

“LIFE HERE HAD ALWAYS HAD HEALING QUALITY FOR HIM.” —Eleanor Roosevelt

Franklin D. Roosevelt

*I am
pure
Hudson
River*

—FDR, 1944

“My heart has always been here. It always will be.” With these few words President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) captured his feelings for his home in Hyde Park as he addressed friends and neighbors gathered in front of the house on election night in 1940. His love of the place where he was born and raised prompted him to begin the process in 1943 of deeding his home to the National Park Service, ensuring that it would be available to future generations.

Franklin’s father, James Roosevelt, purchased the 110-acre estate in 1867 for \$40,000. The property included a house overlooking the Hudson River and a working farm. FDR was born in this house on January 30, 1882, the only child of Sara and James Roosevelt. Growing up with a view of the majestic Hudson River, he developed a love of the river and the valley through which it flowed. By age eight, he was sailing the Hudson. As a young adult, racing his ice yacht “Hawk” was a favorite winter pastime.

Franklin accompanied his father on daily horseback rides. During these times he became immersed in the land, its history, and particularly the trees. In later years, he expanded his parents’ land holdings to nearly 1,500 acres and planted over half a million trees. His interest in tree farming translated into a New Deal program, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC provided jobs to unemployed men age 17-28. Over 10 years, enrollees planted over three billion trees and built over 800 parks nationwide.

Surrounded by the rich agricultural heritage of the Hudson Valley all his life, FDR felt a strong affinity with farmers. One of the first New Deal programs instituted during the Great Depression, the Agricultural Adjustment Act, was designed to help farmers retain their land. His subsistence homestead projects relocated poverty-stricken families into government subsidized rural communities that provided decent housing, cooperative work and farming, and schools.

When Franklin Roosevelt married Eleanor Roosevelt in 1905, they resided in both the house at Hyde Park

and their New York townhouse. Franklin and Eleanor had six children, one died in infancy. FDR supervised the expansion and redesign of the house to accommodate his growing family and his political ambitions, ensuring it reflected the Dutch Colonial architecture of the Hudson Valley.

FDR contracted polio in 1921 and was paralyzed from the waist down. He held out hope for a cure, but was never able to walk again unaided. The multi-level home was adapted to his needs with ramps along short steps. The trunk lift, installed years before the onset of FDR’s polio, became his transportation to the second floor.

In 1932 FDR was elected to the first of an unprecedented four terms as President of the United States. His presidency redefined the role of government in America, establishing programs designed to improve the lives of all Americans. These programs included Social Security, the Federal Deposit and Insurance Corporation, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the establishment of minimum wage, and unemployment insurance.

During his 12 years as President, FDR led the nation through an economic crisis of enormous proportions and the Second World War. He continually returned to this home he loved, seeking strength and relaxation. He entertained foreign dignitaries here, including British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. In the small study, FDR and Churchill initiated a document known as the “Hyde Park Aide Memoire,” that outlined possible future uses of the atomic bomb.

On the afternoon of April 12, 1945, FDR died from a cerebral hemorrhage in Warm Springs, Georgia. He was laid to rest on April 15 in the rose garden here. One year after his death, on April 12, 1946, the home opened to the public. At the dedication Eleanor Roosevelt said, “I think Franklin realized that . . . people . . . would understand the rest and peace and strength which he had gained here and perhaps . . . go away with some sense of healing and courage themselves.”



FDR on his bobsled with “Tip” and another dog.



Young FDR rides with his father while his mother holds the hound.



FDR’s knitting seems to amuse Eleanor.



FDR poses on his property.



Left to right: Sara, FDR, Sistie, Anna, and Buzzie at Springwood.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FDR

*The River
must be
lovely
now and
I wish I
could be
there.*

—Letter to parents

1882 Born Jan. 30 to James Roosevelt and Sara (Delano) Roosevelt in their Hyde Park, NY family home.

1900 Graduates from Groton Preparatory School.

1903 Graduates from Harvard College.

1904 Starts Columbia University Law School.

1905 Marries Eleanor Roosevelt (ER), in New York City; ER’s uncle, President Theodore Roosevelt, gives her away.

1906 ER gives birth to their first child, a daughter; five sons born over next 10 years; one dies in infancy.

1907 Admitted to NY Bar Association; clerks in a NYC law firm.

1910 Elected to first of two terms in New York State Senate; re-elected 1912.

1913 President Woodrow Wilson names FDR Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

1914 Loses Democratic primary for US Senate seat; World War I starts.

1918 Tours American bases in Europe; ER discovers FDR’s affair with her social secretary, Lucy Mercer.

1920 Resigns Navy post; loses election as Democratic candidate for vice president.

1921 Returns to law work; stricken with polio at Campobello Island, New Brunswick, Canada; never again walks unaided; ER cares for him.

1923 Delegate to NYS Democratic Convention.

1924 Nominates NY Gov. Alfred E. Smith for president at Democratic National Convention; first visit to curative waters at Warm Springs, GA.

1925 Oversees construction of Val-Kill Cottage (now Stone Cottage) for ER and friends Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook; the three start Val-Kill Industries in 1927 to create skilled crafts jobs in slack farm season to help stem the flight of rural youth to cities.

1926 First book, *Whither Bound*, published.

1927 Forms Georgia Warm Springs Foundation, a therapy center for polio patients.

1928 Elected NYS governor.

1929 NY Stock Exchange crash triggers Great Depression in US; advocates state-built and -owned dams and power plants; first radio address attacks Republican Party failures; visits state prison after riot, orders investigation of NY prisons.

1930 Seeks better laws for running prisons and to create a full-time parole board; wins re-election as governor.

1931 Seeks revised Old Age Pension Law based on employee contributions; Louis M. Howe and James A. Farley form “Friends of Roosevelt” to promote FDR for president; seeks “scientific unemployment insurance;” recommends a Temporary Emergency Relief Administration and work relief program; seeks votes for funds to reforest sub-marginal farmland.

1932 Seeks to halt unsound banking practices; seeks laws to reform securities sales; gives “forgotten man” speech to Governors’ Conference; as Democratic nominee for president, FDR pledges “a new deal for the American people;” elected 32nd US president.

1933 Assassination attempt fails; inaugurated president, tells nation “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself;” calls special session of Congress the next day and proclaims bank holiday; launches New Deal with 15 new laws to relieve Great Depression; first of 29 radio Fireside Chats.

1935 Continues New Deal; signs Social Security Act; sets up National Labor Relations Board and Rural Electrification Administration.

1936 Elected to second term.

1938 Starts March of Dimes campaign to fight polio; signs Fair Labor Standards Act setting minimum wages and maximum hours.

1939 FDR and ER host Great Britain’s King George VI and Queen Elizabeth for first US state visit by British royalty; treats them to Top Cottage hotdog picnic in Hyde Park.

1940 Elected to an unprecedented third term.

1941 State of the Union Address enunciates the Four Freedoms: of speech and of worship, and from want and from fear; meets British Prime Minister Winston Churchill

aboard ship in “Atlantic Conference” on joint war aims, the first of 12 Allied wartime conferences; Japan bombs Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, “a date which will live in infamy.”

1942 Signs United Nations (UN) Declaration Jan. 1, commits US to defeat of Axis powers; 45 other nations sign, in effect founding modern UN; announces intent to try war criminals ringleaders for the organized murder of Jews and other victims of the Holocaust; signs Executive Order 9066 sending 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry to relocation and/or internment camps.

1944 Sets up War Refugee Board to help those fleeing Nazi persecution in Europe; radio address announces start of Allied invasion of Europe; offers D-Day prayer for success and protection of soldiers.

1945 Inaugurated to fourth term in White House wartime ceremony; meets Churchill and the USSR’s Joseph Stalin for Yalta Conference to negotiate Europe’s postwar future; dies in Warm Springs, GA, April 12; buried in Rose Garden here; President Truman appoints ER to US delegation to UN.



Entertaining at Springwood. Left to right: Eleanor, Amelia Earhart, Jim and Amy Mollison, and FDR.

FDR enjoys driving on his property when at home.

Programs during Roosevelt’s administration gave the American people the dignity of work and hope.

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Greenhouse

Rose garden

Gravesite

Coach house and
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Springwood

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