further embellished with ornamental plantings, most prominently the avenue of willows which lined the grass side slopes on either side of the drive, and extended down to a fork



8301 Creek, Sayville, L. I.

*Wishing you all a Happy New Year*

Fig. 2.16

The dredged canal on the west side of the entry drive, with its original bulkheading, c. 1900. (Bayport Heritage Association)



Fig. 2.17

The pond-like canal on the east side of the entry drive provided a picturesque foreground for views to the estate, as well as recreational opportunities, c. 1900. (Bayport Heritage Association)

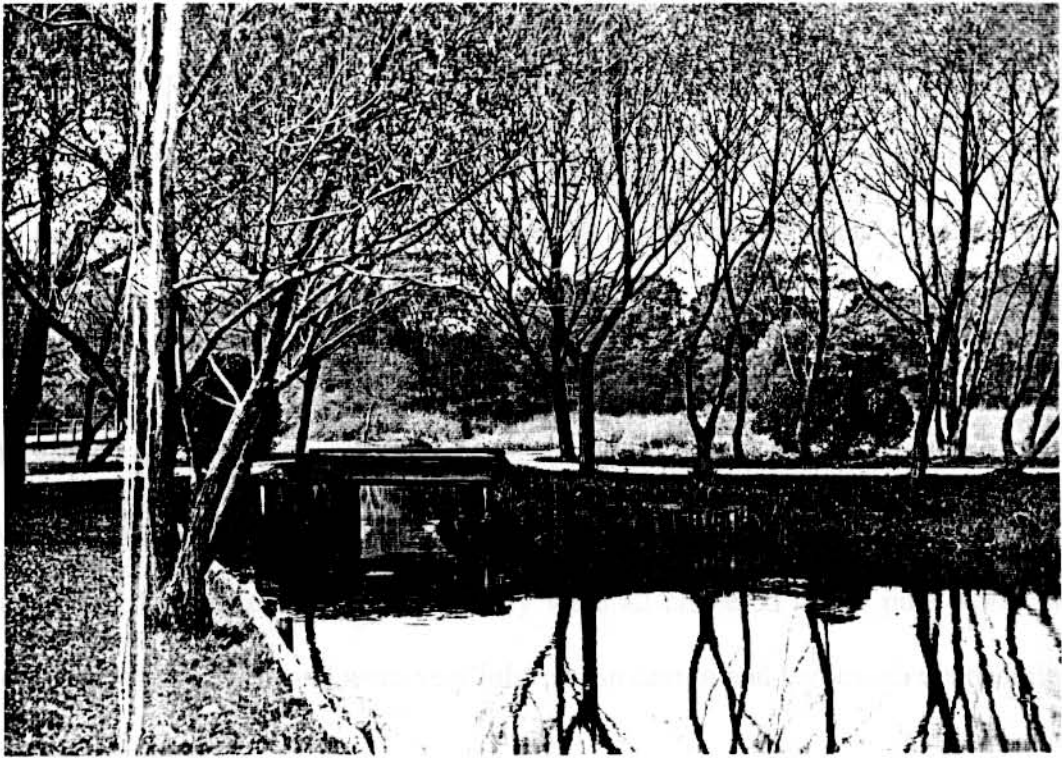


Fig. 2.18 Both the entry drive bridge and the surrounding bulkheading were constructed of wood, but the bridge was eventually replaced by concrete, c. 1900. (Bayport Heritage Association)

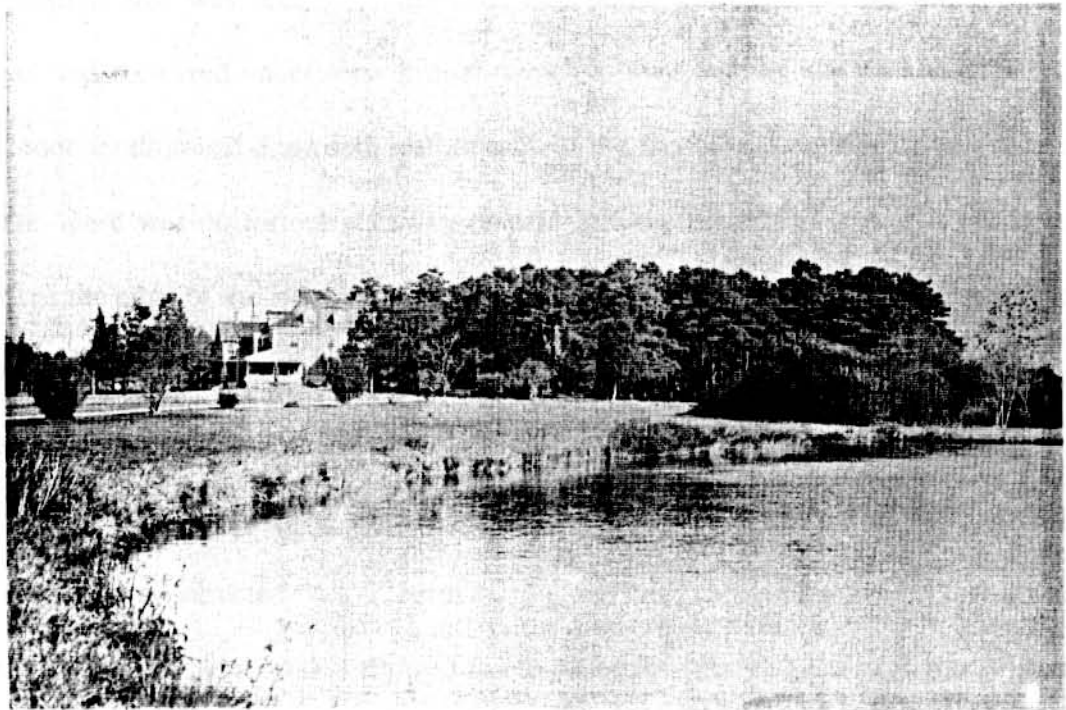


Fig. 2.19 A picturesque view of Meadow Croft across the pond, c. 1905. (NCMRL)

in the drive (SCN, June 9, 1894) [Figure 2.20]. At this point, the servants would continue on straight to the service area of the residence, and a guest or family member would bare right circling around the large open lawn, lined with flowering shrubs on the outside, to the porte cochere.

John developed many recreational features on the estate over the years. To the east of the house he developed an "informal recreation area" that eventually included a children's play house, boat house, and built-in pool (c. 1892). They were all clustered in the pine woodland alongside the east side of the house and were very informal in design and layout, all contributing to a very naturalesque image.

The recreation area was accessible from the east porch staircase. There was a dense canopy overhead and a cleared understory through which a lawn, highlighted with ornamental plants such as rhododendron and dogwood, lead to each of the facilities (Loughlin). As with the rest of the estate, there was no formal walkway or path into the recreation area, but rather an open lawn. Just at the edge of the lawn, sitting in the woods within the recreation area, John had a large, elaborate wooden playhouse constructed for his daughters (Figure 2.21). Directly adjacent to the east of the playhouse a 20' x 50' concrete in-ground pool, which is thought to be one of the earliest constructed on Long Island, was located in the midst of the pines (c. 1892). The pool was originally constructed on a 3' berm surrounded with native plant material and was under a screened-in wooden pavilion that allowed sun to penetrate through glass skylights (Figure 2.22a). Although the pool was located in a secluded informal setting, it must have been quite



Fig. 2.20 The entry drive lined on either side by a row of white willows, c. 1905. (NCMRL)

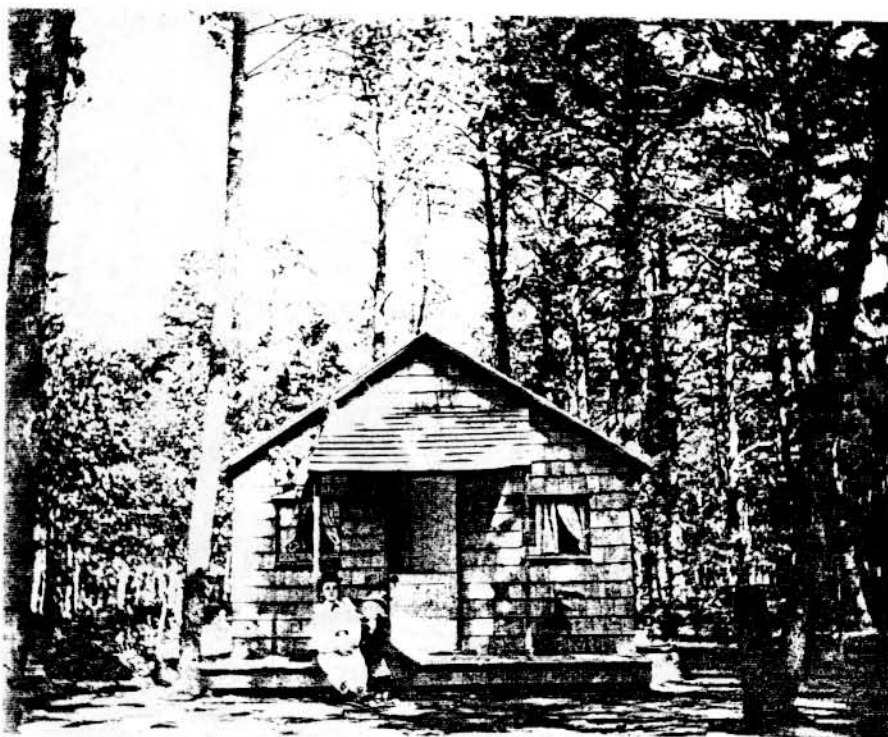


Fig. 2.21 A photograph from John Ellis's scrapbook of his daughters Jean and Pansy in front of their playhouse, c. 1895. (Theodore Roosevelt Assoc.)

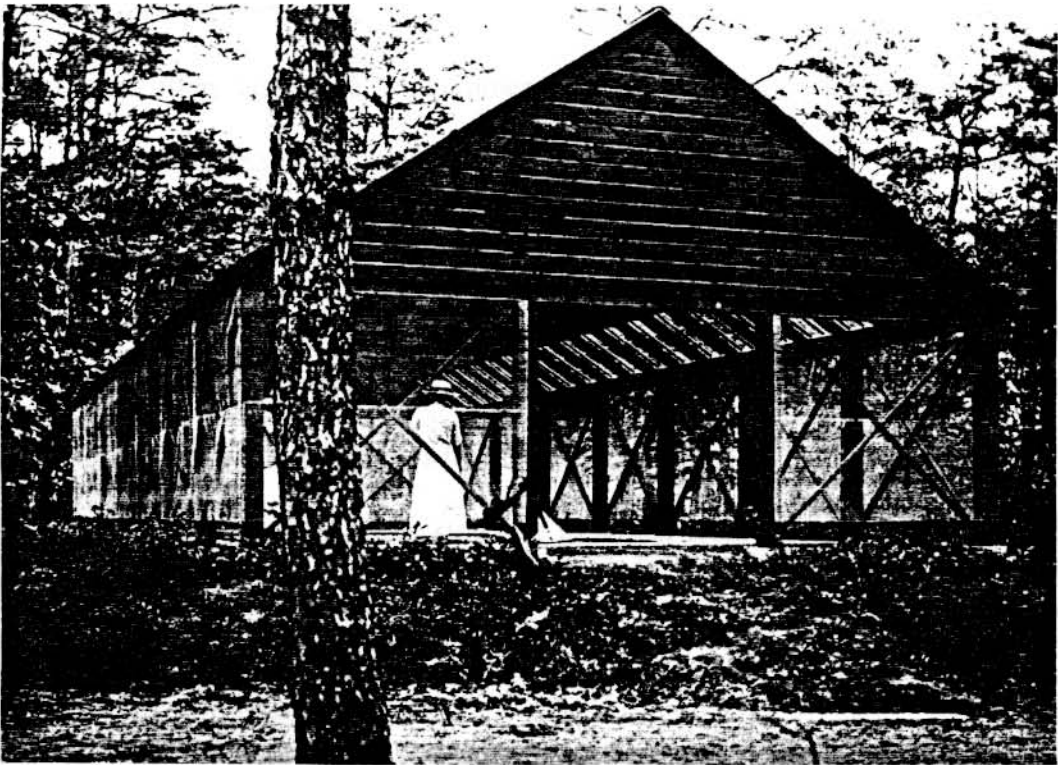


Fig. 2.22a The in-ground pool pavilion structure c. 1895 is believed to be one of the first pools of its type on Long Island. (Theodore Roosevelt Association)

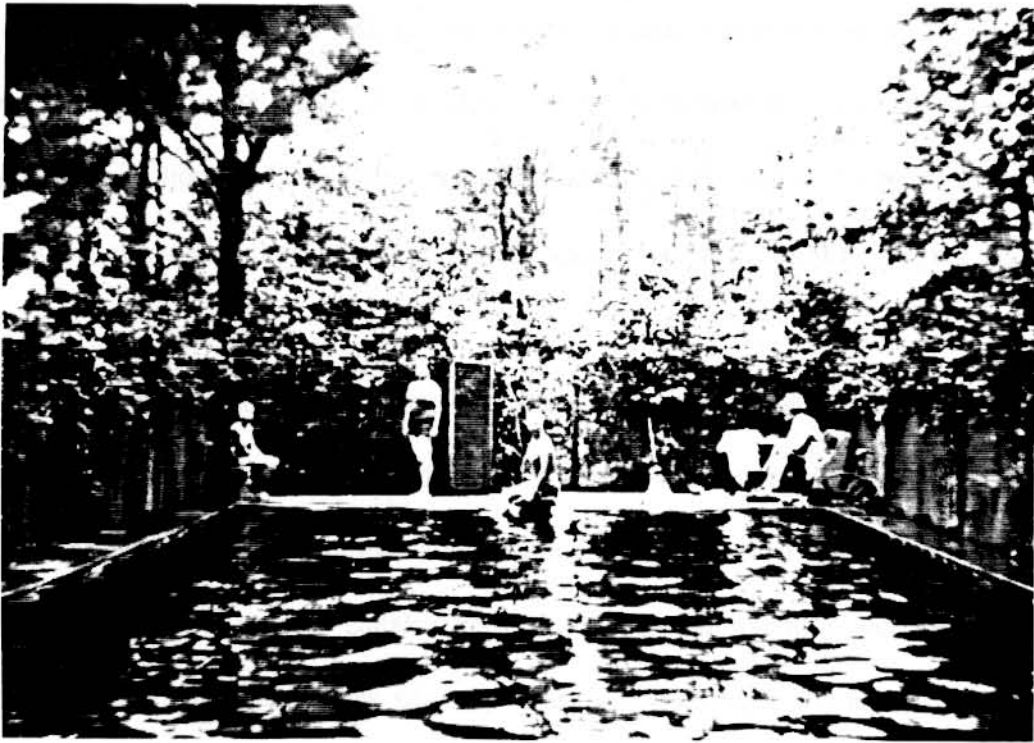


Fig. 2.22b A view of the pool in its later years after the pavilion was removed.

a luxury and used quite often during the hot summer months. The pool's location within this wooded area possibly explains the elimination of the pavilion structure in later years, as it may have been damaged by one of the closely surrounding pines during a storm (Figure 2.22b).

A little further east down a curved path, a boat house was constructed along the edge of a canal that John had dredged through the meadow creating an island (SCN, October 16, 1897). The boat house was a simple wooden frame structure in which were stored the family's four boats (Figure 2.23). The canal that was dredged through the meadows was connected to the front pond and gave access from the boat house to Brown's River from where both the Great South Bay could be reached to the south and Lotus Lake to north. This allowed not only the opportunity for passive recreational boat trips through the waterways at Meadow Croft, but it also provided an alternative transportation link to John's father's boat house located at the mouth of Brown's River, as well as Lotus Lake, which offered further opportunities, such as relaxing in the rustic island summer house. Quite often, members of the family would canoe up the scenic waterway to Lotus Lake where they would gather for social events (Loughlin) [Figure 2.24].

This type of recreational waterway system, known as a water park, was created quite frequently on the south shore of Long Island during the turn-of-the-century Resort/Estate Era for the purpose of being enjoyed as a picturesque and recreational feature. Typically, a water park would consist of artificially created canals dredged through an existing wetland, forming picturesque ponds and islands. On these islands, summer houses were often constructed that could be reached by crossing an ornamental bridge. The parks, which ranged in scale and

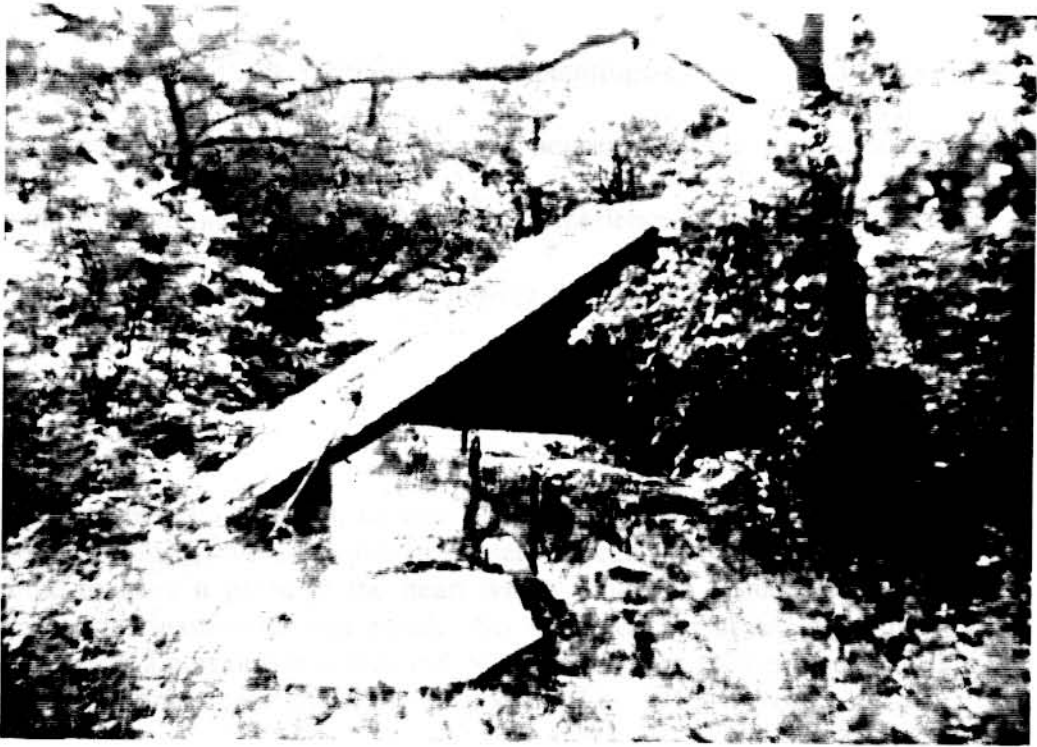


Fig. 2.23 The wooden frame boat house structure was probably constructed in the mid 1890's after the canal was dredged, c. 1895. (Bayport Heritage Association)



Fig. 2.24 John's daughter, Jean, canoeing down the east canal by the boat house. (Theodore Roosevelt Association)

complexity, were further embellished with ornamental plantings so they served aesthetic as well as functional and recreational purposes. Many country houses along the south shore incorporated these artificial ponds, canals, and islands so they could experience "salt marshes, one of the most beautiful features of our Atlantic Coast", which were described by Charles Downing Lay as follows:

"Of the beauty of tidal marshes, no one who has lived near them and watched their changing color with the advance of the seasons can speak so enthusiastically. They come to have a place in the heart which mountain scenery with all its grandeur and fearlessness cannot equal. No where except at sea does the sky become so much a part of one's life, and no where is there greater beauty of line than in their curving creeks and irregular pools." (Lay 1912, p. 101)

Although John E. Roosevelt was not the first to take advantage of the beauties of a tidal meadow by developing a water park, he may have been ahead of his time, for landscape architect Charles Downing Lay wrote about it in 1912 (20 years later).

"The marshes, which are such a beautiful feature of the scenery of the Atlantic Coast, are certain to be of increasing interest to landscape architects who will more and more be called upon to devise some means of making them more useful than they are at present, even if it be impossible to make them a more lovely part of the landscape". (Lay 1912, p. 101)

The entire estate grounds were not for the purpose of relaxation and recreation. As with most estates, there were many tasks and chores that needed to be tended to. The horses and carriages needed to be maintained, crops grown, harvested, and stored to feed the horses, along with a host of other domestic tasks needed to maintain the house and grounds. A small working farm was maintained at Meadow Croft and was separated from the rest of the grounds, located

to the north and the rear of the residence. In 1893, an additional barn was constructed behind the original Woodward barn and carriage house to help aid in the necessary tasks, but proved to be of insufficient size and was eventually added onto in the ensuing years (Roosevelt, J.E., Ledger). A wooden ice house with a brick cellar also was constructed prior to November 1896, when John had an ice pond dug out in the woods alongside the boat house. The ice house was located on the west side of the house in front of the carriage house to provide easy access to the kitchen.

To keep enough staff on hand to care for the estate, a caretakers cottage was constructed on August 17, 1900 in the rear of the property with the rest of the utility structures, creating a small complex of supporting outbuildings necessary to maintain the estate (Roosevelt, J.E., Ledger). This rear farm complex was separated from the front formal portion of the estate by a non-decorative wooden fence that extended from the east side of the barn to the rear entry road. This rear portion of the grounds changed quite often over the years. Based on various photographs c. 1900, there seems to have been an orchard and grape arbor in the rear field near the carriage house. It is possible that these were removed when a small wooden pump house (c. 1900) topped with a cupola was constructed in the middle of the field.

There were many other alterations and additions made to the grounds over the years that could not be dated, due to lack of photographic evidence or historical documentation, such as the garden located just to the west of the rear of the house. It is approximately 20' x 60', bordered on the south side by a slate walk which extended to the rear porch steps. Based on its location

near the kitchen, it is possible it was a kitchen/vegetable garden during the Woodward's tenure, but based on Loughlin's, at some time was converted to an ornamental flower garden containing 6' tall lattice trellis draped with wisteria and trumpet vine, a low privet hedge around the border, dirt paths edged with brick and various perennial flowers (lilies and poppies) groundcover of vinca.

A second garden was laid out directly along side and to the rear of the auto house on a date not yet determined. It was called the Japanese Garden, and was arranged in a rectangular geometric pattern with a circular carpet of plants at its center and a maze of straight angular "web-like" dirt paths lined with brick. The garden was surrounded by a tall privet hedge with an entry penetrating the east side of the garden (Loughlin). Other than Barney Loughlin's (the former caretaker of Meadow Croft) recollection, there is no other evidence or documentation to substantiate or clarify the date or details of this garden.

Throughout the next 20 years, Meadow Croft saw many additional improvements, which seemed to be an attempt by John to maintain his estate in accordance with the newest trends. During the peak of the bicycle craze in the gay nineties, John built a cinder sidepath (for bicycles) along the front of his property connecting the villages of Sayville and Bayport, and helped to complete a path which extended from Jamaica, Queens, to Patchogue along the south shore of Long Island. This was to the delight of the local citizens. "As the roadway is steep and sandy, it has heretofore proved an insurmountable obstacle to cyclists" (SCN, August 15, 1895). The improvement was not solely for the benefit of the community, for John was an avid cyclist

being a prominent member of the Michaux Club and one of the local consuls of the League of American Wheelmen. A consul was a property owner who opened up his ground as a stop for touring wheelmen where they could rest and get refreshments. Thus, many biking groups were able to appreciate the splendor and picturesque nature of the Meadow Croft grounds (Suffolk County Department of Parks "SCDP", p. 2).

In June 1897, a further improvement was made to the estate's entrance. A wood post and pipe rail fence was built extending along the main road in front of the estate, and as with his many other additions, John chose a more simplistic decorative style fence commonly found throughout Long Island, rather than a highly detailed ornament cast iron fence popular as a display of wealth (SCN, June 25, 1897). The fence was in keeping with John Ellis's subtle naturalistic design approach (Figure 2.25 a & b).

Not all of the improvements John made were on the Meadow Croft grounds. Many families who did not own bay front property would construct small bath houses on the beach which allowed them to take advantage of what was promoted to be the finest shorefront on the south side of Long Island. Not missing out on any recreational opportunity, John had a bath house constructed on a local shore front beach in June 1898 (Roosevelt, J.E., Ledger). This was not the only off-site addition to John's holdings. In April 1902, John purchased 100 feet of property to the south at the lower end of Brown's River and proceeded to dredge a harbor and construct a boat house where he would spend much of his time (Roosevelt, J.E., Ledger). The boat house was a simple wood structure with no ornamentation but served the purpose well of

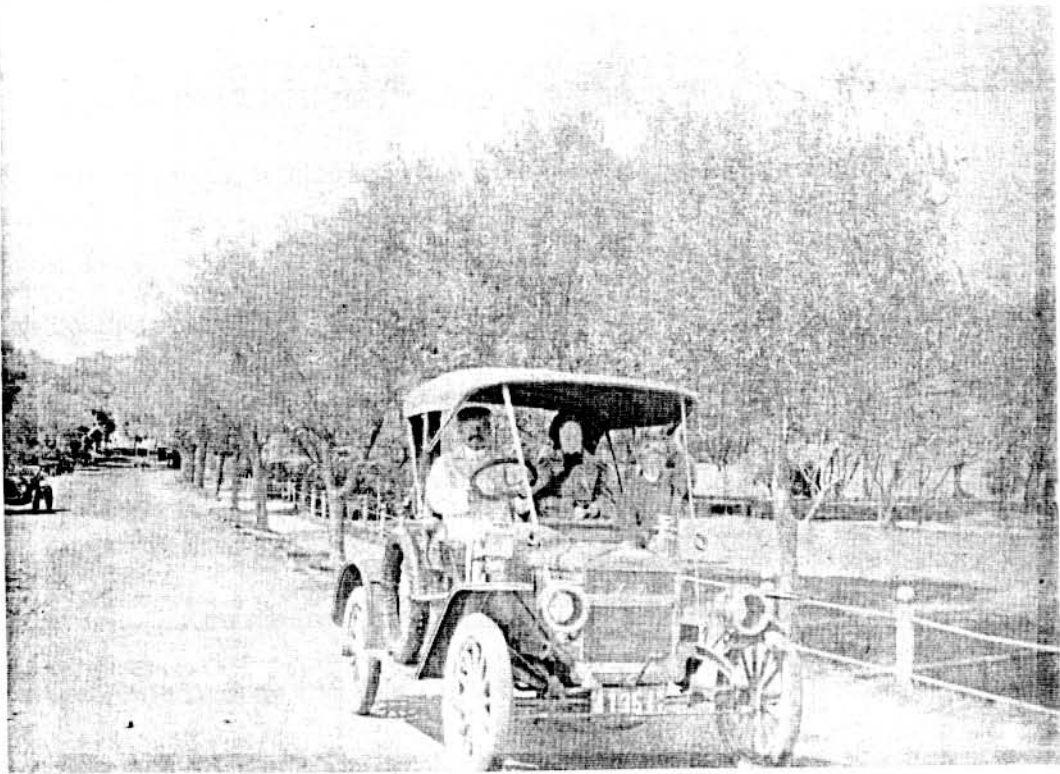


Fig. 2.25a

A view of the approach to Meadow Croft's entrance along Middle Road. Both the fence and line of trees extended along the estate's entire road frontage. (NCMRL)

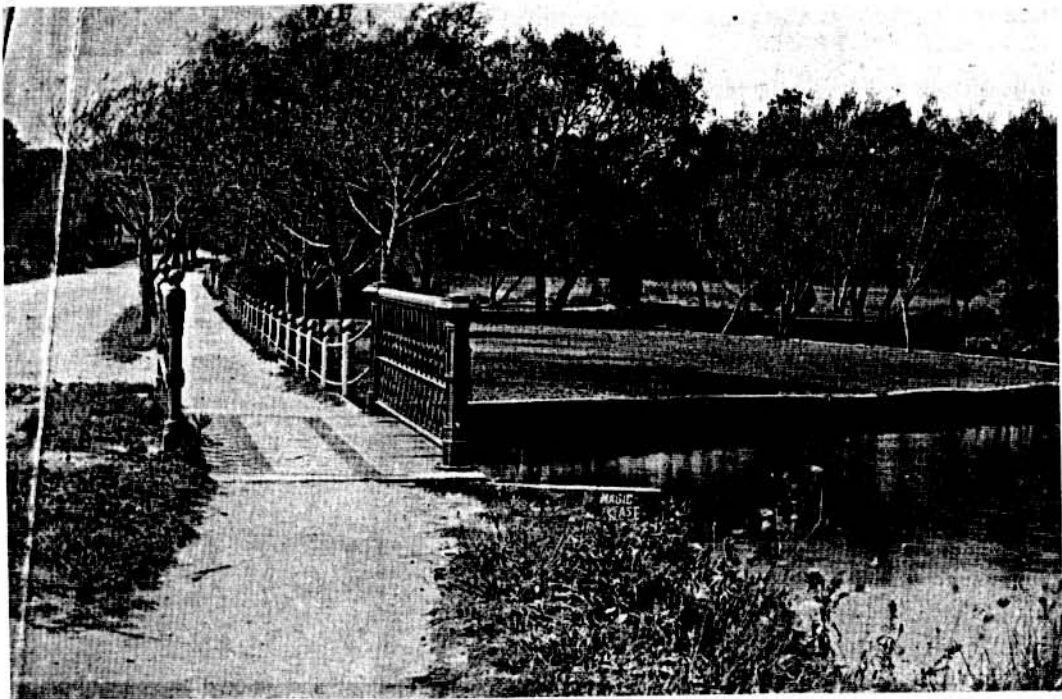


Fig. 2.25b

Both the fence and the 4' wide cinder side path were additions made by John Ellis. The bridge was the boundary between the villages and was not part of Meadow Croft. (NCMRL)

housing the various yachts that John owned throughout his life (Figure 2.26). Prior to this time, John must have housed his yacht in his father's boat house located just up the river.

Although boating was John E. Roosevelt's favorite pastime, the advent of technological progress brought what came to be a close rival, the automobile. Early in the 20th Century, shortly after automobiles began to hit the road, John purchased his first car. In fact, he was one of the first New Yorkers to have purchased an automobile. As early as 1904, the Suffolk County News reported that John had driven from his New York City home to Meadow Croft (SCN, June 10, 1904). It is apparent that John owned a car before 1904 because in April of 1903, an auto house was constructed at Meadow Croft, at the same time an addition was made to the caretakers' cottage (Roosevelt, J.E., Ledger). The stuccoed auto house was located in front of the somewhat obsolete carriage house, and as time progressed, became much more of an active building. In July of 1905, an addition was made to the auto house that allowed for automobiles, which seemed to frequently break down, to be repaired on site (Roosevelt, J.E., Ledger). The automobile would receive a large amount of John's attention for the remainder of his life. He kept abreast of the newest styles with frequent automobile purchases and often took extended tours, such as a trip to Montreal and back (Figure 2.27).

Over the years, John maintained an active interest in improving his grounds and updating them to the newest trends and fashion which seemed to change frequently during the high Victorian period. He consistently added various trees, shrubs and vines, and although there is no extensive planting list, his ledger provides an insight into some of his selection. In November



Fig. 2.26

John Ellis's wife, Nannie Vance, standing on their yacht at the Brown's River Boat House, c. 1910. (Bayport Heritage Association)

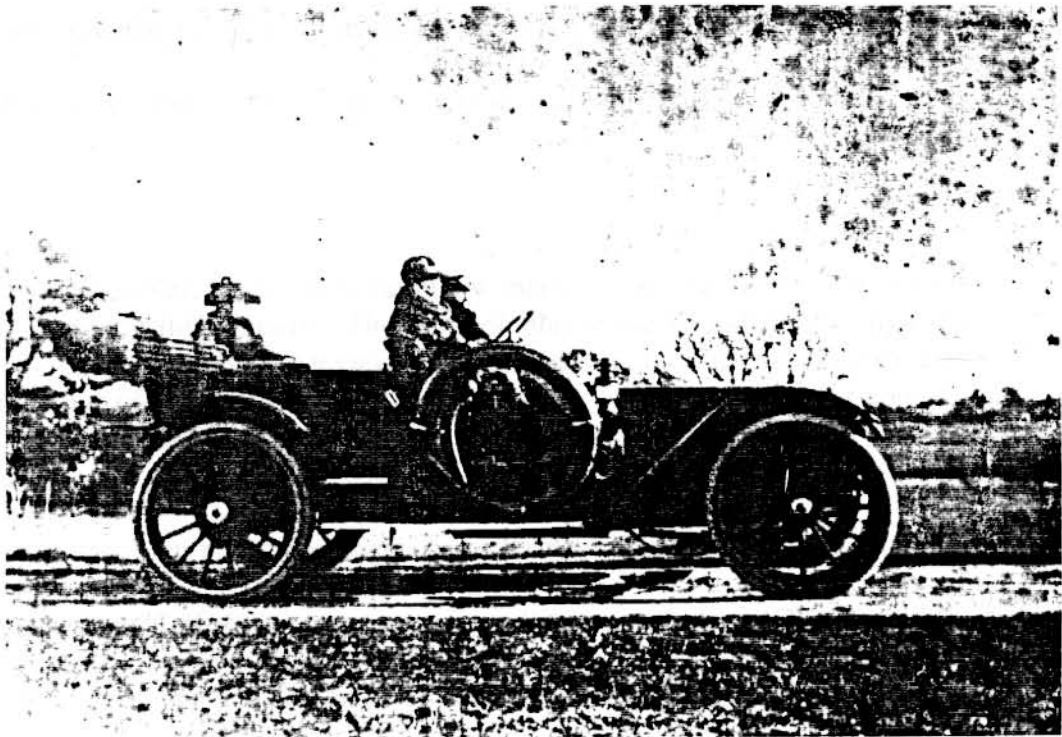


Fig. 2.27

John Ellis at the wheel on the Meadow Croft entrance drive. (Bayport Heritage Association)

of 1896, he purchased a tulip tree and three altheas, and in October of 1902, purchase five tulip trees, two buttonwood, three silver maples, two cut-leaf maples, and two dogwoods (Roosevelt, J.E., Ledger); a more comprehensive list of plant materials purchased for Meadow Croft is included in Appendix A. Tulip trees seemed to be one of his favorite trees, and with them he created a lined avenue along the west side of the formal lawn which, in time, helped provide an enframing for his residence. His selection was quite appropriate for the situation, as A.J. Downing described "where there is a taste for avenues, the tulip tree ought by all means to be employed, as it makes a most magnificent overarching canopy of verdure" (Downing, p. 199).

All of the improvements made at Meadow Croft over the years helped contribute to the estate's picturesque park-like setting, an expression of John's personal aesthetic interest in natural scenery that was a popular sentiment during the Victoria Era. His contemporaries were equally impressed by the picturesque quality of the estate, as 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. 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."  
(Roosevelt Scrapbook)

Over the years, John purchased several smaller parcels surrounding his estate, mostly in an attempt to gain control of the waterways surrounding the property. (See Appendix A for a complete record of property acquisition.) In June 1904, the final addition was made to the property when John purchased the 25 acres that laid to the north, between his property and the

Long Island Railroad, from his father for \$5.00 (Liber 558, p. 371). A portion of this property had been used for agricultural purposes and John continued the usage for his own benefit, although the bulk of the acreage was left as woodland from which firewood was cut. The extensive woodland and its proximity to the railroad track necessitated the development and maintenance of a fire road through the woods to prevent the spread of any fire that may have been caused by sparks thrown off by passing steam locomotives. The road leading from Meadow Croft across the tracks to Lotus Lake also needed periodic clearing of encroaching woodlands to prevent the possibility of fire from steam power automobiles.

John was not the only family member who purchased a portion of his father's Lotus Lake Estate. In 1899, his brother, Robert B. Roosevelt, Jr., purchased a portion of land on the west side of Lotus Lake and proceeded to construct his own country house which he named "The Lilacs" (SCDP). Although not much detailed information exists about the estate, it was laid out in a similar fashion as his brother's, but it was not as elaborate. Together all three estates encompassed over 230 acres of land on which a variety of recreational opportunities existed. The three estates were linked by a unique, circulation system consisting of a roadway, hiking path, and canal allowing all of the estates to be reached by the use of any one (Figure 2.28 a & b).

### **LIFESTYLE**

While summering at Meadow Croft, John Ellis and his family took advantage of almost every recreational activity at their disposal. John was known to have "enthusiastically indulged in every form of recreation that anybody told him was amusing" (Roosevelt, J.E, Scrapbook).

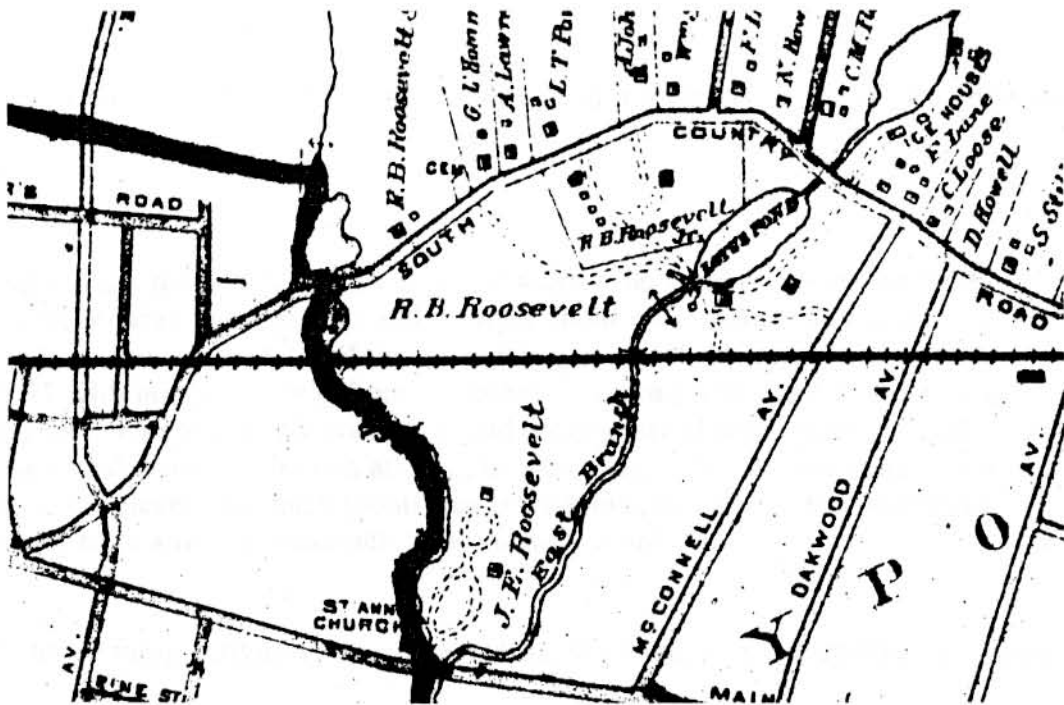


Fig. 2.28a

The 1915 atlas of Suffolk County by E. Belcher Hyde, shows a rough layout of the three estates in the Roosevelt Family Compound.



Fig. 2.28b

A 1938 aerial photo enlargement provides a better perspective of the layout and the geographic location and relationship of the Roosevelt Family Compound.

John's daughter, Jean, created a portrait of his lifestyle in a letter she wrote only a short time after his death:

"He was quite a remarkable fellow 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 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." (Roosevelt, Jean)

Of all the sporting activities John indulged in, his favorites were cycling, ice boating, golfing, and sailing (Figure 2.29). In each of these sports, he was active in organized clubs such as the West Brook Golf Club, Michaux Club of New York (for cyclists), and the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club. In later years, he, along with his father, brother, and some friends, formed the South Side Yacht Club of which he was the First Commodore 1901-1907 (Sayville Yacht Club). Like many yachtsmen, John Ellis also had an interest in boat design and received much local attention for his creation named "The Mary & Lamb". He was constantly updating the design of his boats in order to be competitive in the many South Bay invitational regattas (Roosevelt, J., Scrapbook) [Figure 2.30].

Through the many years, John summered in Sayville at both his father's Lotus Lake and Meadow Croft. He became a prominent figure in the Sayville social scene and was one of the community's most well-liked and respected citizens. He was active in many public functions and often contributed his time to community projects, as he did by supervising the construction of a bike path in front of St. Ann's Episcopal Church (SCN, August 15, 1895). Like his father's

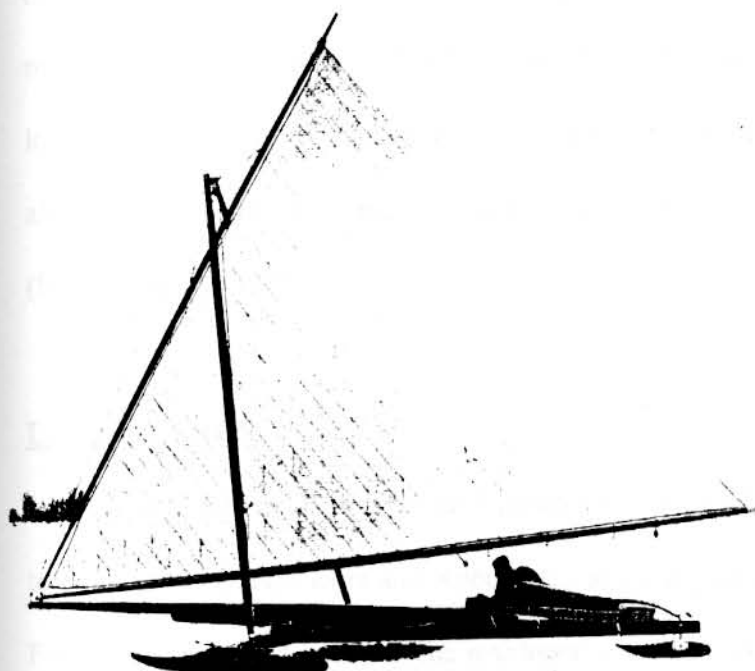


Fig. 2.29 John Ellis at play: golfing and ice boating. (Theodore Roosevelt Association)

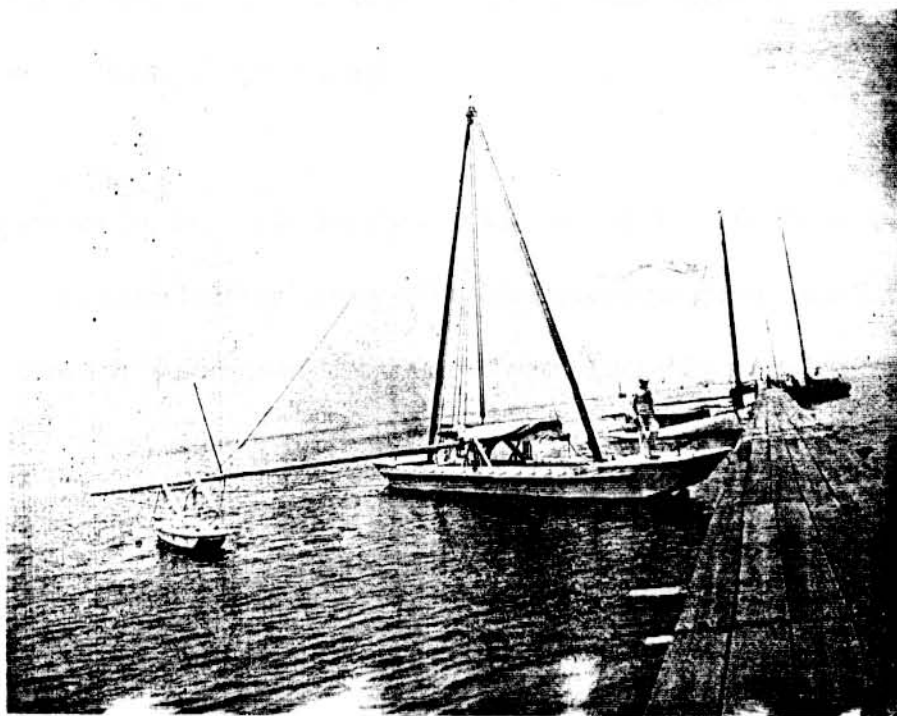


Fig. 2.30 John Ellis on his custom designed Proa, the Mary & Lamb. (Theodore Roosevelt Association)

estate, Meadow Croft often became the center of local social activities, as it did during the many meetings of South Side Yacht Club. But Meadow Croft never saw as much attention from the locals as the day John's cousin and childhood hunting companion, President Theodore Roosevelt, along with several other relatives lunched at the estate, before dining at Lotus Lake that evening (SCN, July 24, 1903).

### LATER YEARS

After Robert B. Roosevelt's death in June, 1906, his Lotus Lake Estate was left in trust to his two sons, John Ellis and Robert, Jr., and Kenyon Fortescue (of his second marriage). The Fortescues remained living in the residence at Lotus Lake while it seems that John was in charge of running the grounds. He maintained the estate much as his father did, running the farm and fish hatchery but, in time, he began to rent and sell off small parcels of the estate (Loughlin) [Map #1, Roosevelt Family Property Map].

On September 26, 1912, John Ellis's wife Nannie died of typhoid pneumonia at Meadow Croft. Just over two years later, in January 1914, John was remarried to Edith S. Hamersley (his sister-in-law, Robert Jr.'s wife), but less than two years later they were separated and after a court battle over alimony were divorced in 1916.

After this period of ordeal, it seems that there was little additional activity at Meadow Croft. It still was used as a summer retreat by John Ellis and his daughter Jean, but there were few noted changes. As John grew older, he gave up the more physically demanding activities

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT for MEADOW CROFT

former summer home of  
**JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT**

SAYVILLE,

NEW YORK

PREPARED BY:

AUGUST 1990

Suffolk County Department of Parks,  
DIVISION of HISTORIC SERVICES



## ROOSEVELT PROPERTY

SITUATED ON SOUTH SIDE OF LONG ISLAND, BETWEEN A

SAYVILLE AND BAYPORT

EMBRACING THE COUNTRY ESTATES OF

ROBERT B. ROOSEVELT DEED

AND OF

JOHN E. ROOSEVELT

AND

ROBERT B. ROOSEVELT JR.

FROM

SURVEYS OF R.C. GOTTWALDIA 1906

*Sold to Railroad at  
20 ft. width & 35 ft. South  
of Center of track - found in  
1911. \$3,000.*

*All inside red dashed parcels  
belong to JER & JSR.  
The red in SE corner is  
Cottage No 5 - Venus -*

## NOTES:

AN ENLARGED PROPERTY MAP SHOWING THE ENTIRE ROOSEVELT  
FAMILY COMPOUND DRAWN IN 1906 JUST AFTER THE DEATH OF  
ROBERT B. ROOSEVELT, SR. THIS IS THE ONLY MAP FOUND  
SHOWING THE DETAIL AND LAYOUT OF ALL THREE ROOSEVELT  
ESTATES.

PROPERTY MAP:  
ROOSEVELT FAMILY COMPOUND



NOT TO SCALE

MAP #

1

and found an interest in painting, at which time he converted the upper floor of the carriage house into a studio, adding a northern window. He spent much of the summer, sometimes all day, painting canvases with landscape scenes, many of which were of the seashore (Loughlin). By August 1922, John had obviously given up his favorite pastime of boating because he sold his boat house on Brown's River for \$2,800 (Roosevelt Ledger).

During this period, 1915-1939, in which his daughter Jean maintained Meadow Croft, there are few records or ledger entries as in earlier years suggesting the fact that there were no substantial additions to the estate (Figure 2.31). In the mid-1920's, Michael J. Loughlin was hired to be the superintendent of the grounds at Meadow Croft and lived in the caretakers cottage where he supported his family while running a small scale substance farm. On the farm he raised turkeys, ducks, and cows, while growing hay and a variety of vegetables which the Roosevelt's would often purchase during their summer retreats (Loughlin).

In his later years, John still spent his summers at Meadow Croft, but would migrate in the winter to his other home in Del Ray Beach, Florida, where he died on March 9, 1939. Jean inherited the estate and continued to occasionally visit Meadow Croft with her family from their home in Glen Cove, Long Island. In April, 1954, Michael Loughlin died and his son, Barney, took over the position and continued to maintain the grounds and the farm in the rear of the estate and eventually purchased a 10 acre portion of the northeast corner of the estate. During this period of time, the house and grounds slowly declined as lost and damaged features were not replaced.



Fig. 2.31 1938 Aerial photograph of Meadow Croft one year before John Ellis's death. Barring any minor alteration, it is the basic layout which John created and maintained throughout his life.

In 1974, Suffolk County began purchasing wetland properties adjacent to Brown's River to be used as a nature preserve; 64.8 acres of the Meadow Croft estate were purchased from Jean Roosevelt leaving 10 acres of the estate in the northwest corner owned by Barney Loughlin, who continues to use the property for agricultural purposes. There was no intent or interest by the county to use the property for anything else but a nature preserve, until the early 1980's when Don Weinhardt of the Bayport Heritage Association initiated local interest in Meadow Croft's restoration.

Eventually, Meadow Croft was dedicated to the Suffolk County Historic Trust in 1982, after which it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. Since that time, the Suffolk County Division of Historic Services has been working actively on the estate's restoration and produced a comprehensive Historic Structures Report which has been used in attaining grant monies for the restoration of the carriage house and main residence.

## **HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE**

Based on the National Register's Criteria For Evaluation (Department of the Interior), the review of Meadow Croft's history provides substantial documentation to conclude that the estate's landscape is significant in several areas.

- 1) The style of the grounds are associated with an event, the turn-of-the-century resort development, which had a significant impact and contribution to the broad pattern of Long Island's development. It was during this period that the south shore began its transition from agricultural villages to seasonal resort communities and Meadow Croft is an excellent example of this transition.

- 2) The grounds also embody the distinctive characteristics of a type and period of landscape design, turn-of-the-century water park pleasure ground estates. Although this design style was once popular and often employed along Long Island's south shore, there are few remaining examples. The grounds at Meadow Croft are all the more significant when considering that this method of wetland enhancement may not be permitted under the existing environmental regulations.
- 3) Meadow Croft is associated with one of the most prominent and influential families in the political history of the United States. The development and usage of the grounds reflect the family's environmental consciousness and their love and passion for a healthy, active outdoor lifestyle.

Based on these points and the historical research, the period of Meadow Croft's significance has been determined to be 1891 through 1915. It was during this time that the overall form, features, and details of the estate were created and the period in which Meadow Croft and the south shore were in their resort era peak.

### 3 - EXISTING CONDITIONS

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# EXISTING CONDITIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

Since 1974, when Suffolk County purchased Meadow Croft to become part of the 462 acre Sans Souci Lake Nature Preserve, it has been left to lie in a dormant state. No maintenance has occurred on the site and the forces of natural succession have been left to take their course. The entire property has been closed off to the public and only the rear portion on which Mr. Barney Loughlin maintained a vineyard and some livestock has seen any human activity. The only other activity on the site since 1974 was the initial restoration project started by the Suffolk County Division of Historic Services in 1988 of installing and repairing the underground utility systems, during which the entry road and a portion of the front lawn road were dug up.

Aside from these activities, there has been little outside influence affecting the historic integrity of the estate grounds. Up until 1974, the grounds were still maintained, although minimally, and occasionally used by the Roosevelt descendants for short summer retreats. The only force acting on the estate since that time has been that of rapid natural succession that has taken the once well-manicured estate and created a very natural but unhistoric view of Meadow Croft (Figure 3.1). In the following existing conditions description, the site has been divided into manageable sections, based on their individual characteristics and function for ease of reference (i.e., surroundings, approach, entry, etc.). Each section is delineated and labeled on the existing conditions maps in the rear of this chapter (Map #'s 2, 3 & 4).



Fig. 3.1

1988 aerial photograph of Meadow Croft and the surrounding dense residential community. The Sans Souci Preserve extends from the Great South Bay up along Brown's River to Meadow Croft and continues to the headwaters of the river's east branch. (Suffolk County Planning Dept.)

## SURROUNDING LAND USE

Meadow Croft was developed in 1891 on the tidal marshland that separated the turn of the century rural resort villages of Sayville and Bayport, which were sparsely developed outside of their centers. The vicinity presently consists of tightly subdivided residential neighborhoods sprawling between the villages along the south shore, leaving Meadow Croft as one of the largest, most preserved open spaces in the immediate area. Fortunately, the areas immediately adjacent to Meadow Croft have been able to maintain features that are more compatible with the site's historic context. Located in the middle of the Sans Souci Lake Preserve, which extends along Brown's Creek from Great South Bay north to the headwaters, Meadow Croft has been protected public land since 1974. The preserve is composed of a mix of tidal meadows, creeks, and dense stands of native woodlands that not only provides a naturalistic visual buffer from the surrounding residential community to the south and east, but also helps maintain the estate's original character. Bordering the estate to the west are St. Ann's Church and Cemetery and Union Cemetery, both are heavily wooded which help to screen the sights and sounds of the adjacent commercial district in the busy village. St. Ann's Church, constructed in 1864, and designed by Isaac H. Green, the same architect that eventually designed the residence at Meadow Croft and the church which the Roosevelt Family attended, is the only structure that is visible from the estate grounds (Map #2).

The remainder of the Roosevelt Family compound, which lies across the tracks to the north, has almost been completely subdivided and developed since the late 1950's, except for 32.5 acres presently maintained by the Town of Islip as open space. Fortunately, the Long Island

Railroad right of way separates this development from Meadow Croft and provides enough of a buffer to eliminate any negative impacts on the historic character of the site.

### **THE APPROACH FROM MIDDLE ROAD**

When approaching the estate on Middle Road from either the east or west, views to the estate grounds are hidden by an overgrown line of privet hedge intermixed with a variety of native shrubs and vines. At some points, phragmites that have invaded the shoreline extend up to the road, also creating an impenetrable screen. There are no remnants of the willows which lined either side of the walkway in front of the estate, but rather, a variety of trees dominated by silver maples (*Acer saccharinum* L.) believed to have been planted after the reconstruction of Middle Road in 1936 (Figure 3.2).

The only substantial remaining view from outside the estate is from the bridge which crosses over Brown's River. From this point, there is a view of the extensive meadows, rivers, canals and ponds that surround the estate, which all appear quite natural with no hint of man's intervention. The main residence is no longer visible through the surrounding stand of oaks and pines which themselves are almost lost in the surrounding sea of phragmites (*Phragmites communis* Trin.). (Figure 3.3)

### **WATERWAYS**

Although most of the original bulkheading is gone, the canals and ponds John Ellis had dredged still remain in their original alignment. There are only the slightest deteriorating remnants of the original wooden bulkheading that extended along much of the canal's shoreline.

Fig. 3.2 - Looking east down Middle Road toward the entrance; neither the house nor grounds are visible.



Fig. 3.3 - A view from the Brown's River Bridge on Middle Road looking north across the meadows to the estate.

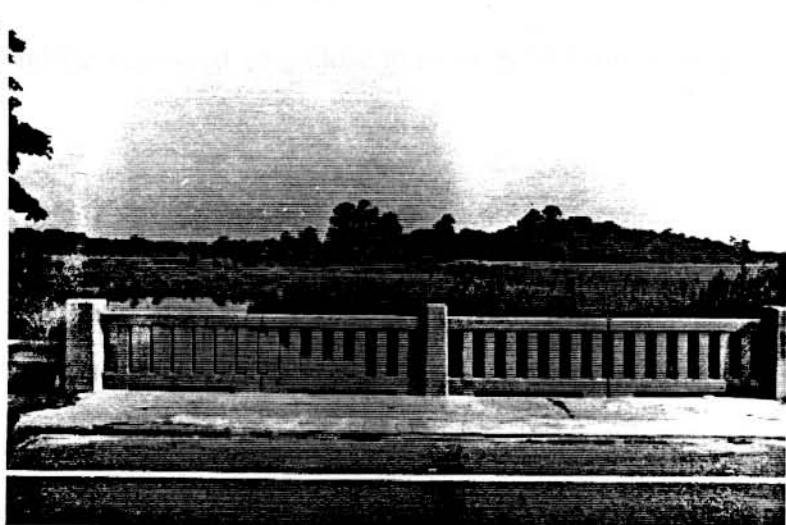


Fig. 3.4a - The remnants of the bulkheading along the east side of the bridge, near Middle Road.



The remaining 3"-4" rough vertical timber pillows are only visible above the water line at low tide. Although their condition is quite poor, the remnants combined with historical photographic evidence should supply enough information so that the exact location and style of the bulkheading can be determined (Figure 3.4a). The depth of the artificial water bodies ranges with the tides from under 1' to 2+', but it is possible that these areas were at one time deeper and have slowly been filling in with sediment over the years. The islands and surrounding wetlands that were once covered with low growing salt meadow grasses, which were harvested seasonally, have been invaded by phragmites, leaving only the inner portions in their original condition. The phragmites have begun to extend out into the canals making them narrower than they were originally; but, the front pond has remained very close to its original form (Figure 3.4 c & d).

## **ENTRY DRIVE**

On both sides of the formal entry drive, which extends across the wetland meadows, stand catalpa trees (*Catalpa speciosa* Warder). The one on the east side is in good condition, but has become overgrown with vines; while the catalpa on the west side has been knocked down and is alive but declining (Figure 3.5). There is a 3' drop in elevation from the Middle Road entrance to the bridge which crosses over the river; and along either side of this drive, there is a steep slope that leads to the deteriorating wooden bulkheading at the shoreline. The 6" vertical pylons had head in place horizontal timbers, but have deteriorated to the point where they no longer provide sufficient retention of the ground behind them. Thus, much of the surrounding area has begun to erode away, washing down into the river. The vegetation on these banks is

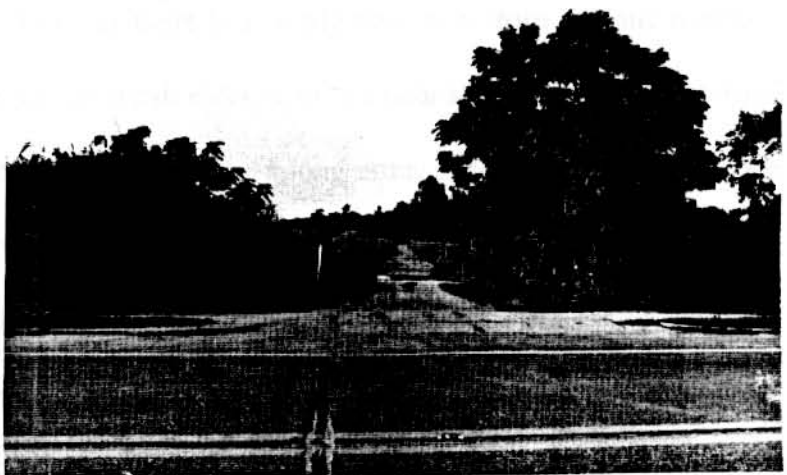
Fig. 3.4b - A view down the east branch of the canal from the boat house location shows the narrow corridor created by the phragmites.



Fig. 3.4c - The front pond on the east side of the entry drive still maintains its original configuration but is surrounded by phragmites which block views to and from the residence.



Fig. 3.5 - A view down the entry drive which is flanked to the east by a catalpa.



dominated by phragmites, but also consists of a host of other tidal marsh species listed on Map #4 (Figure 3.6).

The 17' 3" wide, 12' long concrete bridge that crosses over Brown's River appears to be in sound condition and is in no need of structural repairs. On the north side of the bridge is a chain link fence and gate, installed by the County after its purchase, intended to provide security for the estate from trespassers, but in its present condition can be easily penetrated (Figure 3.7).

The roadway on the north side of the bridge, which ranges from 10' to 15' wide, has eroded to the point which makes it nearly impassable by automobile. The pavement consists of a sandy base intermixed with larger gravel (fill) and remnants of the oyster shells that once covered the roadway when the estate was maintained by the Roosevelts. The strips of land on either side of the driveway are just above the mean tide water level; and, although the drive is firm, the side edges are soft and boggy and, at high tide, become almost submerged and cannot be safely passed over on foot. The shore line edges are relatively straight when compared to the irregular edges of the surrounding islands and are covered with vegetation that consists of native salt marsh vegetation dominated by salt meadow grass (*Spartina patens* Ait.) and phragmites (See Figure 3.8). Further north down the driveway there is a steady transition from wetland meadow grasses to woody shrubs and trees, such as marsh elder with occasional red cedars (*Juniperous virginiana* L.) and shining sumac (*Rhus copallina* L.). Along either side of the road there are also a few remnant willow stumps which are set back 5' off the road and are approximately 10' on center. There are no original willows, but rather saplings/sprouts that have grown from the stumps of the downed white willows (*Salix alba* L.). (Figure 3.9).

Fig. 3.6 - The entry road has begun to erode away due to the collapsed bulkheading.



Fig. 3.7 - The concrete bridge is in excellent condition while the entry gate is in need of repair in order to make it more secure.



Fig. 3.8 - A view south toward the entrance across the boggy, overgrown side lawn.



The formal entry drive leads to a fork in the road where it continues curving off to the right and the service access drive proceeds straight. Between the service road and the adjacent west canal the land extending from the forks down to the auto house is composed of a dense cover of a variety of successional woody trees and shrubs: pitch pine (*Pinus rigida* Mill.), red cedar (*Juniperous virginiana* L.), arrowood (*Viburnum dentatum* L.), swamp maple (*Acer rubrum* L.), bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica* L.), and a host of native vines and grasses (Figure 3.10).

Directly in between the road forks, a circular mass of bayberry surrounding a red cedar has replaced a white willow which stood there in an earlier period. Filling in along the edge of the formal drive and the dredged pond is dense hedge-like formation of arrowood (*Viburnum dentatum* L.) that stands 7' tall blocking views in and out of the estate. Also extending along the shoreline of the pond is a dense mix of bayberry and a variety of other tidal wetland species (Figure 3.11).

## **THE FORMAL LAWN**

A large open formal lawn, bounded on the west by the service access road, slopes up to the residence from the entry drive which circles around its east side. The center of the lawn is clear of trees except for a mass of bayberry that surrounds the stump of an original cedar tree located near the middle (Figure 3.12). Lining the west edge of the lawn are four large evenly spaced tulip trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera* L.) that range in caliber from 95" to 120". They are all in good condition and under no stress, but are in competition with a variety of smaller native trees that have invaded the lawn around them, including red cedars and norway maples (Figure 3.13).

Fig. 3.9 - Looking south down the entry road only a portion of a white willow remains.



Fig. 3.10 - Along the west side of the drive there is a dense cover of successional vegetation.



Fig. 3.11 - A view of the estate from the road branch in the entry drive.



Fig. 3.12 - The formal front lawn extends right up to the foundation of the residence.



Fig. 3.13 - The four large tulip trees which line the entry drive.



Fig. 3.14 - A view of the tulip, beech, and cherry trees from left to right.



Near the middle of the lawn a red cedar stump has been circled by a mass of bayberry and a large choke cherry (*Prunus virginiana* L.). Closer to the house stand three trees: a tulip tree, a purple beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'atropunicea' West.), and a cherry (*Prunus virginiana* L.). Except for the tulip tree, the trees seem to be suffering from root damage caused during the restoration of the underground utilities in 1988. Many limbs have been broken off and the beech tree seems to have declined with many branches dying back from the tip (Figure 3.14).

The lawn is dominated by fescue grasses and, in the area of recent construction, consists of a thin cover of weeds. Across the west side of the lawn another road has developed, an "outlaw road", from automobiles cutting across the lawn rather than trying to pass down the almost impassable servant's drive, which is characterized by overgrown vegetation and eroded ruts that are up to 1' below the existing lawn elevation (Figures 3.15, 3.16).

Along the entry drive on the east side there is another lawn area which extends approximately 50' to the woodland edge that borders the east canal. The woodland is dominated by white oaks (*Quercus alba* L.) but also contains a mix of some black pines (*Pinus thunbergiana* Parlat), maples (*Acer species* L.), and sour gum (*Nyssa sylvatica* Marsh), while the understory consists of bayberry, post oak, and pitch pines (*Pinus rigida* Mill.) which also have begun to invade the lawn (Figure 3.17). Hidden among the native understory shrubs at the lawn's edge are several large masses of rhododendrons (*Rhododendron maximum* L.) and a few Japanese dogwood trees (*Cornus kousa* Miq.) which, along with the surrounding lawn, are being invaded by the more aggressive bayberry shrubs (Figure 3.18).

Fig. 3.15 - The "Outlaw Road" that cuts across the middle of the lawn.



Fig. 3.16 - A view south down the service drive, lined on both sides with a variety of non-historic overgrown native species.



Fig. 3.17 - A view of the east lawn across the main entry drive loop, where many native pines and bayberry shrubs have begun to invade.



As the entry drive approaches the house, there is another fork, with the east branch continuing on to the rear portion of the estate and the west break curving into the porte cochere in front of the residence. Directly between the branches of the forks is another large mass of bayberry which has invaded the area where an historic white pine tree once stood (Figure 3.19). There are a few remnant foundation plantings along the front that have become overgrown. They consist of several barberry shrubs (*Berberis thunbergii* DC.) and privet (*Ligustrum amurense* Carr.), which are scattered along the porch base and apparently at one time, formed a low hedge surrounding the porch (Figure 3.20). On both the east and west corners of the porch are 3-4' tall rhododendrons (*Rhododendron maximum* L.) which had reached up to the roof of the porch, until they were cut back during the recent restoration of the house.

### **EAST SIDE OF THE GROUNDS: INFORMAL RECREATION AREA**

The area extending eastward from the front porch to the east canal, used for recreational activities, still maintains its very naturalistic character. It consists of a mixed woodland dominated by native white oaks (*Quercus alba* L.) and black pines (*Pinus thunbergiana* Parlat.) thinly spaced out over a cleared grass understory which extends from the porch across the drive into the woodland (Figure 3.21). As with the rest of the estate, there is no indication that there was ever a formal path leading from the porch into this area. Two large rhododendrons (*Rhododendron maximum* L.) provide enclosure for the space from the front lawn located to the south; the northern edge of the clearing is defined by an irregular line of understory shrubs that extend down to the canal (Figure 3.22). Located within this wooded area are several structures, the closest to the road being a wooden shed surrounded by a mass of bayberry. The shed served as a storage facility for John Roosevelt's paints and may have been an additional child's

Fig. 3.18 - A rhododendron and dogwood located in the understory on the east side of the front lawn.



Fig. 3.19 - The fork in the road on the approach to the porte cochere where an old white pine has been replaced by a mass of bayberry.



Fig. 3.20 - A view of the east side porch foundation plantings, a mix of barberry and privet.



Fig. 3.21 - A view from the east porch looking toward the informal recreation area.



Fig. 3.22 - The grass clearing that leads to the recreation area is bordered by rhododendrons and dogwoods to the south and a variety of native woodland shrubs to the north.



Fig. 3.23 - John Ellis's paint storage shed.



playhouse prior to that (Figure 3.23). The original playhouse was moved from Meadow Croft to Jean Roosevelt's residence in Glen Cove, Long Island, where it was eventually destroyed. Directly east of the shed is a 20' x 50' concrete in-ground pool, raised above the ground and surrounded by a 3' berm covered with a mass of dense shrubs, vines, and a large fallen oak tree which blocks the view of the pool from the house (Figure 3.24). A partially buried 3' wide concrete slab leads up the berm to the pool and connects to the 2' wide concrete apron that surrounds the pool, along with the remnant of a decaying wooden fence covered with a rusted metal screening. The fence apparently enclosed the pool at one time, but is not part of the original pavilion structure, of which only the concrete footings remain. The sides of the pool and surrounding walk are solid and in good condition, but the bottom has cracks out of which a variety of shrubs and trees are growing (Figure 3.25). At the south end of the pool there is the remnant of a 1' wide wooden diving board held in place by steel brackets anchored to the concrete. On the north side of the pool there is a portion of the stair case recessed in the concrete side wall which lead down into the 7' deep pool (Figure 3.26). Sitting on the edge of the same end of the pool is a make-shift filter system constructed by Barney Loughlin out of a 50 gallon steel drum. Overall, the pool is in fair condition but is not visible or accessible due to the invading understory of bayberry and fallen trees.

Leading from the pool entrance further east into the woods is the remnant of a path highlighted by a rhododendron at its entrance that is not passable due to a fallen oak tree. A short distance down this path due east of the pool lies a slight clearing in the woods which leads to the edge of the marsh. Although no remnants were found, this is the approximate location of the original A-frame boat house. The 1980 Cultural Resource Survey Report documented the

Fig. 3.24 - The original entrance path that leads up to the in-ground pool has become overgrown and the concrete slab that marks the entrance is buried under the brush.



Fig. 3.25 - A view of the pool from the south end.

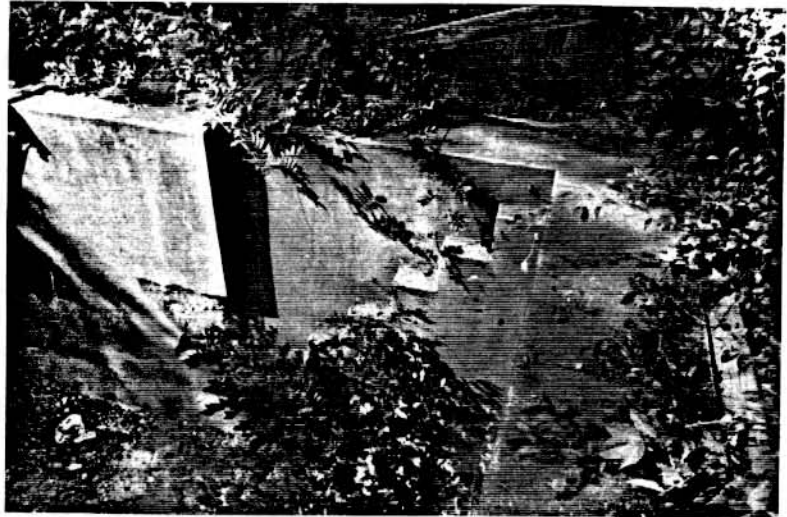


Fig. 3.26 - The remnants of the stairs located in the pool's northeast corner.



existence of the rotted timber remains of the boat house, but phragmites have since invaded the shoreline and no remnants were found.

Just to the south of the boat house across the clearing is a barely detectable narrow path running parallel to the shoreline that leads to the remnants of the wooden foot bridge, which crossed over the canal connecting to the adjacent island. Although the bridge has collapsed and lies at the bottom of the canal, there are still several of the original pylons extending out of the water that indicate the bridge was once approximately 8' wide (Figure 3.27).

From the boat house location north, the original path that connects from Meadow Croft to Lotus Lake continues down through the woods northward running parallel to the shore and continues up to the tracks (Figure 3.28). In most places, the compacted dirt path is still well-defined but many trees have fallen across it making some points impassable. Along the path approximately 50 yards north of the boat house is the burial site and headstone of a Roosevelt family pet, a Cairn Terrier named Billy, that died on July 3, 1924 (Figure 3.29). Throughout most of the woodland in this area, there is a dense understory of native trees and shrubs with many standing and fallen (dead) trees, but there are also several clearings where cut and broken wood is piled to suggest the locations were used for cutting fire wood in the recent past. This woodland, bound on the east by the marsh and Brown's River and on the west by the rear entry road, extends south from the tracks to the east side of the house where a slight depression indicates it lead to the porte cochere.

Fig. 3.27 - The location of the wooden foot bridge that crossed over the east canal. All that remain are some of the decomposing timber posts, approx. 2' on center extending slightly above the water.



Fig. 3.28 - A portion of the original path that extended from the boat house at Meadow Croft across the tracks to Lotus Lake.



Fig. 3.29 - A headstone of a Roosevelt family pet located along the path reading: "Billy Cairn Terrier Born in Scotland Died July 3, 1924".



### WEST SIDE OF THE GROUNDS: SERVICE ACCESS AREA

From the porte cochere, a drive, barely visible on the ground, continues to the west side of the house, where it reconnects with the service road at a fork where a large linden (*Tilia cordata* Mill.) stands, and continues on into the rear of the estate. There is the remnant of the circular service drop off (seen on old maps) directly adjacent to the west rear porch, consisting of a slight circular depression with a rise of ground at the center, indicating a road which connected to the other drives (Figure 3.30).

### THE GARDENS

Just to the north of the circle is a 20' x 60' garden plot which extends from the rear porch west toward the auto house (Figure 3.31). Buried 6"-1' below the grass is a slate path, 2' wide, leading from the steps to the garden. The garden is overgrown with shining sumac (*Rhus copallina* L.), wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda* Willd.), and trumpet vine (*Camposis radicans* L.), which are all growing on a wooden lattice trellis that extends along the north side of the garden and ranges from 3' to 7' tall. The trellis, constructed of 1" x 2" wooden strips in a grid pattern with 4" open squares, is suspended on locust post spaced 5' on center. Although the locust post seemed to be quite old, possibly dating from the early 1900's, the trellis's construction indicates that it is probably a later addition (1930's) [Figure 3.32]. Around the other three sides of the garden are 3' tall locust posts spaced 5' on center and also portions of a privet hedge (*Ligustrum amurense* Carr.) which surrounded the garden. Scattered throughout the interior are patches of common periwinkle (*Vinca minor* L.), but there is no recognizable pattern to the garden or indication of what other plants were grown. Based on Barney Loughlin's remembrances, there

Fig. 3.30 - A view of the west rear porch; directly west of the porch is a slight circular depression which delineates the original road alignment of the service drop-off, the maple tree stands approximately at its center.



Fig. 3.31 - A view of the garden's east side: the rear porch steps exit onto a slate path extending along the garden's south side.



Fig. 3.32 - The trellis which borders the garden's north side is only visible during the winter months, when the vines are dormant.



were brick edged dirt paths that entered on the south and west side and poppies were a dominant flower within the arrangement.

Barney Loughlin also remembers a garden, called the "Japanese Garden" by the Roosevelts, located along the south side of the auto house. There is the remnant of a tall privet hedge (*Ligustrum amurense* Carr.) that framed the exterior border of the garden, which is currently being taken over by the surrounding woodland. A slight opening remains into the garden but there is no trace of any brick edge walkways as Barney described (Figure 3.33). The interior is very boggy and vegetation is dominated by wetland ferns surrounded by a dense cover of native wetland trees and shrubs. The only ornamental plant outside of the privet is English ivy (*Hedera helix* L.), which is growing at the edge of the garden that is presently an overgrown woodland bog.

### **SUPPORTING UTILITY BUILDINGS**

Along the west side of the entry road are a number of supporting outbuildings. The first is the wood frame stuccoed auto house which sits at the edge of the woodland. The building served as a location to both repair and store automobiles. The rear portion of the structure is sinking into the wetland that borders its western side causing the entire auto house to lean (Figure 3.34).

Directly adjacent to the auto house on the north side is a depression approximately 3' deep where the wooden ice house once stood; but the area is now overgrown with brush and there is no visual evidence of its original brick foundation (Figure 3.35). A portion of the

Fig. 3.33 - The "Japanese Garden" which once lay just south of the auto house has become overgrown with native shrubs, but the original Privet hedge still marks its boundaries.



Fig. 3.34 - The stuccoed auto house has begun to lean due to the boggy soil on which it stands.



Fig. 3.35 - Only a slight depression overgrown with vegetation marks the location of the ice house.



partially collapsed carriage house, which served as both the coachmen's quarters and a stable, remains standing just to the north with a 12' x 12' concrete slab at its south facing entrance (See Figure 3.36). An understory of brush and vines has begun to fill in on the building's west side, along with an overstory of catalpa, oak, and pines, and a lone tulip tree, which possibly marks the west boundary of a horse corral.

Almost directly behind the carriage house to the north is the barn, which also has a south facing entrance, but is in much better structural condition. The barn is composed of two sections: the front wooden structure and a slightly larger wood and stucco addition in the rear, which served to shelter both livestock and hay (Figure 3.37). The area west of the barn is in a similar overgrown state as that of the carriage house, but it is slightly more open and has a line of locust posts from a fence that seems to have extended from the barn down along the edge of the wetland and back, creating a large fenced-in area, probably utilized as an animal corral. This area has now filled in with a variety of native trees dominated by catalpa (*Catalpa speciosa* Warder) and black walnut (*Juglans nigra* L.) [Figure 3.38]. There are no remnants of the original Woodward barn (torn down in the 1930's) which stood in between the carriage house and barn, only a dense woodland.

Both the carriage house and barn are located on the west side of the drive that bounds the west side of the triangular shaped rear fields which slope down from the back of the main residence. Along the field's eastern boundary, the rear entry road separates the field from the adjacent woods. Oak trees line this edge and an understory of bayberry has begun to invade the field from the adjacent woodland (Figure 3.39). Surrounding the field are 3' tall locust posts

Fig. 3.36 - A view of the Carriage House's south side and the road which circled around the rear fields providing access to the caretaker's cottage.



Fig. 3.37 - The barn, which lies directly north of the carriage house, had a later stuccoed addition, which is delineated by its cedar shingled roof.



Fig. 3.38 - A view of the rear (west) animal corral area of the barn.



connected by remnants of a wire fence which originally surrounded the rear half of the field and cottage. The middle of the barn to the west and a large dogwood tree to the east mark the fence line which crossed the field, dividing it in half (Figure 3.40). The fence then continued north to the cottage where it ended. The original fence was not a wire fence, but a simple locust post fence topped with a horizontal wooden rail. The rear fields are relatively level and open, though they are dominated by a variety of wild grasses and weeds. Located in the southern half of the field are the remnants of the pump house, which is now represented by a depression measuring 4' x 6' and a surface scattering of brick and concrete debris overgrown with vegetation.

### Caretaker's Cottage

Toward the rear of the fields is the caretakers cottage which originally had its front entrance facing the rear entry road; the cottage was modified at some point and reoriented and is now facing west. The cottage stands just south of the property's original 1891 northern property line (Figure 3.41). Along this line extends a man-made depression measuring 3' deep along with remnants of a fence that were most likely an early marker of the property boundary. The west side of the cottage faces out onto an additional field which extends west down to a woodland edge and is bordered by an invading edge of shining sumac (*Rhus copallina* L.) to the north. This field was connected with the field behind the barn, but a strip of vegetation divides them now (Figure 3.42). The drive that curves around the cottage and connects to the rear entry road creates the cottage's south and east boundary, along which a 3' tall locust post and wire fence and an overgrown hedge of cedars stand blocking views to the cottage (Figure 3.43). Surrounding the cottage are several large trees including spruce (*Picea abies* L.), white pine (*Pinus strobus* L.), oak (*Quercus alba* L.), and locust (*Robinia species* L.). There are also

Fig. 3.39 - Looking south down the rear entry road.



Fig. 3.40 - A view of the rear fields and the surrounding locust posts.



Fig. 3.41 - The Caretaker's Cottage: the west side which is now the entrance was originally the rear of the cottage before the addition of the sun room was made.



Fig. 3.42 - A view from the cottage west toward the adjacent field.

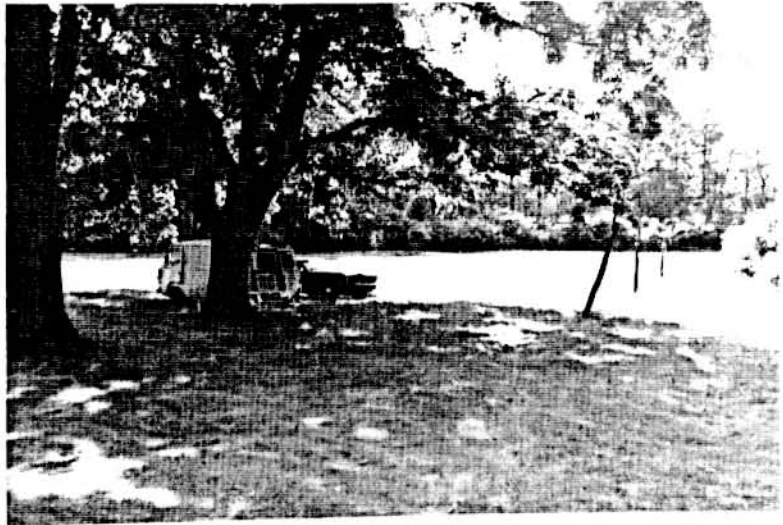


Fig. 3.43 - What was once the cottages front entrance is now hidden by the surrounding cedar hedge mixed with other shrubs. Inside there remain several ornamental trees and shrubs.

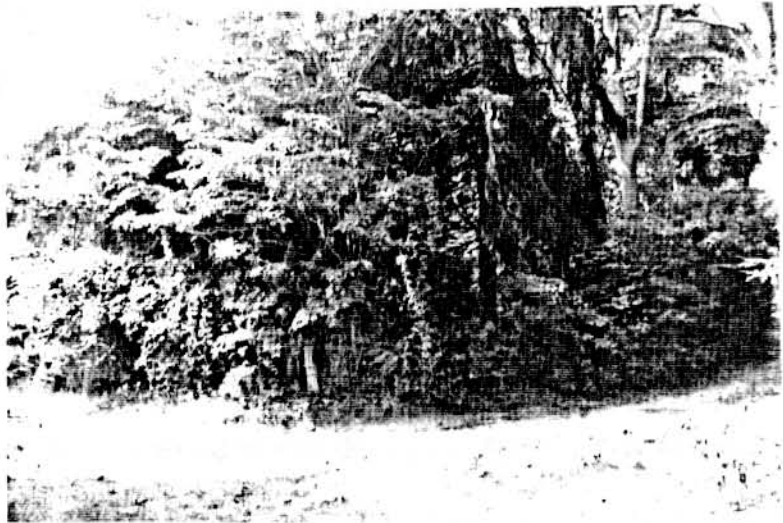


Fig. 3.44 - The two story 1950's wood frame structure which presently houses livestock lies just north of the cottage.



Japanese dogwoods (*Cornus kousa* Miq.), spirea (*Spirea albiflora* L.F.), and rhododendrons (*Rhododendron maximum*) on the cottage's east side, possibly remnants from when it functioned as the entrance to the residence.

## **THE LOUGHLIN PROPERTY**

The remainder of the Meadow Croft estate is presently owned by Barney Loughlin and is actively maintained for livestock and a vineyard. The livestock, horses and a mule, are housed in a two-story wood structure constructed by Loughlin in the 1950's, a short distance through the woods north of the cottage (Figure 3.44). The area is surrounded by dense woods except for a small field which is used for grazing. A dense stand of native woodland separates the two original clearings within which is located the headstone of another Roosevelt family pet, "Humbug" (Figure 3.45). The 30 year old "faultless horse", as the headstone states, is believed to have been buried in this location by Gladys, John's daughter, along with other horses and family pets that passed away. The vineyard lying to the north, which is located on an original farm field historically used as a pasture, was increased in size during the Spring of 1990, from its original dimensions of 350' x 150' to 390' x 180' (Figure 3.46). The rear entry road is the eastern boundary of the Loughlin property and is presently a county-owned right of way that terminates at an historic gate on the property's northern boundary.

A portion of the original gate, which provided access across the railroad tracks still remains, but has been obviously modified and altered with the addition of several wood planks to provide structural support. The 7' long wooden gate is hung from a 4' tall concrete post on a steel hinge (Figure 3.47). The other concrete post is spaced 14' away and still retains a portion

Fig. 3.45 - The headstone of Humbug, a Roosevelt family horse, located in the woods marks the area where several other animals were buried by the Roosevelts.



Fig. 3.46 - A view of the Loughlin vineyard located on the property's northern boundary.



Fig. 3.47 - The remnant of the rear entry gate that provided access across the railroad tracks, still intact with its original hinges.



of the original hinge that held the second gate up which was located in the adjacent woods (Figure 3.48). The entrance obviously has not been used for some time for there are a number of trees and shrubs which have filled in the opening.

### Archeological Remnants

Two additional artifacts were found on the property during the survey. The first is a remnant of the original post and rail fence that lined the front entrance. The decaying post and rusted pipe were located lying in the woods a short distance from the east side of the pool and are presently being stored in the paint shed. Both are in good enough condition to provide a template for an accurate reconstruction of the original fence (Figure 3.49).

The second is the partially buried remains of a 20' long wooden boat hull found in the woods northwest of the barn, which has not yet been excavated. It is of the size and style of what could be a portion of one of the catamaran-style boats John Roosevelt built (Figure 3.50).

### ROOSEVELT FAMILY COMPOUND REMNANTS

Most of the estates of Robert B. Roosevelt Sr. and Jr., which were located directly to the north, have been destroyed during the course of suburban development. However, there are a few remaining portions that are still publicly owned.

The Lotus Lake Estate no longer exists, but the entry road to the estate, located at the end of Lotus Road, which connected to the Old Mill Pond Road, still runs through the County-owned right of way, providing access to Lotus Lake. A row of old white pines line the road as it curves

Fig. 3.48 - The other half of the rear entry gate was located in the woods adjacent to the road.



Fig. 3.49 - A metal pipe and wood post remnant of the front fence.

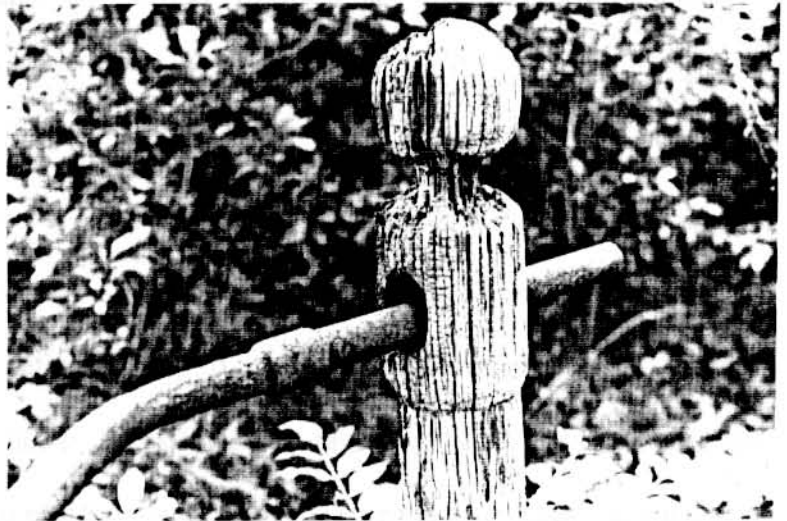


Fig. 3.50 - The wood hull of a boat 20 feet in length was located north of the barn partially buried.



onto the site. The area retains much of its original woodland character, having tall stands of pines, oak, and maple. The Old Mill Pond Road crosses over the reconstructed spillway (1986) on Lotus Lake, which was the original location of a mill. A portion of the island on which stood the Roosevelt's rustic summer house still remains, but is overgrown with no trace of the structure. The Mill Road extends across the lake and through the woods until it terminates in a subdivision. Just after it crosses the lake there is a trail leading to the south which was part of the road that lead to the rear entrance of Meadow Croft. To the north of Mill Road, alongside the west side of the lake, is one of the roads which lead to "The Lilacs", residence of Robert B. Roosevelt, Jr. The house is gone and the surrounding area has reverted back to a native woodland, leaving no evidence of the estate.

At the northern end of the property is a remnant of an entrance drive to Lotus Lake off Montauk Highway. The drive parallels the shore of the lake, crossing a collapsed concrete bridge and circling around an artificial pond before leading to a private residential property. This was most likely the original northern entrance to Lotus Lake that ran down the east shoreline to the residence. Although neither of the two estates remain, the area surrounding Lotus Lake has still maintained its natural character helping to provide the historic context for Meadow Croft.

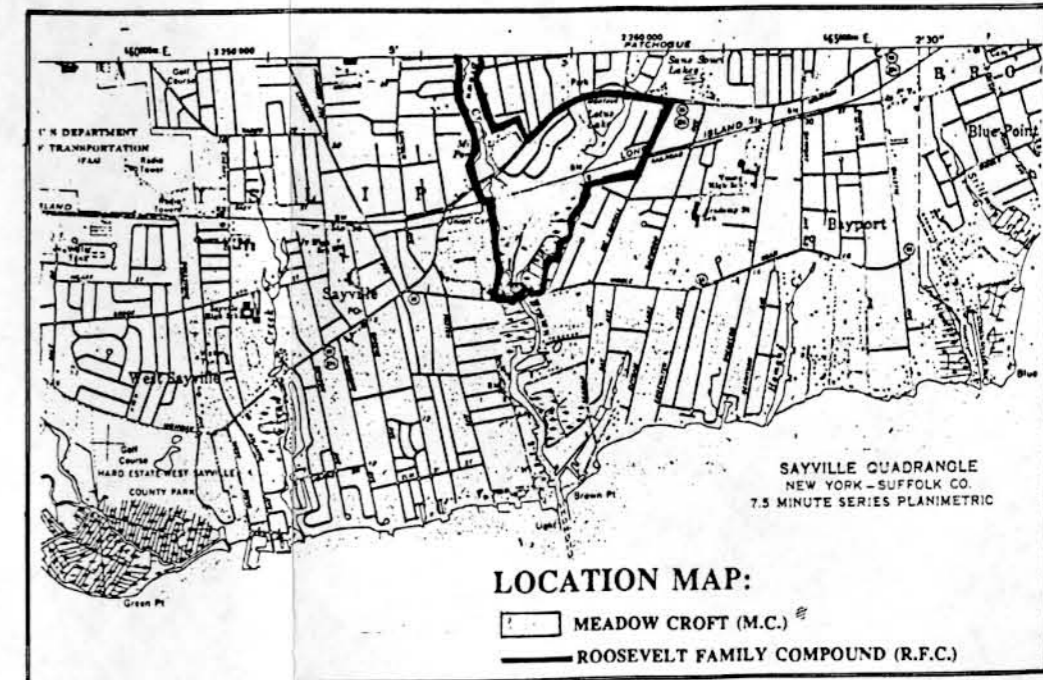
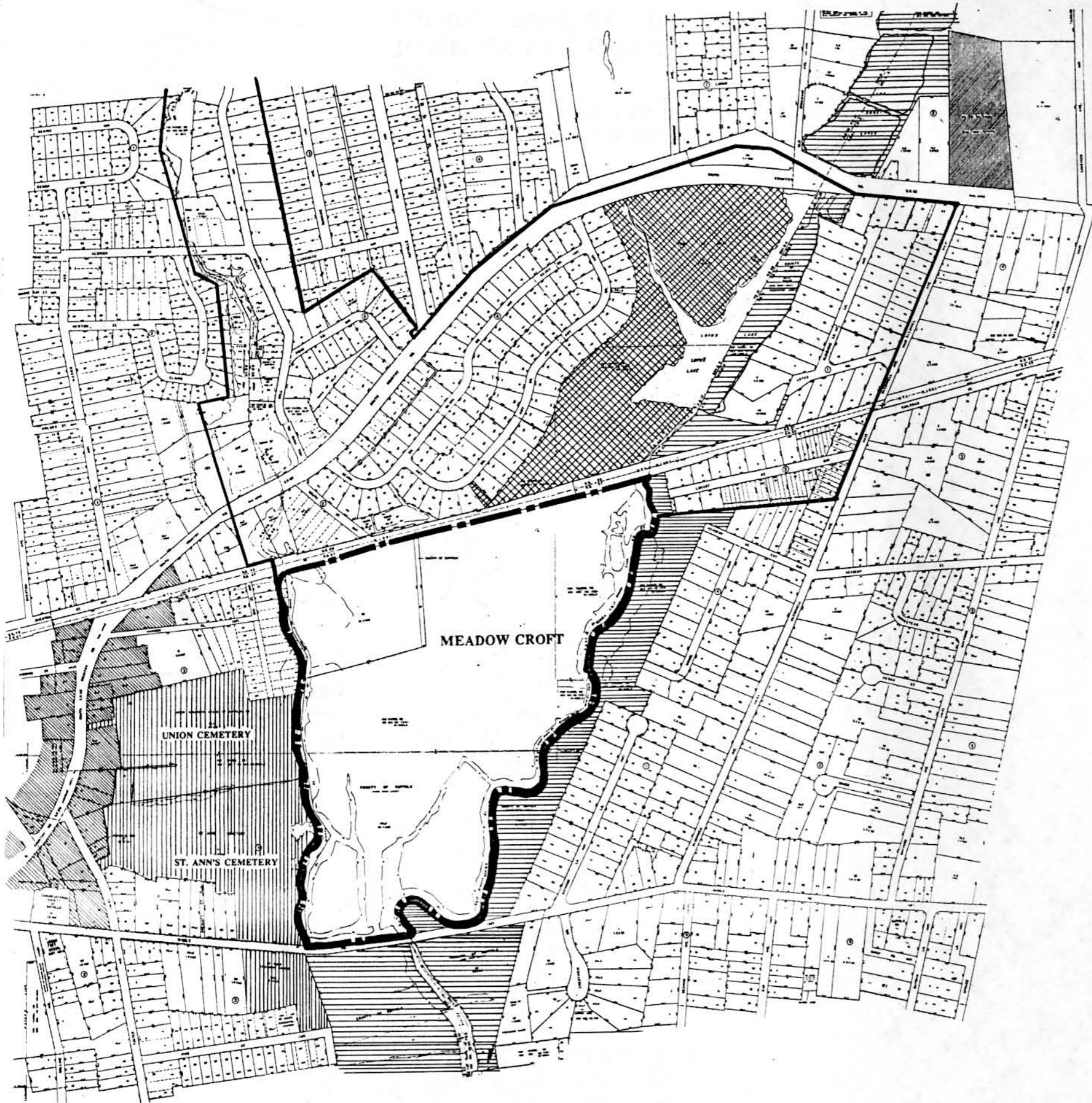
# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT for MEADOW CROFT

## former summer home of JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT

SAYVILLE, NEW YORK

PREPARED BY:  
Suffolk County Department of Parks  
DIVISION of HISTORIC SERVICES

AUGUST 1990



### LOCATION MAP:

MEADOW CROFT (M.C.)  
ROOSEVELT FAMILY COMPOUND (R.F.C.)

### LEGEND

- |  |                     |  |                      |
|--|---------------------|--|----------------------|
|  | OPEN SPACE          |  | M.C. PROPERTY LINE   |
|  | RESIDENTIAL         |  | R.F.C. PROPERTY LINE |
|  | COMMERCIAL          |  | BROWN'S RIVER        |
|  | INSTITUTIONAL       |  |                      |
|  | SANS SOUCI PRESERVE |  |                      |

### NOTES:

The area surrounding Meadow Croft is presently dominated by tightly subdivided residential neighborhoods. The estate is located in the middle of the Sans Souci Lake Preserve which is composed of a mixture of tidal meadows, creeks, and dense woodlands providing a naturalistic visual buffer from the surrounding residences to the south and east. Bordering the estate to the west are St. Ann's Church and Cemetery and Union Cemetery, which both are heavily wooded helping to screen the sights and sounds of the adjacent village commercial district. The Long Island Railroad right of way and the community open space lying to the north of the estate provide a buffer which reduce the impact of the surrounding residential development.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: MAP #

SURROUNDING LANDUSE

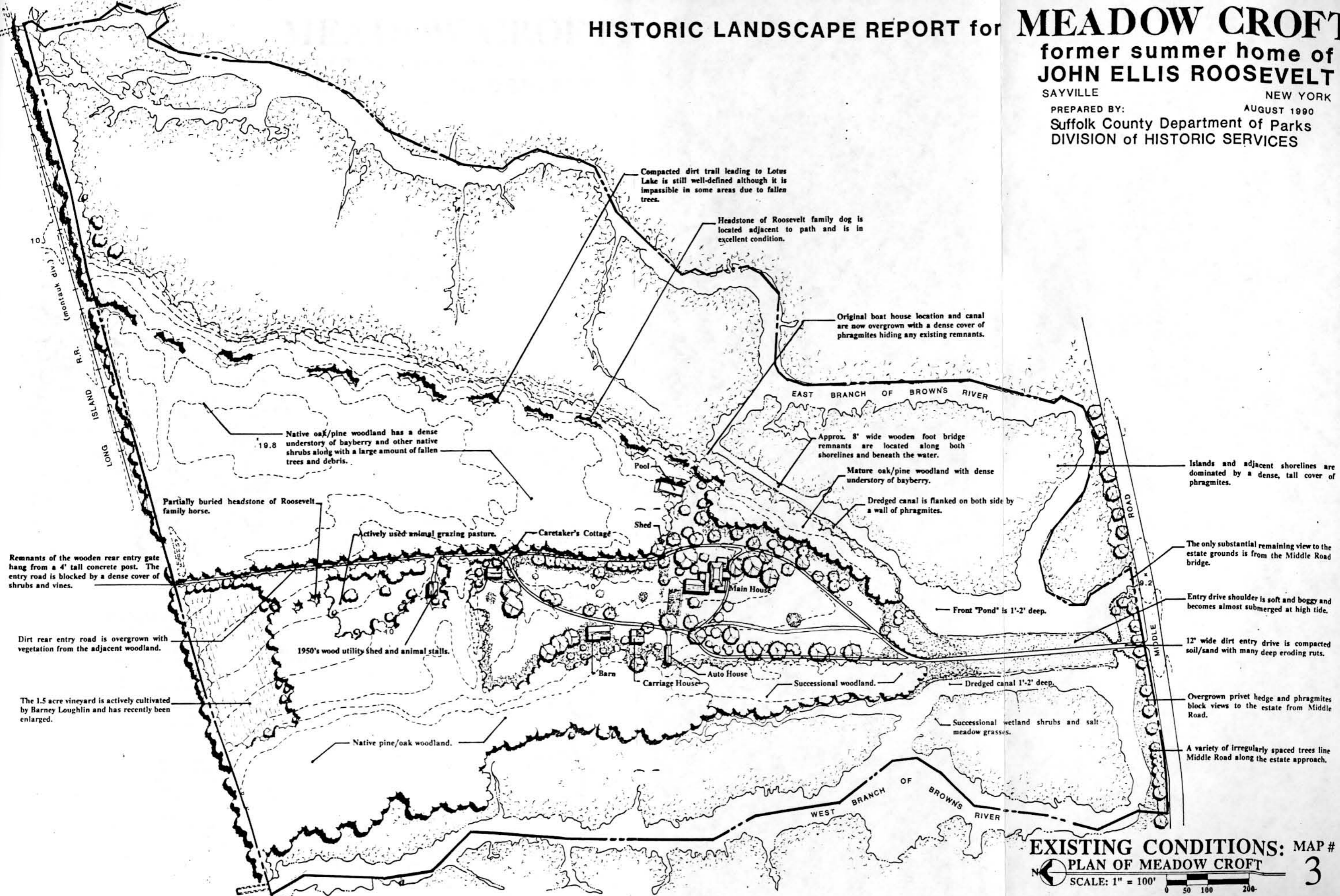
SCALE: 1" = 300'

0 300 600

2

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT for MEADOW CROFT

former summer home of  
**JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT**  
SAYVILLE NEW YORK  
PREPARED BY: AUGUST 1990  
Suffolk County Department of Parks  
DIVISION of HISTORIC SERVICES



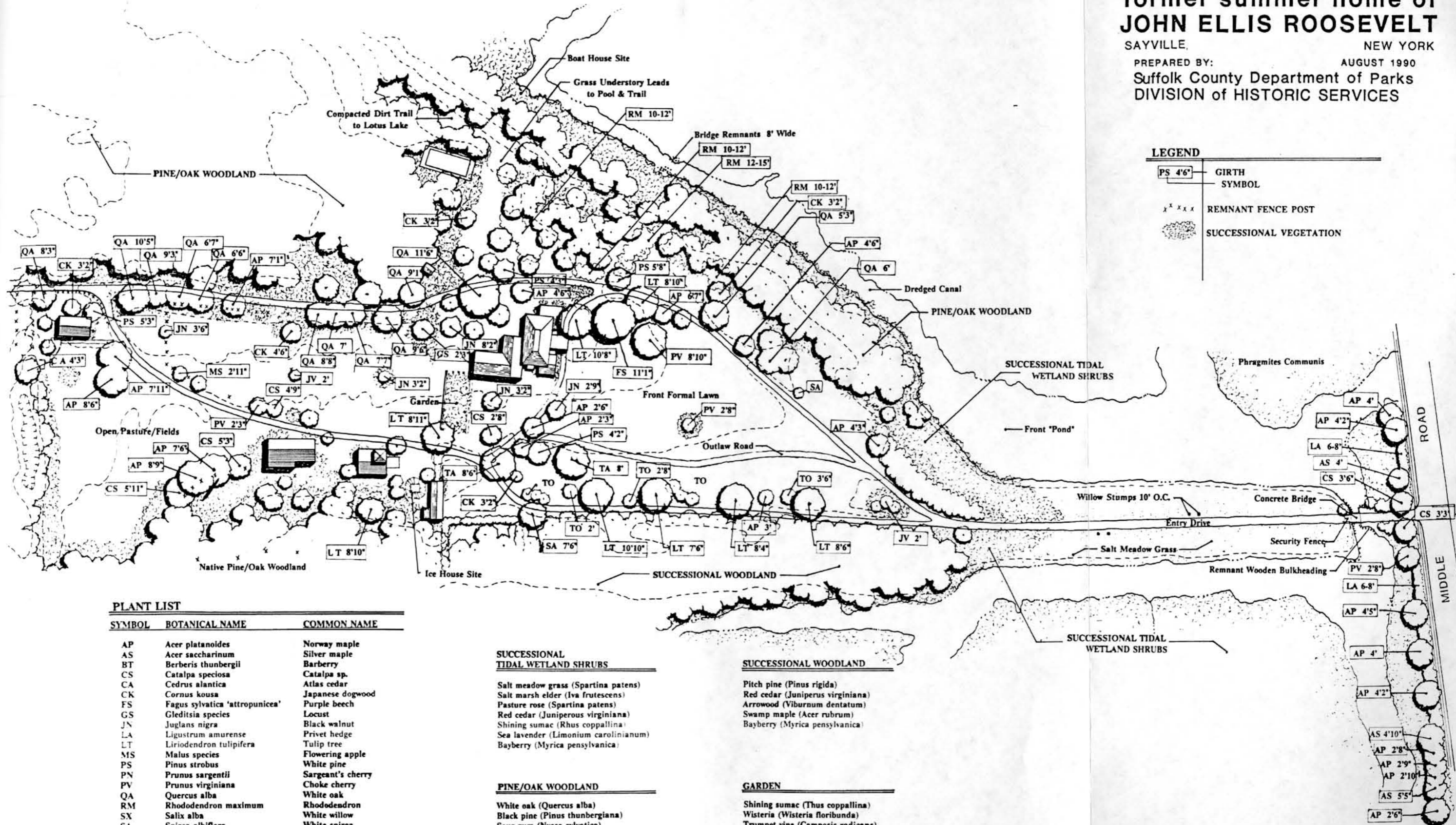
EXISTING CONDITIONS: MAP #  
PLAN OF MEADOW CROFT  
SCALE: 1" = 100' 0 50 100 200  
3

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT for MEADOW CROFT

former summer home of  
JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT

SAYVILLE, NEW YORK

PREPARED BY: AUGUST 1990  
Suffolk County Department of Parks  
DIVISION of HISTORIC SERVICES



LEGEND	
PS 4'6"	GIRTH SYMBOL
X X X X	REMNANT FENCE POST
[Stippled Area]	SUCCESIONAL VEGETATION

## PLANT LIST

SYMBOL	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
AP	Acer platanoides	Norway maple
AS	Acer saccharinum	Silver maple
BT	Berberis thunbergii	Barberry
CS	Catalpa speciosa	Catalpa sp.
CA	Cedrus alantica	Atlas cedar
CK	Cornus kousa	Japanese dogwood
FS	Fagus sylvatica 'atropunicea'	Purple beech
GS	Gleditsia species	Locust
JN	Juglans nigra	Black walnut
LA	Ligustrum amurense	Privet hedge
LT	Liriodendron tulipifera	Tulip tree
MS	Malus species	Flowering apple
PS	Pinus strobus	White pine
PN	Prunus sargentii	Sargeant's cherry
PV	Prunus virginiana	Choke cherry
QA	Quercus alba	White oak
RM	Rhododendron maximum	Rhododendron
SX	Salix alba	White willow
SA	Spirea albiflora	White spirea
TO	Thuja occidentalis	White cedar
TA	Tilia americana	American linden
VD	Viburnum dentatum	Arrowood

## SUCCESIONAL TIDAL WETLAND SHRUBS

Salt meadow grass (*Spartina patens*)  
Salt marsh elder (*Iva frutescens*)  
Pasture rose (*Spartina patens*)  
Red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)  
Shining sumac (*Rhus copallina*)  
Sea lavender (*Limonium carolinianum*)  
Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*)

## PINE/OAK WOODLAND

White oak (*Quercus alba*)  
Black pine (*Pinus thunbergiana*)  
Sour gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*)  
Post oak (*Quercus stellata*)  
Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*)  
Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)  
Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*)

## SUCCESIONAL WOODLAND

Pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*)  
Red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)  
Arrowood (*Viburnum dentatum*)  
Swamp maple (*Acer rubrum*)  
Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*)

## GARDEN

Shining sumac (*Thus coppallina*)  
Wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*)  
Trumpet vine (*Camposia radicans*)  
Privet (*Ligustrum amurense*)  
Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*)

EXISTING CONDITIONS: MAP #  
DETAILED PLAN OF ESTATE 4  
SCALE: 1" = 50'  
0 50 100

## 4 - SITE ANALYSIS

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# SITE ANALYSIS

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Analysis of the existing conditions survey results and the historic research reveal that Meadow Croft fortunately has been able to maintain its historical integrity over the years since it has been left to decline. Because the site has been put to no other use than serving as a summer pleasure ground, there have been no major changes imposed upon the resource except those created by the natural forces of old field succession. Thus, the landscape has been able to maintain the integrity of its overall form and pattern (i.e. landform, circulation, waterways, and vegetation) which has only been hidden and not destroyed by the uncontrolled succession of native vegetation. The maps located in the rear of this chapter provide a graphic description of the site analysis to supplement the text (Maps #'s 5 & 6).

## LANDFORM

The entire upland area of the estate has retained its original topographic features. There have been no major changes to the land form which slopes down from the house toward the surrounding wetlands. The only area that has seen significant change is along the front property line on Middle Road. In 1934, the road and bridge were widened, causing the loss of a small amount of property but, more significantly, creating a slightly steeper grade change from the road to the adjacent river. Also during the course of construction the fence, lawn, hedges, willows, and the wood post and metal rail fence lining the road were destroyed. The hedges were replaced with the same, the lawn was planted with beach grass, and a variety of trees were planted, which are all now overgrown due to lack of maintenance.

Another significant change to the land is the erosion and compaction of the peninsula-like narrow strip of land paralleling the entry road. The lack of sustained maintenance and the loss of the bulkheading have probably contributed to this area's change from solid ground on which a lawn was maintained to a marsh land. This low-lying area has a history of flooding during peak storm tides, but traditionally was maintained by constant filling with soil. Having not been maintained for almost 20 years, the ground has eroded and been washed into the river, creating a bog-like condition on either side of the driveway. Now, the land that previously had been able to support a mowing tractor cannot even be walked on safely.

The entry drive which crosses over this peninsula also is eroding due to lack of sustained maintenance, which originally consisted of frequent deposits of fill in the potholes and a yearly cover of compacted oyster shells. Plans have already been completed for this road's restoration and work will commence as soon as the required D.E.C. permits are attained.

## CIRCULATION

The original network of drives are all intact except for the circular service drop-off on the west side of the residence, and a small turn-around near the east corner of the porte cochere. Although the drop-off has not been used in some years, a circular depression still delineates the drive's original alignment. The condition of the drives is consistent throughout the property; they are compacted and eroded well below their original elevation, which was crowned slightly above the adjacent lawn. All the drives have a consistent width of +/- 12' wide, except where vegetation has begun to block the path, as is the case with the rear entry drive. An "outlaw" road has developed across the middle of the front lawn as a result of the lack of access along the

service drive due to overgrown vegetation. The only road which is no longer detectable is the fire road which was located in the northern woods through the use of historic aerial photos and land form analysis. The fire road, which runs parallel to the railroad tracks and extends from the rear entry drive to the woodland trail, has been filled in by native vegetation. The only formal walkway on the site is the trail running through the woods from the recreational area north to Lotus Lake. Although the trail is well-defined, there are many fallen trees which prohibit easy passage. Throughout the remainder of the estate, it appears the drives were used as walkways to access the grounds.

## **WATER FEATURES**

The original dredged waterways created in the early 1890's have apparently not been altered, although they have undergone deterioration due to neglect. The wood bulkheading which once lined portions of the river and canal has deteriorated to the point where the original construction style can no longer be interpreted, leaving only the photographic evidence from which it can be determined. The canals and pond have maintained their alignment although they seem to have silted up and become more shallow over the years. The phragmites which line the shore of the canals also have begun to invade the waterways in areas creating narrower passages than once existed. The water level of Brown's River, which is controlled by spillways located on the two lakes that feed it, may have risen slightly widening the river and causing some adjacent low-lying areas to now be submerged even at low tide. This may be the result of the replacement of the spillway on Lotus Lake in the early 1980's.

## VEGETATION

Many of the larger specimen trees planted on the property by John Ellis have remained alive, in good condition and, for the most part, easily detectable among the native oaks and pines. The majority of the ornament trees appear to have been located in the front formal entry area; tulips, lindens, and beech being the most widely used. There are several Japanese dogwoods located throughout the grounds and although most are too young to be original, it was a species apparently planted often throughout the property. Unfortunately, the only surviving ornamental shrubs are the rhododendrons which were planted on the lawn along the east side of the entry drive to create a picturesque understory. There is only a trace of the dense, round spirea shrubs that once lined the drive along the formal lawn. Only a few stumps remain from the extensive avenue of white willows that lined the front entry road. The majority of the willows were killed by salt damage during the hurricane of 1938 and the survivors also eventually declined and died.

The overgrown privet hedge that lines the front entrance and presently blocks views to the estate is not original, but rather a replacement of the original which was maintained at a height of approximately 4'. There are no traces of the clipped privet balls that were once scattered on the lawn adjacent to the bridge. The phragmites which have invaded the canal shoreline and islands have reduced views of the waterways from the estate and altered the overall appearance and character of the meadows. These islands were historically covered by much shorter salt meadow grasses, which were seasonally harvested.

The front lawn, which originally had stretched from the residence down to the pond's and canal's edge, has been invaded by the succession of old field trees and shrubs. Masses of

bayberry and arrowwood, along with red cedars, post oak, sassafras, and other native species, have begun to invade the lawn's edge, creating a dense screen of woodland that blocks views to and from the estate. The area west of the service drive, which was historically an open lawn, has also been invaded by successional vegetation which blocks views of the adjacent canal.

The original fields located in the northern woods by the railroad tracks still remain, but also have been altered. The largest rear field has remained intact, although it has been slightly enlarged and its function has changed from livestock grazing to one of a vineyard. The smaller rear field is more irregular in shape and has been reduced in size due to the invasion of the surrounding woodland. This field is presently used as a grazing pasture for a mule and a horse which are kept in a 1950's non-contributing wood structure adjacent to the field. The surrounding native woodland pattern has remained relatively consistent over the course of the last 150 years, but the once dominant pines, historically cut for timber and fire wood, are now second in prominence to the oaks.

The remains of the two gardens on the property do not provide any major clue as to their original layout, plant variety, or date. A portion of the privet hedge which surrounded the "Japanese Garden" remains, but there were no additional surface remnants or photographic evidence found which could help date or give further details of the garden. The garden adjacent to the west porch is well-defined and still retains a portion of the lattice fence and a partially buried slate walk. The boundaries of the garden are clearly defined by a remnant of privet hedge which once surrounded it, but the exact pattern detail and plant materials of the garden's interior have been erased by the successional vegetation which has since invaded.

## STRUCTURES/OUTBUILDINGS

Of the 11 significant structures and outbuildings, only 6 are still in some identifiable condition: the caretakers cottage, the barn, carriage house, auto house, paint shed, and pool. Although each is in a different state of disrepair, they have retained their original character to some extent, although their surrounding character has been altered. The caretaker's cottage originally was aligned with its entrance facing east, but subsequent alterations and additions have moved the entrance to the west side facing onto the adjacent field rather than the rear entry road. As with the surrounding pasture/fields, the corral area and fields west of the barn and carriage house also have been invaded by a dense cover of successional vegetation, creating the loss of the original field's pattern. The concrete in-ground pool is in fair condition and is surrounded by vegetation in a similar pattern to its historic condition, although it is somewhat overgrown. There are no remnants of the wood and glass pavilion which once covered the pool except for the concrete footings. The "paint shed" is also surrounded by dense understory vegetation, which restricts access to it from the recreation area.

The other structures - the original Woodward barn, the bridge, boat house, pump house, ice house, and play house - have all to some degree left behind remnants which may reveal more information as to their exact location and construction. No remnant of the boat house could be found in the area of its original location, which has become boggy and overgrown with phragmites. Historical aerial photos confirm this is the location of the boat house, but indicate this area of the canal has filled in, perhaps covering the remnants of the structure. The exact location of the bridge was determined by the remnants of the approximate 8' wide structure which are located along the shoreline and submerged in the canal. Both the pump house and ice

house locations are marked by depressions filled with debris and successional vegetation, while both the original Woodward barn and children's play house locations are approximately known, but no surface remnants were found to help determine their exact location.

Remnant fence posts do exist throughout the rear field and, along with photographic evidence, have helped determine the location of the original fences which defined the field patterns. A wood and post rail fence extended across the rear field from the barn to the rear road then followed the road north crossing in front of the cottage and then turned west, terminating at the man-made depression marking the pre-1904 property line. On the west side of the barn, a post and wire fence enclosed an animal corral area which is now overgrown.

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT for

# MEADOW CROFT

former summer home of  
JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT

SAYVILLE



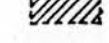

NEW YORK

PREPARED BY:

AUGUST 1990

Suffolk County Department of Parks  
DIVISION of HISTORIC SERVICES

## LEGEND

-  MAN-MADE CANAL/POND
-  SUCCESSIONAL VEGETATION
-  ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE
-  HISTORIC TRAIL

The compacted dirt path leading to Lotus Lake is still well-defined. The entrance to the path is marked by a large rhododendron.

The native woodland pattern on the estate has remained relatively consistent over the course of the last 150 years, but the once dominant pines, historically often cut for timber and firewood, are now second in prominence to the oaks.

Presence of the fire road is barely detectable due to the successional and mature vegetation which has filled in. The age and density of vegetation indicates it has not been maintained.

Man-made depressions were used as an excavation pit for filling and maintaining the grade of the front entry road.

The largest rear field has remained intact, although its function has changed from livestock grazing to a vineyard at the present time.

A wooden structure constructed in the 1950's has functioned as a utility building and livestock shelter since then, but has no relevant significance to the grounds.

Field pattern is more irregular in shape and a bit smaller than it was historically due to the invasion of the surrounding woodland.

A man-made depression marks the pre-1904 estate property line.

The west side, which was historically an open lawn area, has been invaded by a dense cover of successional vegetation which blocks the views of the adjacent canal.

Phragmites have invaded the shoreline and islands which were historically covered by short, native salt meadow grasses, and have reduced views of the water and changed the overall appearance and character of the meadows.

The canals and "pond" have maintained their original alignment although it is possible they have begun to silt up, and the surrounding phragmites have begun to invade the waterway.

Lack of sustained maintenance has allowed the natural erosion process to turn the once firm road shoulder covered by native meadow grasses to a lowland bog covered by successional wetland vegetation.

During the renovation of Middle Road and the bridge in 1934, the original white willows, privet hedge, and post & rail fence which lined the road were removed and replaced with a variety of trees and another privet hedge, which are now overgrown blocking views to the estate.

SITE ANALYSIS:  
PLAN OF MEADOW CROFT

SCALE: 1" = 100'

MAP #

5

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT for

# MEADOW CROFT

former summer home of  
**JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT**

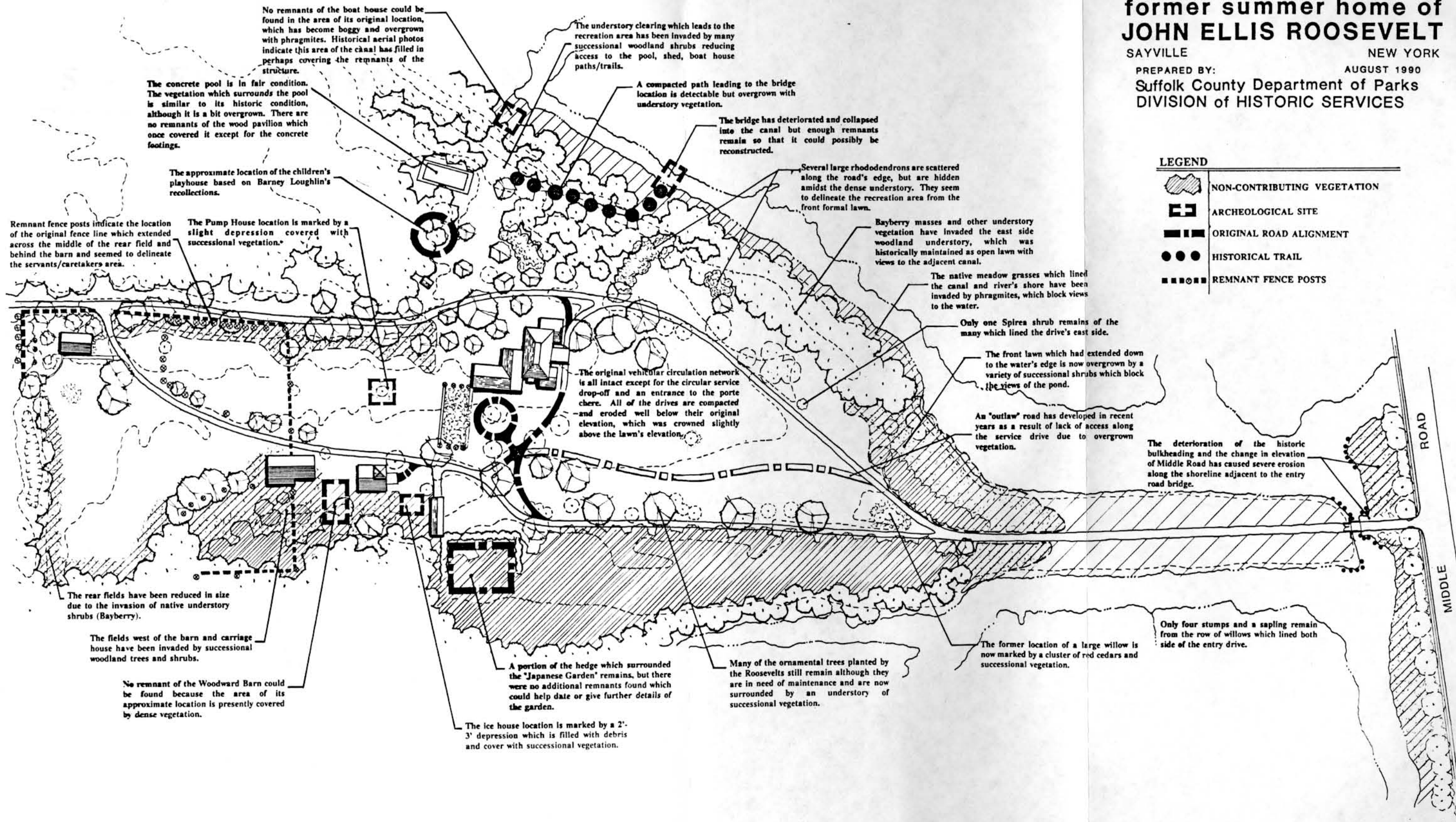
SAYVILLE

NEW YORK

PREPARED BY:

AUGUST 1990

Suffolk County Department of Parks  
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## LEGEND

	NON-CONTRIBUTING VEGETATION
	ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE
	ORIGINAL ROAD ALIGNMENT
	HISTORICAL TRAIL
	REMNANT FENCE POSTS

**SITE ANALYSIS:**  
DETAILED PLAN OF ESTATE  
SCALE: 1" = 50'

MAP #  
**6**

## 5 - RESTORATION PLAN

## 5 - RESTORATION PLAN

# RESTORATION PLAN

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## INTRODUCTION

Meadow Croft has remarkably avoided suburbanization and managed to retain a vast amount of its historical integrity. Not even the surrounding land uses threaten to intrude on the site's historic sense of place. Of the original 75.4 acre estate, the county presently owns 64.8 acres, the majority of the area that was developed by John Ellis Roosevelt. The entire grounds are included in this plan on the prospect that the county eventually will take control of the remaining 10.4 acres.

The site was laid out in the picturesque style derived from A.J. Downing's "country villa" concept, containing an ornamental landscape pleasure garden and a utility area which was used as small active farm. Although the pleasure grounds played a larger role in the Roosevelt's family life, both areas contribute to the significance and will be included in the restoration. Fortunately, both parts of the estate have maintained a high degree of historical integrity, however there are several constraints to achieving a complete restoration:

- 1) The loss of several of the original outbuildings and structures of which there has been no documentation found as to their exact location, style, or construction (the ice house, pump house, bridge, and original Woodward barn).
- 2) The physical limitation imposed by the grounds for vehicular access, circulation, and parking. The front entry road will only permit one-way traffic which could create a safety hazard. There is also nowhere to provide a large on-site parking lot without compromising the historic and environmental integrity of the site to some degree.

- 3) The site's location in a D.E.C. regulated wetland also may cause constraints. Any restoration within the wetland such as the bulkheading or reconstruction of the boat house will require the review and permission of the Department of Environmental Conservation.

In summary, there are exceptional opportunities for an accurate and literal restoration of Meadow Croft based on the site's integrity and the availability of historic documentation, but this project poses some unique constraints which can be overcome by following this restoration master plan.

## **MASTER PLAN**

The master plan is a comprehensive long-term plan for the restoration of the grounds at Meadow Croft. It is intended to outline the restoration objectives, provide a framework in order to achieve specific short-term recommendations, and guide long-term planning and development. The plan is long-term and it is realized that all the objectives cannot be reached simultaneously, so it establishes guidelines which can be used to evaluate later project developments. Restoration plan maps #7 and #8 are included in the rear of this chapter and provide a further graphic description to supplement the text.

The restoration plan is the result of a thorough understanding of the site's history, existing conditions, and contemporary needs. It offers site specific recommendations for the restoration of the overall form and detail of the landscape to the established period of significance, while providing a compatible use that will require minimal alteration to the property and its

environment. Although restoration has been selected as the primary treatment for the site, other specific projects will require the use of more appropriate treatments, including:

- 1) stabilization of historic features on the site in order to re-establish their structural stability and arrest their further deterioration while detracting as little as possible from the site's appearance and significance;
- 2) preserving and maintaining the existing form, integrity, and materials of historic features (archeological site) by arresting or retarding their deterioration through a program of ongoing maintenance;
- 3) reconstruction of significant missing historic features on the site based upon the accurate duplication of original features, composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities, substantiated by physical or documentary evidence.

## **RESTORATION OBJECTIVES**

The overriding objective is to restore the Meadow Croft landscape as accurately as possible to its historic condition, which evolved from 1891 to 1915, while enhancing the site's educational opportunities through the addition of compatible uses.

The second objective is to arrest the serious deterioration of historic features and structures by stabilizing and protecting them from further loss or damage.

The third objective is to restore vehicular access onto and around the site to prevent the further development of shortcut "outlaw" roads and to establish a small, temporary on-site

parking area so that volunteer groups will have a place to park while continuing with the restoration.

The fourth objective is to conduct archeological investigation of high priority areas which will help resolve issues regarding period, location, design, materials, and construction: 1) garden areas; 2) waterways; 3) the ice house; 4) boat house; and 5) bridge.

The fifth objective is to eliminate incompatible non-historic features or to limit their visual impact, restore or reconstruct significant buildings and structures, and restore the site's original open character by the removal of successional plant material, and the repair and maintenance of the historic vegetative features.

The sixth and final objective is to document the restoration process for Meadow Croft through the press, television, film, video and any other means that will publicize the landscape preservation effort, gathering additional public and private support and funding. By providing information of interest to the preservation community and the public, other historic landscape projects may be initiated once their special importance and needs are realized and understood.

## RESTORATION CONCEPTS & GUIDELINES

- 1) The date for the restoration of the grounds will cover the years 1891 to 1915. This was the period of Meadow Croft's development during which John Ellis converted the pre-existing farm into a country estate pleasure ground and water park. It was also during this period that most of the resort era development took place and the south shore was in its hay day. The estate did not undergo any historically significant changes or events after this period that would mandate their inclusion.
- 2) The restoration of the landscape and related structures is to be an accurate one substantiated by historical, physical, or pictorial evidence rather than conjectural designs. The replacement of structures, landscape, or vegetative materials should match the original's composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. In the event such accuracy is not possible, consideration and discussion must ensue about the range of options. Absolute authenticity may occasionally be tempered by:
  - Lack of substantial historic information about a feature, area or structure;
  - Unavailability of certain plant species or appropriate materials; and
  - Extraordinary expense.
- 3) Validity for the authenticity of the restoration will be substantiated by a combination of written records of historic, physical, and pictorial evidence: written records of that time period including John's ledger, scrapbook, visual records, the oral history of Barney Loughlin, and further archeological investigation.
- 4) Any alteration necessary for the development of a compatible use should have a minimal impact on the site's historic integrity, thus the site will not include twentieth century conveniences and amenities. Eliminated, therefore, are formal sidewalks, benches, and unnecessary signage, etc.
- 5) Because of the site's unique location within a wetland nature preserve, special attention must be paid not only to historical authenticity, but to the preservation of this sensitive surrounding environment. Any restoration or reconstruction project on the site should respect both the landscape's historic significance and the site's natural character, and must therefore be historically accurate while being performed in a manner which protects the sensitive ecology of the area. In the instance where a conflict arises between the restoration objectives and the environmental regulations of a State or Federal agency, the historical accuracy should not be compromised. Thus, when necessary, the appropriate measures should be taken to obtain any required permits in order to complete the restoration or reconstruction without compromise.

- 6) Whenever time or money is not available for authentic work, that project will be set aside until either or both become available so the restoration is not compromised. In the case where a major project cannot be completed due to budget constraints, appropriate measures such as stabilization or preservation and maintenance should be undertaken to prevent loss or damage until finances are available.
- 7) Archeological investigation should precede the restoration of all significant site features, especially critical areas such as the gardens, ice house, and boat house. Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve the site's archeological resources adjacent to any restoration, reconstruction, or stabilization project. All archeological excavation should be limited to providing sufficient information for research, interpretation, and management needs.

## **SHORT-TERM ACTIONS**

### **Stabilization of Significant Features**

The first and most important action is the protection and stabilization of all the significant site features in order to prevent their deterioration.

- In order to proceed with the documentation and stabilization of historic outbuildings, the existing overgrown vegetation must be removed. A priority in this is the removal of any fallen trees that endanger the structures. All buildings will then be stabilized to prevent any further deterioration and documented by photographing and cataloging any items related to the structures. The structures should then, if necessary, be secured with an enclosure of fencing to prevent entry into the structures. The major priorities are the pool, auto house, and carriage house, which all could pose immediate danger to visitors on the site.
- Areas of landform erosion such as along Middle Road and the entry drive and bridge should be stabilized until additional treatments are undertaken.
- Any significant plant material in danger of declining also should receive immediate attention and the necessary appropriate action to prevent further decline (most notably the purple leaf beech tree on the front lawn).
- The site has already been secured by a 6' high chain-link entrance gate, but the northern property boundary bordering the railroad tracks has no fence and needs to be temporarily secured by the installation of a non-climbable fence to prevent entry from or onto the tracks.

### Circulation

The circulation element needing the most immediate attention is the entry drive and the network of vehicular routes that provide access to and around the residence.

- The section of the main entry drive which passes through the meadow should be returned to its original grade elevation, even with that of the bridge, by filling and compacting with sub-grade material and grading the surface with a layer of crushed oyster shells (the historic road cover). The historic entry drive leading from Middle Road was originally 12' wide. This will not allow for two-way traffic and poses a vehicular safety hazard. The preferred solution to this situation is to provide a 5' to 6' firm grass shoulder alongside the compacted shell road. This would allow two vehicles to pass, if necessary, while maintaining the drive's original dimensions and character and eliminating the need for additional warning signs. In order to preserve this drive in its restored condition, the original bulkheading along the canal will need to be restored using the existing remnants and photographic evidence as a guide.
- A similar treatment is needed for all of the interior drives surrounding the house, except the pavement surface should be compacted stone dust instead of oyster shells. All of the drives widths should be a constant 12' throughout the estate and have a slight crown above the adjacent lawn areas.
- The circular servant's drop-off should be restored to its original alignment, which has been documented in the field and, through historic evidence, is shown on the restoration map.
- The service drive on the west side leading up to the estate and the rear entry road both need to have the overhanging vegetation cleared from their path so to make them passable by vehicle.
- No additional walks should be added to the site to maintain its historic integrity. The historic drives can be used to provide access to the various site features and possible parking locations. The restoration of the drives throughout the estate in the described manner will provide barrier-free access for the handicapped to all historic features on the site.

### Vegetation

Another area needing immediate attention is the restoration of the formally open lawn areas, by the removal of non-historic trees and brush that have begun to invade the site. This will help re-establish the original basic pattern of the landscape. Prior to the removal of any vegetation on the site, all identified historic plant material must be visibly tagged to prevent accidental removal or damage during the restoration.

- The clearing of miscellaneous brush and overgrowth along Middle Road and the pruning of the existing privet hedge to its original height of 3' to 4' will open up the historic views into the estate and heighten public awareness of the restoration activity. The trees lining the road should also be pruned so to allow views under the canopy to the estate.
- The successional brush and woody vegetation that has filled in around the front lawn and recreation area should be removed, recovering the original lawn pattern, and opening up the historic views to the surrounding water. Following the clearing, these areas should be reseeded to establish the lawn, which will then need continued maintenance. Revealing the landscape to the public will have an immediate beneficial impact of increased awareness of the restoration.
- After the bulkheading lining the canals is restored, the successional vegetation that has invaded the property along Middle Road should be removed, at which time the area should be stabilized and regraded followed by the restoration of the lawn.
- The two historic trails, one leading to Lotus Lake from the boat house, and the other to the bridge, both need to be cleared of vegetation and debris to reestablish their original width of approximately 4' allowing pedestrian access. The trails, which are level, will need to be maintained in such a manner to permit barrier-free access, thus periodic clearing of debris and regrading will be necessary.

### Archeology

- Archeological investigations should be performed on those high priority sites such as the original Woodward barn, ice house, pump house, boat house, and bridge so they can be protected from any further loss or damage during the process of restoration. Hand clearing vegetation should be reserved for all critical archeological areas in the vicinity of old building foundations and close to original trees.

Parking

- During the course of the initial restoration process, the parking of vehicles of volunteers and workers should be limited to the circular servant drop-off area on the west side of the house and prohibited on the lawn or other such other open area.

**LONG-TERM ACTIONS**

Once the primary restoration objectives are achieved and the site is in the condition to be opened for public visitation, there are several additional actions that should be taken, along with many smaller projects that will be necessary to restore the detailed features of the site which contribute to its significance.

Parking

- The preferable option for parking is to make off-site arrangements possibly by reaching a cooperative agreement with St. Ann's Church directly adjacent to the site. The church lot, which is rarely occupied, is within reasonable walking distance to the site and in the case of large events, would prevent damage to the site caused by excessive usage. The church also has an historic relationship to Meadow Croft and the local community, thus would provide an ideal location for parking.
- Another possible location for an off-site parking area is the open field opposite the entrance to Meadow Croft. This property is presently owned by the County and is part of the Sans Souci Preserve. It may be possible to develop a parking lot in this location, if permitted by the D.E.C., because of its proximity to a wetland.

**On-Site Alternatives**

If these arrangements cannot be worked out, a number of possible on-site parking alternatives exist.

- The first on-site parking alternative location is the smaller rear field just north of the cottage. It is well-screened from the rear entry road and is adjacent to a non-contributing structure which could be converted into a welcoming

center/maintenance facility. This would not cause foreseeable damage to the site's historic integrity or create any visual distraction to the experience.

- The second alternative is to use the larger rear field by the railroad tracks (once the county takes control of the property) which is presently a vineyard . This area could accommodate more vehicles than could be expected to visit the site and would not significantly diminish the historic significance or experience of the site, as the area is to be maintained as an historical open pasture.
- The third alternative is to develop a small 10 to 20 car parking lot which can be sensitively incorporated onto the site in the woodland area on the east side of the property, just north of the pool and paint shed. This would provide parking for volunteers and employees who will be running the tours and gift shop located on the first floor and a small number of visitors. The parking lot should be a simple compacted stone dust lot with one entrance off the adjacent drive. The entire lot should be screened with the native woodland vegetation in that area to reduce its visual impact.
- Parking for the residents of the caretakers cottage can be located on a temporary basis on the lawn adjacent to the cottage. But, once the site is open to the public, the vehicles should be located on the north side of the cottage off the rear entry road near the non-contributing information/maintenance facility. All parking areas developed on the site should be surfaced with compacted stone dust to minimize environmental impact of runoff.

### Signage

The addition of signage should be kept to a required minimum and used primarily to guide vehicular traffic, preventing possible safety hazards. The scale, color, composition, and size of any signage should be distinguishable as a contemporary addition, but reflect the natural and historic character of the site. Sign posts could be constructed of wood and detailed in a similar style as the original round fence posts. Tour maps and guides, which could obtained on-site, should be used to provide guidance and interpretive information about the grounds rather than the use of signage. The installation of any required security lighting should be concealed

and as inconspicuous as possible, lighting only those areas around the historic structures, so as not to detract from the property's aesthetic and historic qualities.

### Vegetation

There are many historic trees which have been lost that need to be replaced, most prominently the white willows along the entry drive. Also, the trees presently lining Middle Road should eventually be removed and replaced with white willows. The willows should all be the same size and planted simultaneously to maintain an even aged appearance. The additional ornamental trees can be replaced as per the plan as finances permit. As the historic vegetation is replaced, the appropriate original species must be used as identified on the Master Plan map. Any plant material donated by individuals or community groups must be the appropriate species for the designated location or it should not be accepted.

- The two fields in the northern portion of the property also need to be cleared in order to restore their original configuration and character, after which time, if the program permits, they can resume their historic function as animal grazing pastures.
- The 20' wide fire road should also be restored through the removal of all the existing vegetation within the limits defined on the restoration map.
- On a smaller level of detail, all of the foundation plantings which are presently surrounding the residence should be removed, after which the lawn should be restored right up to the foundation.

### Fences

- The front wood post and metal rail entry fence should be replaced using the photographic documentation and the existing remnant post to guide its accurate reconstruction. The fence should be located between the sidewalk and hedge and extend from the Brown's River bridge east to the west property line, as it did

historically. The curved sections of the fence leading into the entrance should also be reconstructed.

- A more appropriate entry gate should replace the existing one and be designed to better match the scale, size, style, and color of the site, but must also be distinguishable as a contemporary addition. Once the estate is open to the public and more carefully maintained and secured, it should no longer be necessary to prevent trespassers so the gate can be simple steel structure intended to prevent vehicular access after hours.
- A permanent, non-climbable style fence should be installed in the rear of the property to eliminate the possibility of trespassers accessing the site from across the railroad tracks. Although it is not necessary for this fence to match the historic character of the site, it should be located so that it is screened from views on the property. The historic gate at the rear entrance to the property should be restored using the existing gate and the remnant located in the woods as a guide.
- After the removal of the successional vegetation and restoration of the field pattern, the simple wood post and rail fence that historically divided the rear field, separating the cottage and main residence, should be restored along with the historically appropriate gate based on the photographic documentation.
- After the areas adjacent to the barn and carriage house are cleared, the post and wire fence that enclosed a small animal corral can be restored using the existing locust post pattern adding the necessary posts that are required to maintain the original spacing.

### Gardens

After additional archeological investigation, the garden adjacent to the west porch of the house should be restored with the historically appropriate plant materials and laid out according to the garden's original pattern, if it can be determined. If found to be historically appropriate through additional archeological research, the "Japanese Garden" adjacent to the auto house should be restored. If not, it should be cleared and restored to its condition as an open lawn area.

Uses - Facilities and Structures

All of the various buildings and structures on the site should be restored or reconstructed pending additional information obtained during archeological investigations, after which they will each be able to play a role in the experience of the historic site.

Plans have already been tentatively arranged for the restoration and re-use of the estate residence. The first floor will consist primarily of restored rooms which will be opened to the public for educational tours, run by the Bayport Heritage Association. The Friends For Long Island Heritage will also run a small gift shop on the first floor. The upper floors will be used as office space by the Bayport Heritage Association, who will also run a nature resource library open to the public for researching the Island's environmental history.

The auto house, carriage house, and barn should be restored, after which time they can be used for various exhibit purposes contributing to the educational experience of the period's history. For instance, the auto house may display an early period automobile of the type and style owned by John Ellis, while the barn and carriage house may house equipment used during the period in the maintenance of the site and cultivation of the farm. This could be incorporated into the educational experience of the lifestyle of the estate servants and caretakers.

The juxtaposition of the auto house, ice house, and carriage house help to display the rapid technological process made during this short period of time. If the ice house cannot be reconstructed, it should be preserved with its foundation exposed as an archeological remain and an educational tool of unique practices and techniques of landscape preservation.

Enough substantial information was not obtained in order to reconstruct the original Woodward barn, but further archeological investigation should be able to determine its location after which time it can function as a preserved archeological feature for interpretation. The location of the small wooden pump house been determined and should be reconstructed using the photographic evidence and verbal description by Barney Loughlin. The non-historic structure/barn located north of the cottage could be easily converted into a maintenance shed, providing easy storage of equipment and avoiding the cost of its removal. The orientation of the cottage entrance should be realigned to the east by removing vegetation, restoring the remnants of the original walkway, and making the necessary structural alterations to the cottage.

With the ample photographic evidence that exists, the original pool pavilion can be reconstructed and serve as a non-functioning exhibit that contributes to the understanding of the resort period recreational lifestyle of the Roosevelt Family. The boat house can also be reconstructed based on photographic evidence, after which time it can resume its function as a boat launch so the grounds and the unique features of the water park can be fully appreciated and the property can continue to serve as a recreational facility, as was originally intended. If archeological investigations can locate the site of the original play house adjacent to the pool, the photographic documentation can be used to reconstruct it.

If the small wooden bridge can be reconstructed, after further archeological investigation it too will not only contribute to a better understanding of the historic water park, but will provide access to the Island's unique ecological habitat, and further contribute to the site's educational experience.

The historic trail which connects to the Roosevelt Family Compound cannot only be used as part of a walking tour of the site, but as a nature walk where unique natural attributes of the upland, woodland, and meadow can be explored and used as an educational tool.

In conclusion, the site has many features that, over time, if properly treated and restored, will not only contribute to the historic significance and authenticity of this unique turn-of-the-century country estate with its picturesque pleasure ground and working farm, but also serve multiple uses as a nature preserve park where the public can come from the surrounding suburbs and experience the beauties of the natural environment that initially drew the wealthy New York City businessmen. The site, in combination with the nature library that will be housed on the second floor of the residence, can also serve as an educational research facility where the public can come to learn of the importance and unique qualities of tidal wetland ecology. Finally, the use of the archeological features, such as the ice house, can be used as an exhibit to educate the public of the intricate aspects and processes of historic landscape restoration in the hopes that it will initiate additional interest and projects. All of these uses are compatible and can not only be incorporated into the site while maintaining its historical integrity, but will enhance the site's total experience.

## MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES

Throughout the period of the site's restoration and thereafter, an ongoing program of maintenance should be performed to ensure the health of the vegetation and the protection and proper function of other features, and provide for the highest level of public safety while respecting and protecting the authenticity of the restored site. Routine upkeep will facilitate the difficult task of maintaining an everchanging landscape in an authentic appearance. The same general maintenance procedures are required for the site as with any other public facilities: mowing, pruning, weeding, raking, tree care, watering, etc.

As was the case during the period of significance, the majority of the routine ground maintenance occurred in the front portion of the estate: the entrance and formal lawn area. These areas of the estate were historically maintained in a highly manicured fashion, as was typical with most pleasure grounds during the period. Written and photographic records show the lawn was frequently mowed and edged (weekly to bi-weekly) during the growing season and the privet hedges were maintained in a tightly clipped fashion, while the spirea shrubs were maintained in a manner to enhance their natural form and character. The photographic evidence reveals that the large specimen lawn trees were not pruned to a maintained size, but rather permitted to achieve their natural growth pattern and character. Although the character of this mature vegetation is now different than that which existed during the period of significance, it does not alter the overall context of the site and there is no evidence to conclude that it is inconsistent with the (informal) design intent. Based on the maintenance of the landscape throughout its history, it is believed these trees were intended to reach their mature natural form.

The remainder of the estate was maintained in a much less intense manner. The rear fields (from the fence dividing the estate from the cottage) were maintained in a mixed use fashion, divided between agriculture crops and animal grazing pastures, surrounded by native woodland. These areas defined in the restoration plan would have been maintained according to appropriate farming practices and methods of the period.

The standard grounds management practices should incorporate these maintenance patterns in order to maintain the site in accordance with the character of the historic period of significance. The following general guidelines are intended to address those specific areas related to the historic maintenance of the site:

Lawn - The entire front formal lawn area extending back to the wooden fence should be mowed (clippings removed) weekly or bi-weekly, as necessary, to maintain a manicured appearance. (This includes the understory lawn which extends up the east side to the recreation area.) Removal of weeds, watering and fertilization, and edging should be included in the program as necessary to achieve this look. Because there are no formal paths on the estate, visitor traffic across some lawn areas may create the need for increased maintenance intensity, i.e. aeration, reseeding, in order to prevent/repair deterioration.

Vegetation - Ornamental and specimen trees throughout the estate should be pruned as necessary to maintain their health and vigor by removing dead, diseased, and damaged limbs. All necessary measures should be taken to protect and repair damaged trees through the use of appropriate treatments (i.e. cabling, bracing, root fertilization). Pruning should include the

removal of lower limbs which block historically important views (noted on the Restoration Plan) to the canals and ponds and which inhibit vehicular circulation. In the event that a documented significant tree warrants replacement due to death or uncontrollable decline, the same species should be used in its place. All planting and replacement operations should also be documented. The ornamental shrubs should be seasonally pruned in an attempt to maintain them in the same style and size documented by the photographic evidence, i.e. privet hedges maintained at a 4' height tightly clipped. The woodland immediately surrounding the front lawn and recreation areas should be periodically cleared of debris. Fallen trees should be cut down and removed and the stump cut flush with the ground. Special note and care should be taken to prevent the damage of historic structures by falling trees and limbs in woodland areas through periodic pruning, repair, or removal, if necessary. The naturally occurring vegetation within the woodland areas should be reinforced with in-kind replacement if extensive damage or deterioration (fire/disease) causes the loss of the historic character.

Agriculture/Pasture Areas - The rear portion of the site was historically used as agricultural and pasture land. If the site program allows, these areas should continue to be used in this fashion. If possible, the fields can be leased to community groups (i.e., garden or equestrian clubs) who may have an interest or desire in maintaining the agricultural fields or need for a horse grazing area. Any efforts or contributions of local groups and organizations should be coordinated with those of the regular site staff. It is essential that if such cooperative efforts are undertaken, they are consistent with the restoration goals and objectives of the site. If no programmatic uses of these fields can be developed, they should be maintained as open pasture/meadow land being mowed seasonally (once or twice a year).

If possible, in situations where equipment and skills are available, the maintenance of all or a portion of the site could be done using historical equipment and methods as a demonstration portion of the site program.

Circulation System - The nature of the compacted dirt drives throughout the estate will require that they are regularly maintained by filling and regrading damage caused by erosion and compaction from natural forces and increased usage. Special note should be taken to prevent the formation of ruts and holes and to maintain the drive's alignment, width, and edges. The portion requiring the most intensive maintenance will be a shell covered entry drive which will receive the most traffic and has a high potential for erosion due to tidal flooding. This portion of the drive will require frequent filling and regrading along with the addition of crushed oyster shells in order to maintain its historic condition.

Further maintenance guidelines and requirements will need to be developed as additional information gathered during the restoration and archeological investigations determine how other areas were used and maintained.

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT for MEADOW CROFT

former summer home of  
**JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT**

SAYVILLE

NEW YORK

PREPARED BY:

AUGUST 1990

Suffolk County Department of Parks  
DIVISION of HISTORIC SERVICES

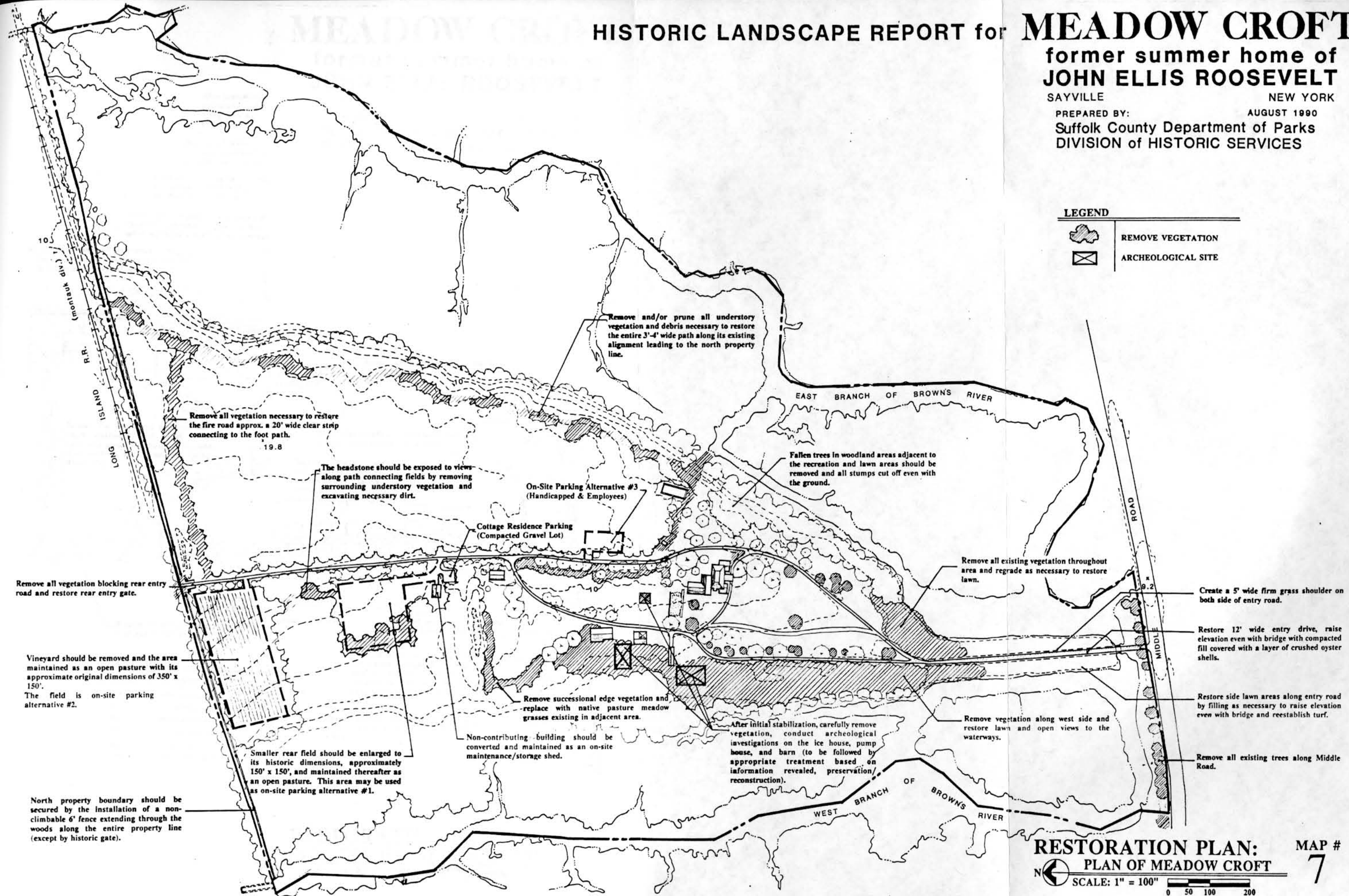
## LEGEND



REMOVE VEGETATION



ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE



**RESTORATION PLAN:**  
**PLAN OF MEADOW CROFT**



SCALE: 1" = 100'

0 50 100 200

MAP #

7

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT for MEADOW CROFT

former summer home of  
**JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT**

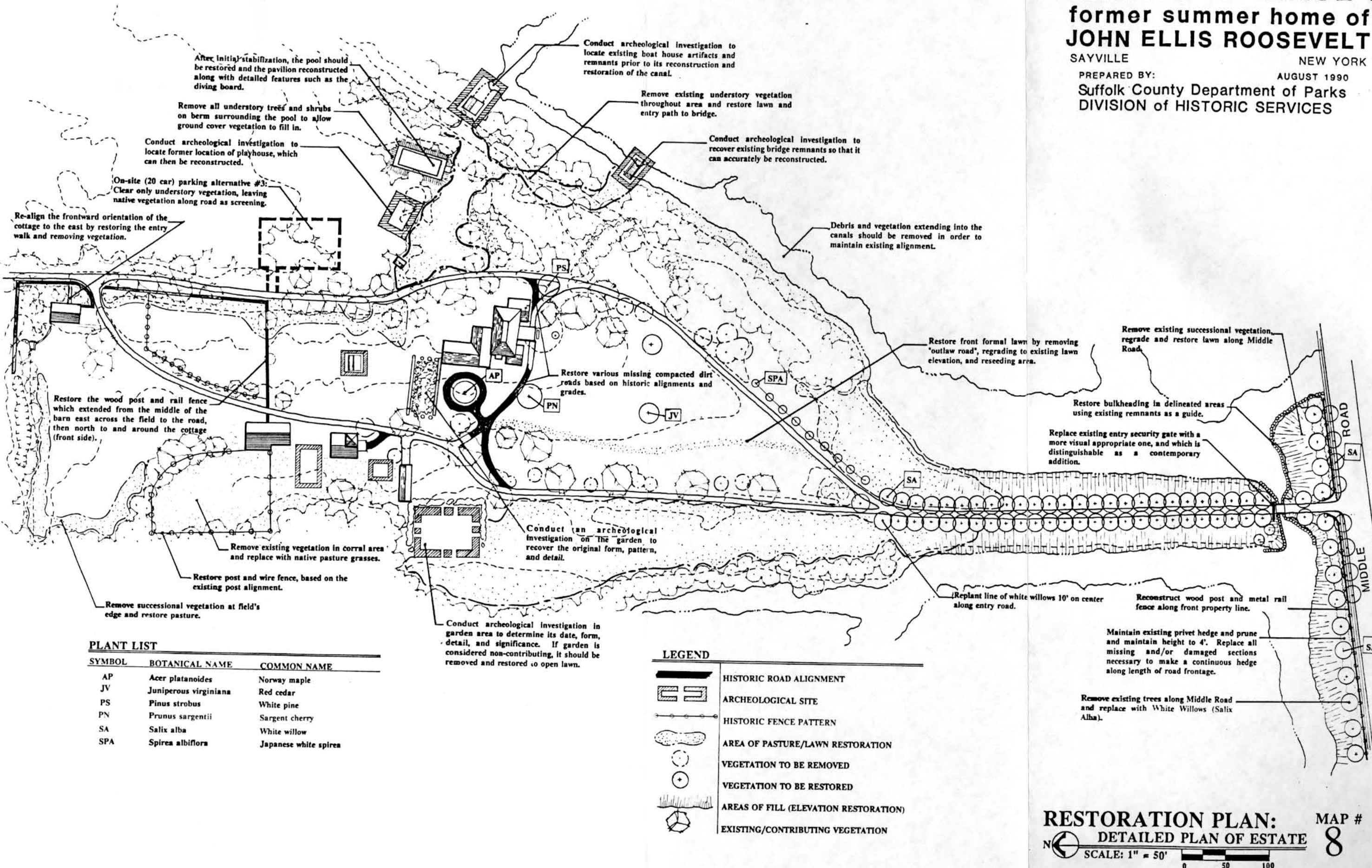
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## 6 - APPENDICES

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## TITLE SEARCH WORK DONE ON MEADOW CROFT PROPERTY BY DON WEINHARDT - 1987

1 March 1861

Liber 151, Page 137

From: James E. & Elizabeth Woodhull  
Nelson & Mary Woodhull  
Samuel & Julia Woodhull

To: John Woodhull

In consideration of \$1.00 - 15 $\pm$  Acres:

- N. & E. by land of Daniel Lane
- W. & S. by the middle of the Forks Creeks

with appurtenances.

22 May 1868

Liber 152, Page 90

From: John & Amanda Woodhull

To: Isaac S. Douglas

In consideration of \$1,500.00 - 15 $\pm$  Acres:

As above with buildings.

30 August 1869

Liber 161, Page 520

From: Isaac S. Douglas

To: Edward Edwards

In consideration of \$1,500.00 - 15 $\pm$  Acres:

As above with buildings.

15 June 1870Liber 170, Page 544

From: Edward & Rebecca Edwards  
To: Isaac S. & Elizabeth Douglas, and Sarah Woodhull  
In consideration of \$1.00 - 15 $\pm$  Acres

23 August 1870Liber 171, Page 84

From: Isaac S. & Elizabeth Douglas and Sarah Woodhull  
To: Edward Edwards  
In consideration of \$1,500.00 - 15 $\pm$  Acres

9 September 1870Liber 172, Page 124

From: Edward Edwards & Wife, Rebecca  
To: Benjamin F. Woodward  
In consideration of \$1,550.00 - 15 $\pm$  Acres:  
- N. & E. by the heirs of Daniel Lane  
- W. & S. by the Forks Creek

21 January 1871

Quit Claim Deed

1 February 1871Liber 176, Page 291

From: Charles Douglas

To: Benjamin F. Woodward

In consideration of \$125.00 - 1/2 Acre

13 November 1890Liber 336, Page 361

From: Benjamin F. Woodward  
Anne Woodward, Widow of Benjamin F. Woodward (Deceased)

To: John E. Roosevelt

In consideration of \$4,500.00 - 15± Acres:

- N. by land of R.B. Roosevelt, formerly Lane
- E. by land of R.B. Roosevelt, formerly Lane
- and by the East Branch

17 November 1890Liber 336, Page 555

From: Robert B. & Marion T. Roosevelt

To: John E. Roosevelt

In consideration of \$1.00

31 October 1895Liber 432, Page 125

From: F. William & Julia R. M. Cook

To: John E. Roosevelt

In consideration of \$150.00 - 1 Acre:

- N. by Thomas Price
- E. by Center of West Branch of Brown's River
- S. by William F. Lecluse
- W. Union Cemetery

16 August 1900Liber 499, Page 314

From: Robert B. Roosevelt

To: John E. Roosevelt

In consideration of \$10.00:

- Easterly half of the East Branch of the Forks Creek

29 June 1904Liber 558, Page 371

From: Robert B. Roosevelt

To: John E. Roosevelt

In consideration of \$5.00:

- N. by the Railroad
- S. by Property of John E. Roosevelt
- E. by Creek
- W. by Creek

## TIMELINE OF MEADOW CROFT'S DEVELOPMENT & RELATED SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Compiled from John E. Roosevelt's  
Scrapbook and Ledger, Period Newspaper Accounts  
and Other Historic Sources as Noted

- 1890, November 13 John Ellis Roosevelt (J.E.R.) purchases the 15 acre farm of the Benjamin F. Woodward family for \$4,500 (Liber 336, p. 361).
- 1890, November 17 J.E.R. purchases an additional 30 adjoining acres to the east, from his father for \$1 (Liber 336, p. 555).
- 1891, January 17 Boss Nelson is building a large house on the property of J.E.R. in Sayville (Suffolk County News "SCN").
- 1891, June 27 J.E.R. contemplates building a new bridge at Brown's Creek (SCN).
- 1892, October 8 "Mr. John Roosevelt resumes work on the creek and meadow improvement enterprise. Last winter the work of excavating the east side of his roadway leading from the public highway to his residence which opened up a fine waterway 75' wide along said roadway was a very marked and admirable improvement. The same plans are arranged to accomplish the same results along the west side of the road" (SCN).
- 1892 Decoration of Meadow Croft's interior complete.
- 1893 Memo for new barn: begin new stable 19' 8" wide (same as old barn) about 17' in length to take in horse and wagon (J.E.R. Ledger).
- 1894, June 9 "John E. Roosevelt continues in the work of improvements on his meadowland near Bayport Bridge by enlarging his artificial lakes by filling in and raising the ground, preparatory to sewing lawn seed for grass plots and setting out shrubbery, thus turning the wild meadowland into a beautiful park" (SCN).
- 1895 J.E.R. leads bicycle parade through Sayville to benefit St. Ann's (Roosevelt, J., Scrapbook).
- 1895, August 15 "The Episcopal Church is having a bicycle path built in front of its property and just outside of the walk as a sample of what may be done. Mr. John Roosevelt is superintending the work..." (SCN).

- 1895, August 23 "John Roosevelt has been improving the walk across the meadows this week and is planning to build a bicycle path beside it" (SCN).
- 1895, September 6 J.E.R. continues to improve his property by "excavating the meadows and widening the creek so that it has quite a lake-like appearance, while the dug-out is used for filling in and raising the marsh to upland preparatory to sewing lawn grass and setting out shrubbery and ornamental trees. The artificial with the natural combined, the far stretch of meadow decorated with so many variegated flowers altogether make it one grand panorama of beauty and to all passersby a joy forever" (SCN).
- 1895, October 31 J.E.R. purchases one acre on the west side of Brown's River from F. William Cook for \$150 (Liber 432, p. 125).
- 1896, November J.E.R. purchases one tulip tree and three altheas from LeCluse (nursery) for \$8 (J.E.R. Ledger).
- J.E.R. has ice pond dug at \$3/sq. yd. (J.E.R. Ledger).
- 1897, June 25 "Mr. John Roosevelt is making a decided improvement by building an iron fence along the front of his property on the meadows between this place and Bayport (\$65.26)" (SCN).
- 1897, October 16 "Mr. John Roosevelt is building a boat house on the creek near his residence" (SCN).
- 1898, June 13 J.E.R. has bath house built on the beach (J.E.R. Ledger).
- 1899 Robert B. Roosevelt, Jr. builds home near Lotus Lake called "The Lilacs" (SCN).
- 1899, March 17 "The work of widening Roosevelt's dam in order to make the north road which crosses it wide enough to be safe has started this week. The hill is being cut down to get material to widen the road across the dam" (SCN).
- 1900, August 16 J.E.R. purchases the east branch of Brown's River from Robert B. Roosevelt, Sr. for \$10 (Liber 499, p. 314).
- 1900, August 17 "Builder Nelson Strong has the contract to erect a small cottage for Mr. John E. Roosevelt for the use of the gardener (\$600)" (SCN).
- 1902, April J.E.R. purchases 100 feet along Brown's River from Mr. Terry and wood before dredging a harbor and building a boat house (J.E.R. Ledger).

- 1902, October J.E.R. purchases five tulip trees, two buttonwood, two gum, three silver maple, two cut-leaf maple, and two dogwoods (J.E.R. Ledger).
- 1902 J.E.R. has addition to carriage house built (J.E.R. Ledger).
- 1903, April J.E.R. has Nelson Strong construct an auto house and addition to cottage (J.E.R. Ledger).
- 1903, July 21 President Theodore Roosevelt visits Meadow Croft and has lunch (SCN).
- 1904, June J.E.R. purchases the property adjoining Meadow Croft to the north up the railroad tracks from Robert B. Roosevelt, Sr. for \$5 (Liber 558, p. 371).
- 1905, July An addition is built onto the auto house (J.E.R. Ledger).
- 1906, January Robert B. Roosevelt dies at his Lotus Lake Estate. The chief beneficiaries of his estate were his children John E., Robert, Jr., and Margaret B. (SCN).
- 1909, January 8 "Nelson Strong is adding more bathrooms and several rooms and making other improvements at Meadow Croft" (SCN).
- 1911, April 28 "Some of the buildings at Meadow Croft were threatened by a forest fire on Tuesday and caretaker George Hill Enbrand had a hard fight to protect them" (SCN).
- 1912, July 26 "A large apple tree on the estate of J.E.R. was blown over the other day and in its fall brought down a large grape arbor" (SCN).
- 1912, September 27 Mrs. Nannie Roosevelt dies at Meadow Croft of typhoid pneumonia at age 52 (SCN).
- 1914, January 8 J.E.R. marries Edith Hamersley, sister-in-law of Robert B. Roosevelt, Jr. (SCN).
- 1915, October 29 Mrs. Edith Hamersley-Roosevelt filed a suit for separation from J.E.R. (SCN).
- 1916, January 21 Divorce decree final. Edith awarded \$400 per month alimony (SCN).
- 1922, August J.E.R. sells river lot (boat house) to J.P. Zeregua for \$2,800 (J.E.R. Ledger).
- 1922, August Griffin 131 Sayville owns along west side of our west pond (J.E.R. Ledger).

- 1924 Michael J. Loughlin of Kerry, Ireland, becomes the superintendent of Meadow Croft (Loughlin).
- 1935, August 30 A fence erected on the west side of the Mill Pond in front of Mrs. Griffin's property has prompted a controversy with John E. Roosevelt. Mrs. Griffin claimed to own some of the land surrounding the Mill Pond. J.E.R. stated that his father had acquired the property from the Lane Family in 1873. We secured a grant to control the entire pond and little strip around it for mill purposes and later for trout fishing (SCN).
- 1936 A new bridge is constructed and the road widened in front of Meadow Croft (Loughlin).
- 1938 The Hurricane of 1938 causes flood water to rise up to the door step of the Meadow Croft residence. The salt water from the bay that covered the property caused much damage to the trees and was responsible for the decline and death of the willow along the entry drive (Loughlin).
- 1939, March 9 J.E.R. dies in Del Ray Beach, Florida. Jean Roosevelt, his only surviving daughter, inherited his estate and continued using it as a summer retreat (SCN).
- 1954, April Barney Loughlin became the caretaker of Meadow Croft after the death of his father, the former caretaker (Loughlin).
- 1950's In the late 1950's, Robert Jr.'s estate "The Lilacs" on the west side of Lotus Lake was razed after its contents were sold at auction (SCN).
- 1958, May 22 The Lotus Lake Estate residence was destroyed by a fire suspected to be started by an arsonist (SCN).
- 1960's The former Robert B. Roosevelt, Sr. estate on the east side of Lotus Lake was developed with many suburban style homes (Stevenson, p. 80).
- 1966, April In April 1966, another developer who owned about 68 acres of the former estate on the west side of the lake sought permission for the Town of Islip Board to build 104 homes instead of the 60 homes that it was zoned for. A group of conservation-minded residents formed the Bayport/Sayville Watershed Preservation Committee to oppose the developer (Stevenson, p. 80).
- 1966, September 20 The Islip Town Board grants the developer's petition to the extent of permitting 83 homes to be built with 30 to 35 acres of land to be donated to the Town for conservation purposes. The area abutting the lake was to be preserved in its natural state (Stevenson, p. 80).

- 1974 Suffolk County condemns and purchases 64 acres of Meadow Croft to become part of the Sans Souci Nature Preserve for park purposes. Barney Loughlin retained ownership of 10 acres in the northwest corner of Meadow Croft.
- 1982 Meadow Croft is dedicated to the Suffolk County Historic Trust.
- 1985 Meadow Croft nominated to the National Register of Historic Sites.

## MEADOW CROFT - ORAL HISTORY OF BARNEY LOUGHLIN, FORMER CARETAKER

NOTES FROM NOVEMBER 19, 1988 WALK AROUND MEADOW CROFT WITH  
BARNEY LOUGHLIN, DON WEINHARDT, AND RICHARD MARTIN.

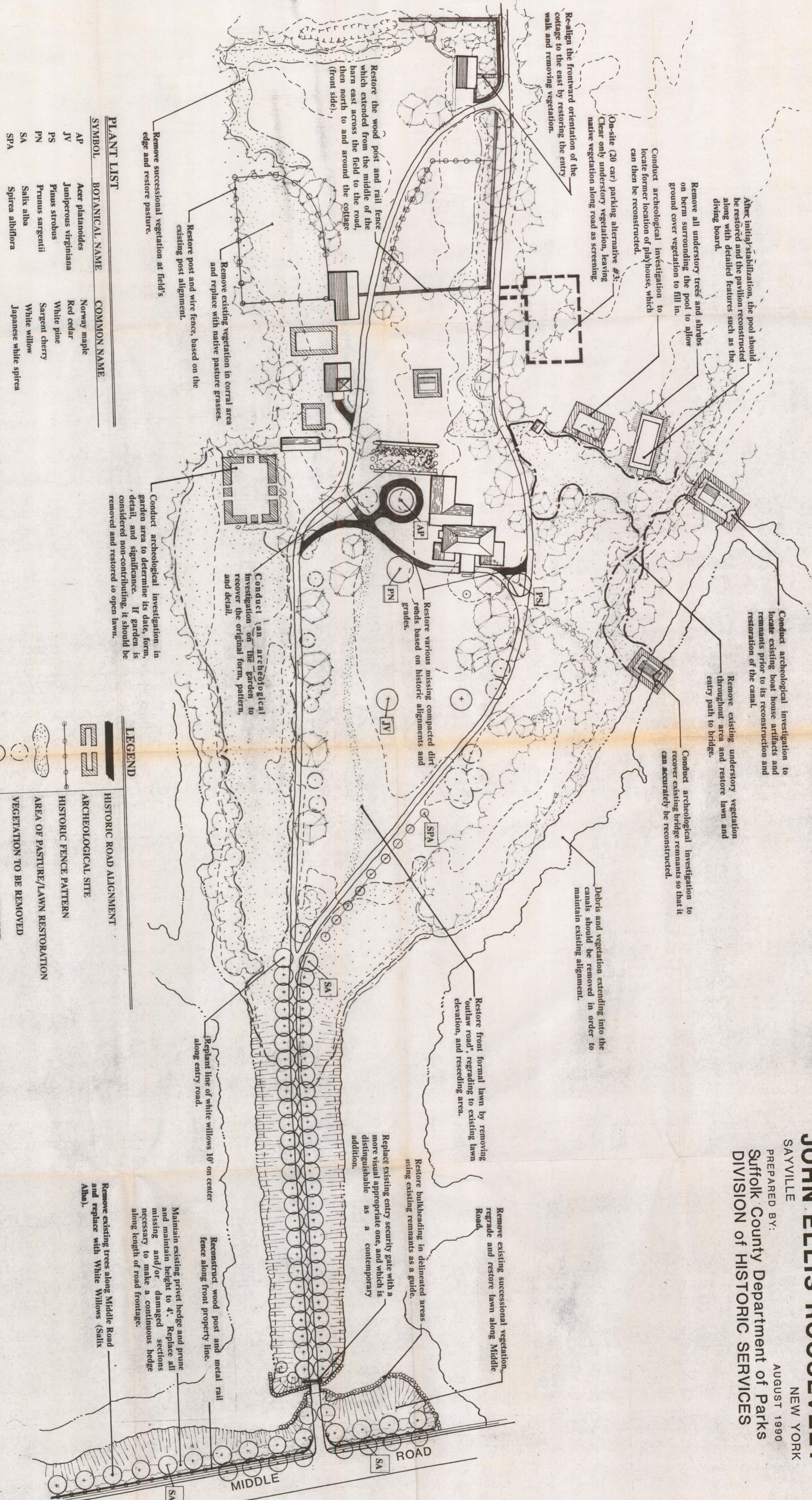
- 1) Started out by the "Auto House". Just south of the auto house, near the water's edge, was a garden with herbs, etc. for the house. This garden has been completely overgrown. Barney said the land between the west driveway and the water was completely cleared from the garage to the front entrance.
- 2) A wood plank walkway existed from a point southeast from the pool to an island that was used for the grazing of the various animals on the property. The island has not been kept up and has returned to a swamplike appearance. Locust posts may still be in existence with the reeds.
- 3) The boat house stood just northeast of the pool. It was a simple structure with a gable roof that had a pulley mechanism to lift a rowboat for overhead storage. Barney remembers that the Roosevelts had four rowboats and a canoe. He talked about how he would row family members around the waterways and would go through the tunnel under the railroad in order to get to Robert B. Roosevelt's property on Lotus Lake. An inlet that was created to get to the boat house can be seen through the reeds.
- 4) The property between the Swimming Pool and the children's playhouse was kept cleared until 1938. The willows that lined the entrance drive were lost after the 1938 Hurricane, and were not replaced.
- 5) Barney remembered that they cut ice in the waters east of the boat house location.
- 6) The pool was filled with water at the beginning of the summer and not cleaned until it was emptied at the end of the season. They did not have a filter for the pool during the time of John Roosevelt. Barney made up a filter for himself later on (which is seen by the pool today). The pool would fill up with leaves and moss would grow on the sides. The water became very murky and you could not see bottom. After the pool was emptied, the small ravine from the water runoff can be seen near the water's edge, Barney remembers having to scrape off the moss at the end of the season from the sides of the pool.

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT for MEADOW CROFT

former summer home of  
JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT

SAVILL  
PREPARED BY:  
Suffolk County Department of Parks  
DIVISION OF HISTORIC SERVICES

NEW YORK  
AUGUST 1990



PLANT LIST	
SYMBOL	BOTANICAL NAME
AP	Acer platanoides
JV	Juniperus virginiana
PS	Pinus strobus
PN	Prunus sargentii
SA	Salix alba
SPA	Spiraea alba
COMMON NAME	
Norway maple	
Red cedar	
White pine	
Sargent cherry	
White willow	
Japanese white spirea	

LEGEND	
	HISTORIC ROAD ALIGNMENT
	ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE
	HISTORIC FENCE PATTERN
	AREA OF PASTURE/LAWN RESTORATION
	VEGETATION TO BE REMOVED
	VEGETATION TO BE RESTORED
	AREAS OF FILL (ELEVATION RESTORATION)
	EXISTING/CONTRIBUTING VEGETATION

RESTORATION PLAN: MAP # 8  
DETAILED PLAN OF ESTATE  
SCALE: 1" = 50'

# MEADOW CROFT

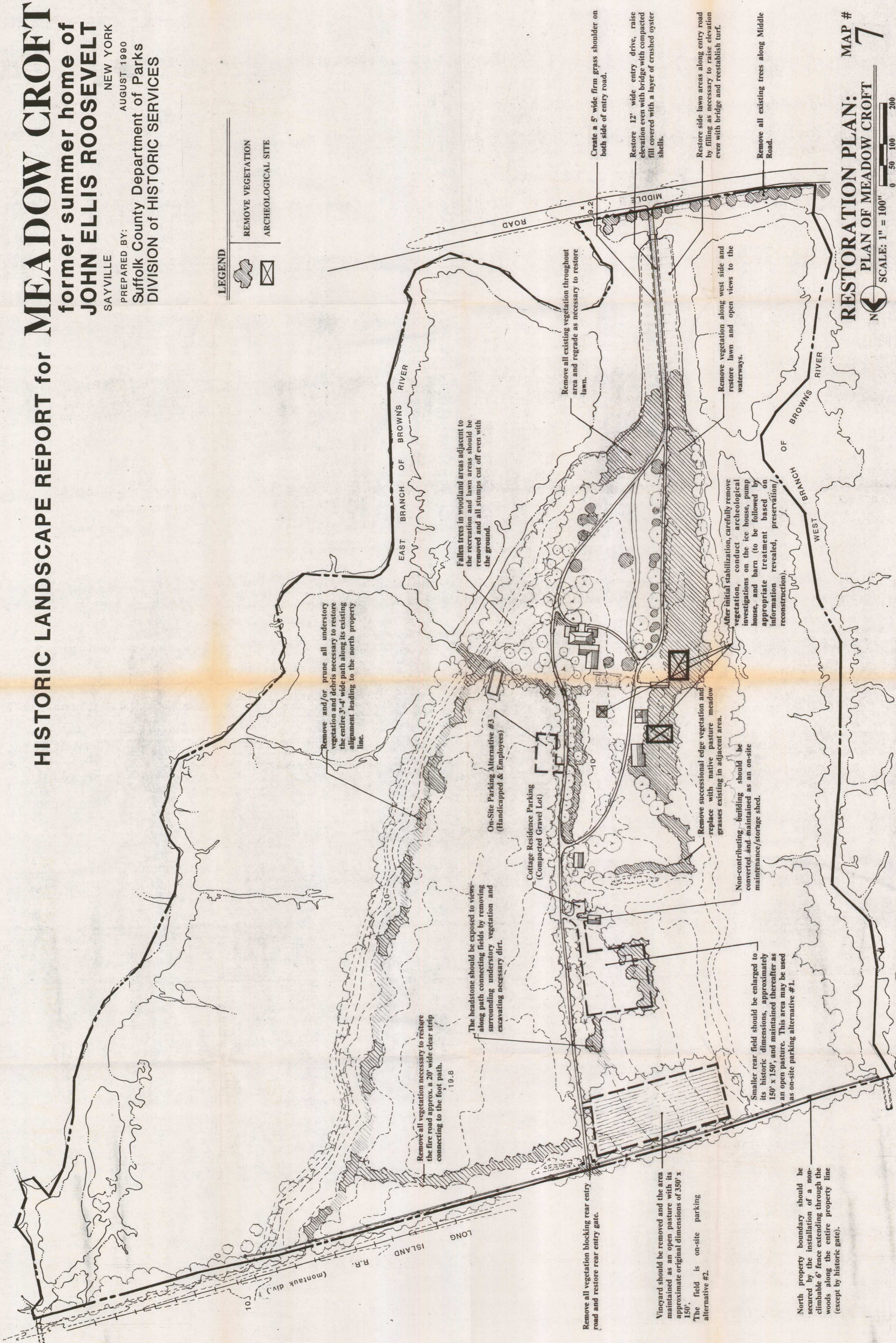
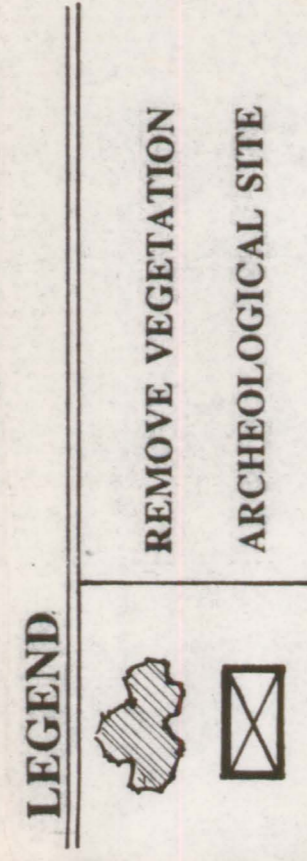
# former summer home of JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT

SAYVILLE  
NEW YORK

PREPARED BY: AUGUST 1990

Suffolk County Department of Parks

## DIVISION of HISTORIC SERVICES



**RESTORATION PLAN:**  
**PLAN OF MEADOW CROFT**

N  SCALE: 1" = 100'

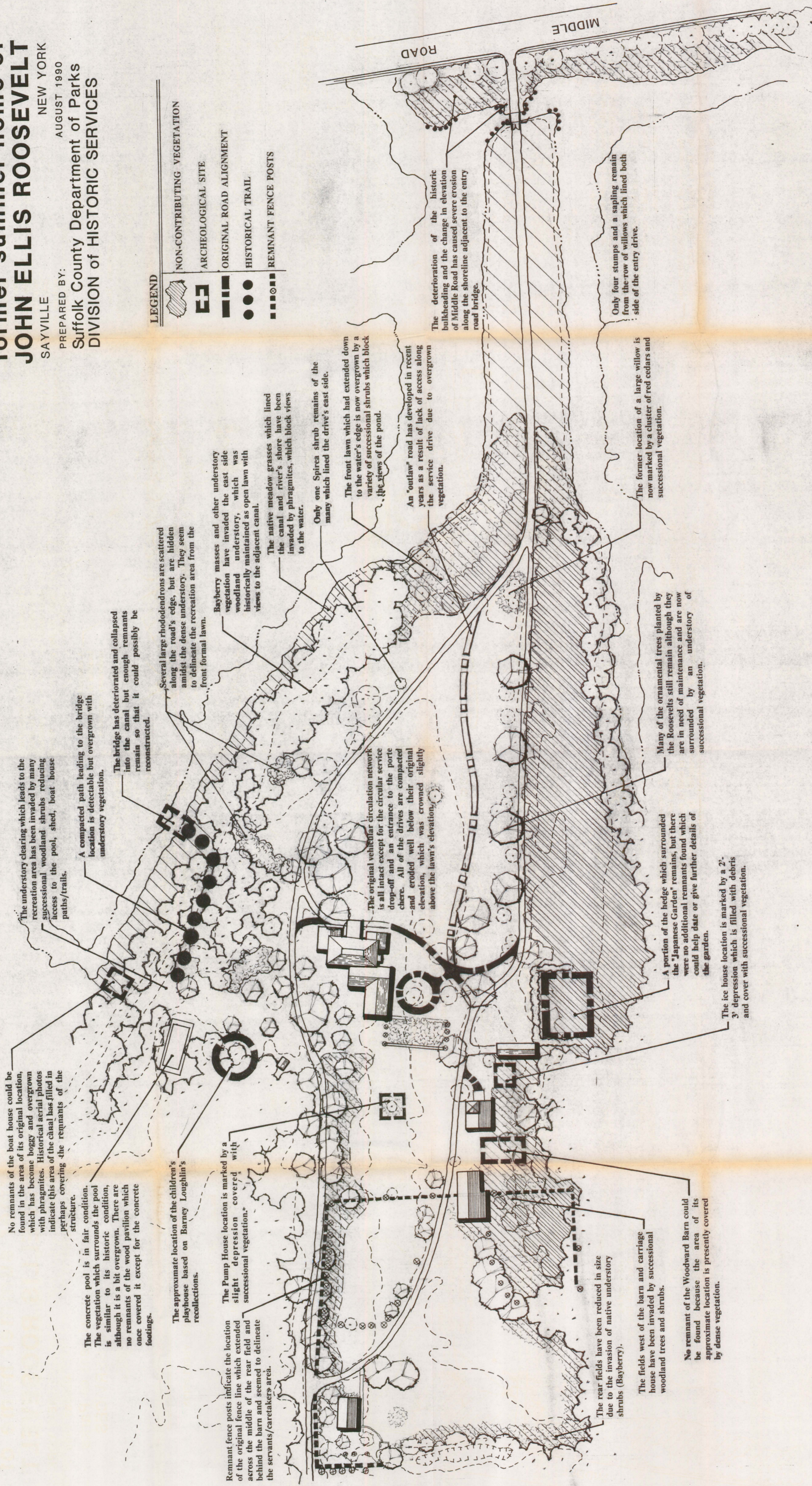
MAP # 7

SCALE: 1" = 100'

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT for MEADOW CROFT

former summer home of  
**JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT**  
SAYVILLE NEW YORK

PREPARED BY:  
AUGUST 1990  
Suffolk County Department of Parks  
DIVISION of HISTORIC SERVICES



**SITE ANALYSIS:**  
**DETAILED PLAN OF ESTATE**  
**MAP # 6**

SCALE: 1" = 50'  
0 50 100

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT for MEADOW CROFT

## former summer home of JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT

SAYVILLE NEW YORK  
AUGUST 1990  
Suffolk County Department of Parks  
DIVISION of HISTORIC SERVICES

LEGEND	
MAN-MADE CANAL/POND	
SUCCESSIONAL VEGETATION	
ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE	
HISTORIC TRAIL	

The compacted dirt path leading to Lotus Lake is still well-defined. The entrance to the path is marked by a large rhododendron.

The native woodland pattern on the estate has remained relatively consistent over the course of the last 150 years, but the once dominant pines, historically often cut for timber and firewood, are now second in prominence to the oaks.

A wooden structure constructed in the 1930's has functioned as a utility building and livestock shelter since then, but has no relevant significance to the grounds.

Presence of the fire road is barely detectable due to the successional and mature vegetation which has filled in. The age and density of vegetation indicates it has not been maintained.

Man-made depressions were used as an excavation pit for filling and maintaining the grade of the front entry road.

The largest rear field has remained intact, although its function has changed from livestock grazing to a vineyard at the present time.

Phragmites have invaded the shoreline and islands which were historically covered by short, native salt meadow grasses, and have reduced views of the water and changed the overall appearance and character of the meadows.

The canals and 'pond' have maintained their original alignment although it is possible they have begun to silt up, and the surrounding phragmites have begun to invade the waterway.

Lack of sustained maintenance has allowed the natural erosion process to turn the once firm road shoulder covered by native meadow grasses to a lowland bog covered by successional wetland vegetation.

During the renovation of Middle Road and the bridge in 1934, the original white willows, privet hedge, and port & rail fence which lined the road were removed and replaced with a variety of trees and another privet hedge, which are now overgrown blocking views to the estate.

The west side, which was historically an open lawn area, has been invaded by a dense cover of successional vegetation which blocks the views of the adjacent canal.

A man-made depression marks the present 1904 estate property line.

Field pattern is more irregular in shape and a bit smaller than it was historically due to the invasion of the surrounding woodland.

**SITE ANALYSIS:**  
**PLAN OF MEADOW CROFT**  
MAP # **5**  
SCALE: 1" = 100'  
50 100 200

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT for

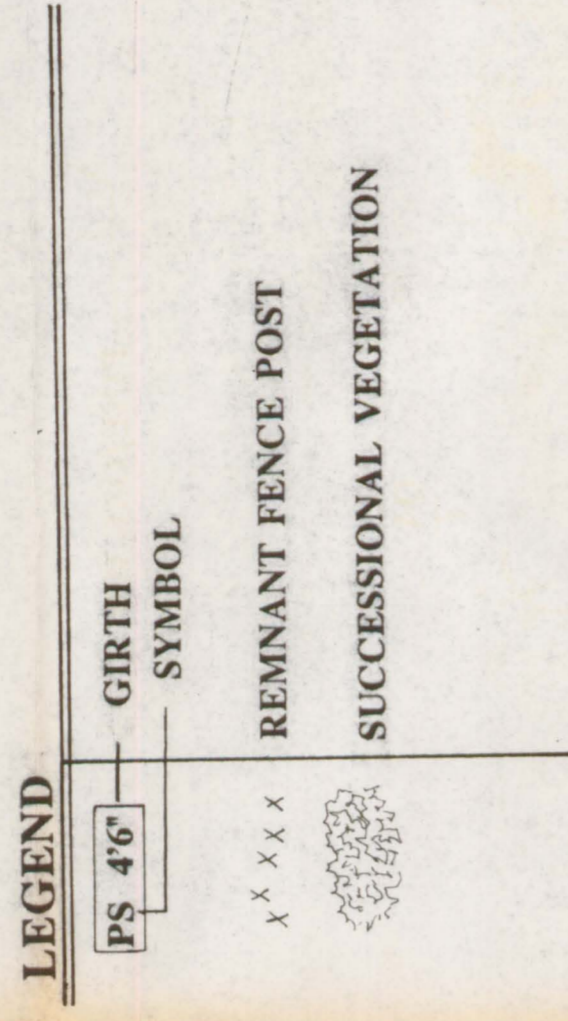
former summer home of  
JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT

SAYVILLE, NEW YORK

PREPARED BY: AUGUST 1990

Suffolk County Department of Parks

DIVISION of HISTORIC SERVICES



PLANT LIST		
SYMBOL	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
AP	Acer platanoides	Norway maple
AS	Acer saccharinum	Silver maple
BT	Berberis thunbergii	Barberry
CS	Catalpa bignonioides	Catalpa sp.
CA	Cedrus atlantica	Atlas cedar
CK	Cornus kousa	Japanese dogwood
FS	Fagus sylvatica 'atropunicea'	Purple beech
GS	Gleditsia speciosissima	Locust
JN	Juglans nigra	Black walnut
LA	Ligustrum amurense	Privet hedge
LT	Liriodendron tulipifera	Tulip tree
MS	Malus species	Flowering apple
PS	Pinus strobus	White pine
PN	Prunus sargentii	Sargent's cherry
PV	Prunus virginiana	Choke cherry
QA	Quercus alba	White oak
RM	Rhododendron maximum	Rhododendron
SX	Salix alba	White willow
SA	Spirea alba	White spirea
TO	Tilia occidentalis	White cedar
TA	Tilia americana	American linden
VD	Viburnum dentatum	Arrowwood

**SUCCESSIONAL  
TIDAL WETLAND SHRUBS**

Salt meadow grass (*Spartina patens*)  
Salt marsh elder (*Iva frutescens*)  
Pasture rose (*Spartina patens*)  
Red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)  
Shining sumac (*Rhus copallina*)  
Sea lavender (*Limonium carolinianum*)  
Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*)

**PINE/OAK WOODLAND**

**SUCCESIONAL WOODLAND**

**GARDEN**

**EXISTING CONDITIONS:**  
**DETAILED PLAN OF ESTATE**

**N**

**SCALE: 1" = 50'**

**MAP # 4**

SCALE: 1" = 50'

## MEADOW CROFT

# JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT

PREPARED BY: AUGUST 1990

Suffolk County Department of Parks

**Suffolk County Department of Parks  
DIVISION of HISTORIC SERVICES**



SCALE: 1" = 100'

007  
001  
02  
0

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT for

# MEADOW CROFT

former summer home of  
**JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT**

NEW YORK

SAYVILLE

PREPARED BY:

AUGUST 1990

Suffolk County Department of Parks

DIVISION of HISTORIC SERVICES



## LEGEND

- |  |                     |  |                      |
|--|---------------------|--|----------------------|
|  | OPEN SPACE          |  | M.C. PROPERTY LINE   |
|  | RESIDENTIAL         |  | R.F.C. PROPERTY LINE |
|  | COMMERCIAL          |  | BROWN'S RIVER        |
|  | INSTITUTIONAL       |  |                      |
|  | SANS SOUCI PRESERVE |  |                      |

## NOTES:

The area surrounding Meadow Croft is presently dominated by tightly subdivided residential neighborhoods. The estate is located in the middle of the Sans Souci Lake Preserve which is composed of a mixture of tidal meadows, creeks, and dense woodlands providing a naturalistic visual buffer from the surrounding residences to the south and east. Bordering the estate to the west are St. Ann's Church and Cemetery and Union Cemetery, which both are heavily wooded helping to screen the sights and sounds of the adjacent village commercial district. The Long Island Railroad right of way and the community open spaces lying to the north of the estate provide a buffer which reduce the impact of the surrounding residential development.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: MAP #

SURROUNDING LANDUSE

2

SCALE: 1" = 300'

0 300 600

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE REPORT for MEADOW CROFT

former summer home of  
JOHN ELLIS ROOSEVELT  
NEW YORK  
SAYVILLE

PREPARED BY: AUGUST 1990  
Suffolk County Department of Parks  
DIVISION of HISTORIC SERVICES

## ROOSEVELT PROPERTY

SITUATED ON SOUTH SIDE OF LONG ISLAND, BETWEEN

SAYVILLE AND BAYPORT

EMBRACING THE COUNTRY ESTATES OF

ROBERT B. ROOSEVELT DEED

AND OF

JOHN E. ROOSEVELT

AND

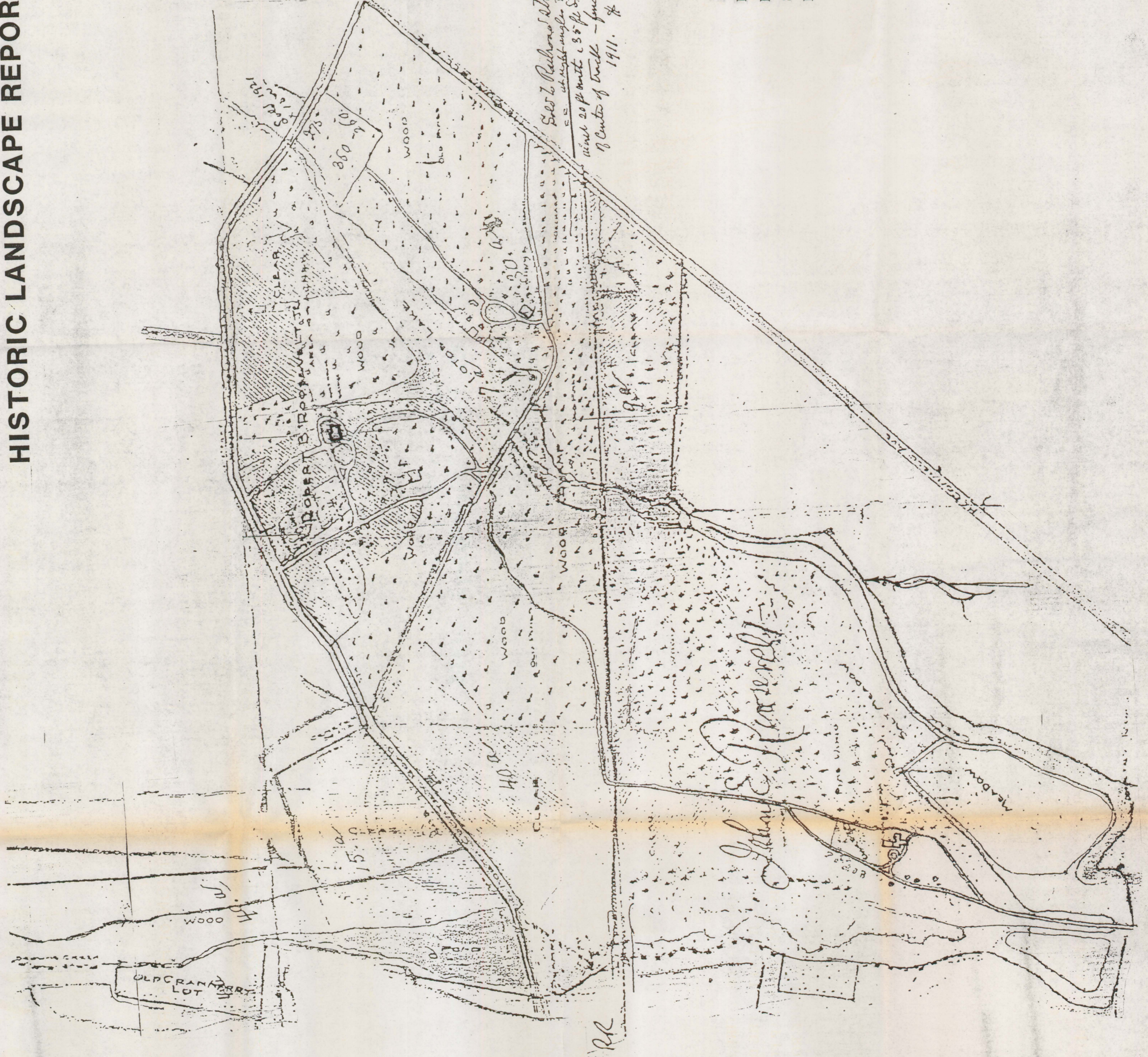
ROBERT B. ROOSEVELT JR.

FROM

SURVEYS OF R. COTTWALDEN 1906

*All inside red dashed parcels  
Belongs to J.E.R. & J.S.R.  
The red in S.E. corner is  
Cottage no 5 - penus -*

*Set 2. Railroad strike  
SS at right angles to RR  
about 20 ft north & 30 ft south  
of center of track - found in  
1911. \$ 3,000.*



### NOTES:

AN ENLARGED PROPERTY MAP SHOWING THE ENTIRE ROOSEVELT FAMILY COMPOUND DRAWN IN 1906 JUST AFTER THE DEATH OF ROBERT B. ROOSEVELT, SR. THIS IS THE ONLY MAP FOUND SHOWING THE DETAIL AND LAYOUT OF ALL THREE ROOSEVELT ESTATES.

PROPERTY MAP: MAP #  
ROOSEVELT FAMILY COMPOUND 1  
NOT TO SCALE