

historic resource study

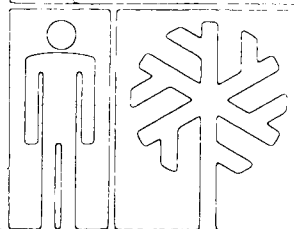
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# ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

HISTORIC SITE / NEW YORK

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HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY  
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
(VAL-KILL)  
HYDE PARK, NEW YORK

by

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DENVER, COLORADO



## PREFACE

This study fulfills the requirements of Package 102, Development Study Package Proposal, June 10, 1977, for a Historic Resource Study of Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site. It is prepared in accordance with the provisions of the task directive of May 25, 1978, as amended by the North Atlantic Region in their memorandum of July 12, 1978. The purpose of this study is to provide the basic historical data essential to the preservation and interpretation of Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site. It attempts to provide some answers as to why Val-Kill--the idea as well as the place--was born, what were its physical parts and how they developed, and, most importantly, what it meant to Eleanor Roosevelt during her lifetime.

This study is a revision of a draft prepared in 1978 that takes into account some suggestions made by the Park and Region. It also makes use of the Marion Dickerman Collection which was not available to the writer before now. The revision has developed further the history of land use and Mrs. Roosevelt's attachment to Val-Kill and its meaning to her from 1945 to 1962. In doing this, the writer has sought additional bibliographical materials.

Since the time this revision was authorized, a Historic Structure Report (Historical Data Section) was programmed. As a result, the writer has deleted from the Historic Resource Study much of the physical history of existing structures, incorporating that history into the Historic Structure Report. Some duplication is inevitable, however, and sometimes good in order to maintain continuity in both narratives.

There are three main depositories of materials that provide the bulk of historical data for Eleanor Roosevelt and Val-Kill. They are

the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Georgia Department of Archives and History, and Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site. The first contains, among other important collections for this study, the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, an extremely rich collection of materials concerning Mrs. Roosevelt's life and Val-Kill. The second depository contains the Henry Johnston Toombs Collection of drawings, photographs, and letters pertaining to the physical history of Val-Kill. The third repository contains the Marion Dickerman Collection recently purchased and just recently examined by the writer. This last collection consists of numerous photographs, movie films, and a miscellaneous assortment of manuscripts mostly relating to Val-Kill. The small Marion Dickerman Papers in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library should not be confused with the much larger collection owned by the park.

The author is indebted to a number of people and institutions. Among the latter is the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and its very able professional staff. The other institution is the Georgia Department of Archives and History. This is not the first time that the staff at this latter institution has come to the writer's aid.

The author wishes to thank the following persons for the many courtesies they showed him in providing interviews and memorabilia in their possession: Mr. and Mrs. Frank Landolfa, Mr. and Mrs. Lester Entrup (Mr. Entrup passed away shortly after the interview), Mr. Harry Johannsen, Mr. John A. Roosevelt, and Mr. Archibald Curnan.

A word of appreciation must also go to the staff of the Home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt National Historic Site, especially to Superintendent Warren Hill, Unit Manager Margaret Partridge, and Emily L. Wright, who cooperated in every way possible to assist the writer. Other persons at the park who helped in so many ways were Kathy Allen, Sue Pridemore, and Leon Froats. The author is

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE .....	i
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .....	vi
CHAPTER	
I. THE MEANING OF VAL-KILL .....	1
The Stage Is Set .....	1
Val-Kill Is Born .....	7
The Land .....	17
II. THE STONE COTTAGE, 1925-1947 .....	24
Architect and Builder .....	24
Construction and Description .....	31
Changes Over the Years .....	39
Furnishings .....	42
III. THE SHOP BUILDING, 1926-1936 .....	49
Designer and Builder .....	49
Construction .....	52
Furnishings .....	53
IV. OTHER STRUCTURES, 1925-1962 .....	56
Swimming Pool .....	56
Landscape .....	61
Stable-Garage .....	68
Playhouse .....	73
Miscellaneous Structures .....	74
V. LIFE AT VAL-KILL, 1926-1937 .....	87
Eleanor Roosevelt and Val-Kill .....	87
Val-Kill Industries .....	90
Furniture .....	92
Weaving .....	117
Pewter .....	121
Other Interests .....	124
A Variety of Social Causes .....	124
Todhunter School .....	127
Social Events .....	128



	PAGE
VI. ON HER OWN .....	131
The End of An Experiment .....	131
Friendships Cool .....	137
Physical Changes at Val-Kill .....	155
Shop Building: Eleanor's Cottage (1936-1962) ..	155
Stone Cottage (1947-1962) .....	157
Other Structures .....	157
Life Continues (1945-1962) .....	159
VII. VAL-KILL TODAY .....	178
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	180
APPENDIX .....	185
1. Historical Base Map .....	187
2. Memorandum of Lease between Eleanor Roosevelt, Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman and Otto Berg: Machinery, Tools, Lumber, Samples, etc. ..	189
3. Memorandum of Lease between Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook and Eleanor Roosevelt: Weaving Cottage and Handicraft Center .....	193
4. Memorandum: The Forge Lease .....	199
5. Inventory of Articles Sent to Cottage .....	205

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

		PAGE
1.	Val-Kill, 1925 (before stone cottage) .....	20
2.	Val-Kill, 1925 (before construction) .....	21
3.	Val-Kill, 1925 (a different view) .....	22
4.	Eleanor Roosevelt and Henry Toombs, ca. 1934 ..	26
5.	Stone Cottage, ca. 1930 .....	40
6.	Furniture Shop, ca. 1930 .....	54
7.	Furniture Shop, ca. 1930 (a different view) .....	55
8.	Old swimming pool, ca. 1930 .....	59
9.	Old swimming pool, ca. 1928 .....	60
10.	Flower garden with shed, ca. 1935 .....	63
11.	Landscaping around stone cottage, ca. 1938 .....	65
12.	Landscaping around stone cottage, ca. 1938 (another view) .....	66
13.	Vegetable garden, ca. 1962 .....	67
14.	Garage-Stable (stable side), 1976 .....	71
15.	Garage-Stable (garage side), 1976 .....	72
16.	Playhouse, 1976 .....	75
17.	Flat bridge, 1925 .....	76
18.	Flat Bridge, 1925 (another view) .....	77
19.	Dock, ca. 1950 .....	79
20.	Outdoor fireplace, ca. 1962 .....	81
21.	Doll House, 1976 .....	84
22.	Greenhouse, ca. 1940 .....	85
23.	Furniture produced by Val-Kill Industries, ca. 1930 .....	106

	PAGE
24. Furniture produced by Val-Kill Industries, ca. 1930 .....	107
25. Furniture produced by Val-Kill Industries, ca. 1930 .....	108
26. Furniture produced by Val-Kill Industries, ca. 1930 .....	109
27. Furniture produced by Val-Kill Industries, ca. 1930 .....	110
28. Furniture produced by Val-Kill Industries, ca. 1930 .....	111
29. Furniture produced by Val-Kill Industries, ca. 1930 .....	112
30. Pewter produced by Val-Kill Industries, ca. 1930 ..	123
31. Alcove to Eleanor's living room, ca. 1940 .....	158
32. Wiltwyck School being greeted by Mrs. Roosevelt, ca. 1950's .....	170
33. Guests being entertained by Mrs. Roosevelt, ca. 1955 .....	172
34. United Nations group meeting with Mrs. Roosevelt, ca. 1958 .....	173



CHAPTER I  
THE MEANING OF VAL-KILL

The Stage Is Set

To appreciate the real significance of Val-Kill one must first try to understand Eleanor Roosevelt--her childhood, her early life as a young bride, and her later years (first as the wife of an aspiring young politician, then as the wife of a governor, later as the wife of a president, and finally as a widow).

As the oldest and only girl of three children Eleanor was not blessed with the charm and beauty of her mother and aunts. Her mother and aunts were vain women who were motivated by selfish desires that frequently led them to be reproachful of Eleanor, who then reacted by recoiling into a shell of loneliness. When she turned to her father Elliott, younger brother of Theodore Roosevelt, for the love, strength, and understanding she so badly needed, she found a parent who, although affectionate, was too weak to sustain her. The result was that Eleanor became withdrawn, shy, and unhappy, a condition that dominated much of her youth and even some of her adulthood. While psychologically debilitating, these characteristics ironically also provided the opportunities that were to make her mature early, make her resourceful and extremely sensitive, and gave her a strong awareness of things around her.

When Eleanor married the handsome and outgoing Franklin Delano Roosevelt, her spirits seemed to be buoyed, but only momentarily, for she found that her ever-present strong-willed mother-in-law had taken the place of her disciplinarian Grandmother Hall. Henceforth, Eleanor would still remain in the background with all her shy childhood qualities and self-imposed isolation to

plague her. In the Big House at Hyde Park she found herself a guest and not the mistress of her own household. She discovered that many of her normal duties as a mother were frequently usurped by an overbearing and domineering mother-in-law.

Perhaps the two events that had the greatest affect on her life in these years were the estrangement between herself and her husband after she had learned of his love affair with Lucy Mercer and Franklin's polio affliction. After 1918, her marital life was never the same. Discouraged and feeling betrayed, Eleanor tended to build a defensive wall about her. While all this was unfortunate for her and her family, it did, perhaps, for the first time make her aware of her own latent capabilities. Ironically, it was her husband's physical incapacity which helped her to find these qualities. Prompted and encouraged by the indefatigable efforts of Louis Howe, who recognized presidential material in Franklin when he saw it, Eleanor began to realize her own potential.

Her shyness and timidity began to melt away. Never one to speak in public, she now learned the art of public speaking. Never one to freely reveal her thoughts either publicly or privately, she now was finding that her views on political and social matters were gaining public attention. The 1920's revealed an Eleanor Roosevelt that was far different from the timid person she had once been. She was now actively engaged in the Women's Division of the New York Democratic Committee and in other programs where women were once held in scorn. It was in the 1920's that Eleanor's personality began to take a different turn. Astute politicians like Al Smith and Louis Howe began to see in her the essential ingrediants of a political activist.

It was also at this time that she met the two persons who, perhaps more than anyone else, were responsible for the great metamorphosis which she was undergoing. These were Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman. Without them, Val-Kill both as an idea and

as a home might never have been born. Indeed, it might even be interesting to speculate that without the influence of these two women Eleanor's life might never have taken the turn that it did. Although she still might have been the wife of a governor and the First Lady, her own greatness might have been delayed, if not, totally eclipsed by her husband.

Marion Dickerman was born in a small town in New York State in 1890, only six years younger than Eleanor. She attended Wellesley College in 1907-1909, but she later transferred to Syracuse University where she received graduate degrees in education from that institution. In the ensuing years she became nationally prominent as an educator, as a leader in women's activities in the Democratic Party, and as a specialist in labor relations.<sup>1</sup>

Marion and Nancy Cook, who was about seven years her senior, first met at Syracuse University in 1909. Eleanor Roosevelt later described Nancy as an "attractive" woman who was not intellectually inclined as Marion and less appreciative of the abstract or theoretical. Nancy's propensities lay more in the practical realm of creativity. She was remarkably sensitive with her hands and could do almost anything with them.<sup>2</sup> Marion was slow and methodical of purpose while Nancy was quick, impatient, and intense in all her moves. Each saw in the other a need for what each lacked.

The two women became ardent suffragettes and espoused many liberal causes such as the abolition of child labor, protection of

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1. Who's Who In America, p. 794.

2. Kenneth S. Davis, Invincible Summer: An Intimate Portrait of the Roosevelts Based on the Recollections of Marion Dickerman (New York: Atheneum, 1974), p. 5 (hereafter cited as Davis, Invincible Summer).

women against industrial exploitation, and world peace. They both taught in the public school system in Fulton, New York, and when World War I broke out, they became involved in the Red Cross and the Liberty Loan Drive. In 1918 they accepted positions with the Endell Street Hospital in London which was devoted to the care of wounded soldiers. While there, because of her skills in building things, Nancy was assigned to constructing artificial legs for discharged patients.

When both women returned to the United States, they found themselves steeped in politics, and Marion was soon nominated to run against a Republican incumbent for the New York State Assembly. She had the distinction of becoming the first woman in New York State to run for the legislature. Although she lost the election, she surprised everyone by running so strongly that she denied her opponent the gubernatorial nomination which he sought.

Nancy, meanwhile, who had become active in Marion's behalf, learned to like politics more than teaching. In 1920 she helped to organize the Women's Division of the New York Democratic Committee to which in later years she became executive secretary. Marion, on the other hand, returned to education, serving as a dean at the New Jersey State Normal School, instructor at Bryn Mawr College, and finally serving as teacher, principal, and owner of the Todhunter School in New York City.<sup>3</sup>

Eleanor first met Nancy in 1922 during a fund-raising effort at which time the latter was looking for just the right person to aid in this endeavor. Eleanor seemed to fit the bill, and soon a very close

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3. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7; Summary of Marion Dickerman's involvement in politics is drawn from Oral History Interview of Marion Dickerman for Columbia University by Mary Belle Starr, Marion Dickerman Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.



friendship developed to which Marion was also drawn. Before long, both Marion and Nancy were accepted into Hyde Park not only as intimate friends of Eleanor but as dear friends to all the Roosevelts. Franklin, especially, took an immediate liking to the two women, and he sought to encourage their friendship in every way possible. As Kenneth Davis in his Invincible Summer has stated, "They were being accepted into the small, close-knit Roosevelt inner circle, the most intimate of family circles, of which the only member Marion had not yet met was Louis Howe..."<sup>4</sup>

As the friendship between the three women grew, Eleanor was drawn more and more into the orbit of activities of the other two friends. She became very active in the Women's Division of the New York Democratic Committee, the Women's Trade Union League, and the League of Women Voters. These organizations, combined with the frequent prodding of Louis Howe, caused Eleanor to become more involved in political affairs.

It was evident that by the middle of the 1920's Eleanor was beginning to see in herself a totally different person. Although her husband was being touted as a political leader to be reckoned with and Eleanor would naturally play second fiddle, she was enjoying the popularity that seemed to have evaded her all these years. Many years later, long after Eleanor had passed from the scene, her son James provided an excellent explanation for this change in his mother's character and personality. Upon being asked what he thought of his mother's personal traits, he answered,

Of course looking back on it I see such a transition and development of her character, of her capabilities. But I suppose the thing that will always live with me is the fact

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4. Davis, Invincible Summer, p. 19.

that I think she grew more than any human being that I've known. She grew from somebody that, as I remember, was a rather insecure person who felt she could never drive a car properly. I was with her when she backed down a hill and upended the car and it came to rest against the tree standing upright. And I remember her trying to learn to ride a horse, which really she didn't enjoy riding, which she did out of pride. I remember the person who felt she had to smoke a cigarette when she couldn't inhale to save her soul, nearly choked to death. And I remember a lot of little things that indicated that she would try to do things to help in a general situation without really enjoying it in any way at all. And then I think from that, particularly as she developed her own life, from the time that father became ill with polio, little by little her capacity grew. Louis Howe contributed to it by giving her self-confidence to be able to get up and talk before people, which really I think was almost a dread thing to have to do at one point. I think that she grew during the time that father was governor when she realized she could teach school, she could have an independent life and still do the things which were her responsibility as a wife and mother. When he became President I think she felt that she could still run the White House, so to speak, domestically but could make a positive contribution to the success of his presidency. I think all this accumulated and gave her confidence, and she undoubtedly must have known that it was being noticed and appreciated. I think that when father died she made the transition to her own life, which I think Harry Truman's appointment of her to the UN really capped it and gave her the final opportunity to do something that obviously was totally on her own and nobody else helped her. None of father's people helped her. This is something which she did on her own. And I think it led to a final capping of her life and career which made up for, maybe, some of the keep<sup>5</sup> disappointments that she had in a more personal way.

Although in saying what he did James Roosevelt was recapitulating his mother's whole life, his view pretty much summed up the changes that were occurring in Eleanor by the mid-1920's. It was obvious that the idea and the reality of a Val-Kill were not too

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5. Interview with James Roosevelt by Dr. Thomas F. Soapes, Oral Historian, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, December 8, 1977.

far off; they needed only the time and circumstances to present themselves.

### Val-Kill Is Born

The exact circumstances surrounding the birth of Val-Kill have been somewhat garbled by time and by early writers who either did not have the original documents before them or else had misinterpreted the writings of Eleanor Roosevelt.

The new life which Eleanor had discovered and her new-found friendships left a strong yearning in her heart to live in a place that was set apart from the Big House in Hyde Park where her mother-in-law ruled as matriarch.<sup>6</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt's own story in later years of how Val-Kill came about is simple and brief:

Franklin was particularly interested in one of our undertakings. He helped to design and build a stone cottage beside a brook where we often went to picnic during the first years after he was paralyzed. The brook was called Val-Kill so we called the cottage Val-Kill cottage.

There was more than this to the story, however. Eleanor, Nancy, and Marion, sometimes accompanied by Franklin and

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6. Joseph Lash, who received his information from Malvina "Tommy" Thompson, long the personal secretary of Eleanor Roosevelt, has said that F.D.R.'s mother "objected strongly" to Nancy Cook and the only way Eleanor could see her friends was to build a place of her own. Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor Roosevelt: A Friend's Memoir (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 141. Marion Dickerman has disputed this position, and has claimed that Sara Roosevelt always liked Nancy Cook. James R. Kearney, Anna Eleanor Roosevelt: The Evolution of a Reformer (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), p. 170.

7. Eleanor Roosevelt, This I Remember (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 32.

Eleanor's two youngest sons, used to picnic in an area of the Roosevelt estate known as Val-Kill. Val-Kill (in Dutch meaning valley stream) was a piece of land which Franklin had purchased and added to his estate in 1911. The Fall Kill Brook ran through the area. Val-Kill was approximately two miles from the Big House. Marion Dickerman provides a vivid description of what happened at one of these picnics. She recalls that on one Saturday afternoon in the fall of 1924 Eleanor, Franklin, Nancy, Marion, and the two youngest Roosevelts were enjoying a picnic at their favorite spot beside the brook. The brook was sparkling clear and the area where they sat was open and surrounded by woods. In the peaceful quietude of these surroundings conversation was spirited and filled with laughter. As evening approached Eleanor felt sad that this would probably be the last picnic of the season for the joyful group, for Sara Roosevelt would close her mansion for the winter. According to Marion, Franklin suddenly spoke out, "But aren't you girls silly? This isn't Mother's land. I bought this acreage myself. And why shouldn't you three have a cottage here of your own, so you could come and go as you please?" He suggested to Marion and Nancy that they might actually make this place their country home. "If you'll mark out the land you want, I'll give you a life interest in it, with the understanding that it reverts to my estate upon the death of the last survivor."<sup>8</sup> Thus, the whole idea of Val-Kill started as a social one, that is to say, as a place to live. One can well imagine the excitement that prevailed on that day. Eleanor, more than anyone, must have

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8. Davis, Invincible Summer, pp. 34-5; Marion Dickerman, The Val-Kill Industries: Furniture-Pewter-Homespun, n.d., Marion Dickerman Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, states essentially the same thing; Lash, citing Miss Dickerman, also says the same. Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of Their Relationships based on Eleanor Roosevelt's Private Papers (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1971), p. 304 (henceforth cited as Lash, Eleanor and Franklin).

sensed the meaning of her husband's generosity. Now for the first time she could have a place of her own, albeit to be shared by her dearest friends.

While Marion remembers this first discussion about Val-Kill as having taken place sometime in the fall of 1924, a letter written by Franklin on August 5, 1924 reveals that her memory may have been faulty. In his letter written to Elliott Brown, a building contractor and friend, Franklin had this to say:

My missus and some of her female political friends want to build a shack on a stream in the back woods and want instead of a beautiful marble bath, to have the stream dug out so as to form an old-fashioned swimming pool.

Thus while Marion may have been essentially correct about the circumstances leading to the establishment of Val-Kill, she was wrong about the time.

It was not until January 26, 1926, long after construction of the cottage got underway, that Franklin entered into a written agreement with the three ladies setting aside a piece of land for their use. The document signed by the four parties read as follows:

IT IS HEREBY COVENANT AND AGREED by and between Franklin D. Roosevelt, his heirs and assigns, party of the first part, and Nancy Cook, Marion Dickerman and Anna E. Roosevelt, their heirs and assigns, parties of the second part:

The party of the first part does hereby lease unto the parties of the second part the following property for use as a residence or for industrial or manufacturing purposes:

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9. FDR to Brown, August 5, 1924, F.D.R. Collection, F.D.R. Library.

Said property is a portion of the so-called Bennett Farm on the east side of the Creek Road in the Town of Hyde Park, Dutchess County, New York, and is bounded as follows:

'Beginning at a point in the center of the Fallkill Creek, in the south line of said Bennett Farm, being the north line of the Tompkins Farm and running thence west approximately 276 ft. along the wall to a fence; running thence approximately in a N. W. direction following on the west side of the road to a point on the north side of said road, where said road turns sharply west, a distance of approximately 500 ft.; running thence approximately 700 ft. in a northeast and easterly direction across said Fallkill Creek to a stake; running thence south approximately 700 ft. to the boundary line between the Bennett and Tompkins Farms; running thence west along said boundary line to the point of beginning in the Fallkill Creek.'

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD under the following terms and conditions:

- (a) This lease shall be for the life of the three parties of the second part and of the survivor or survivors of them.
- (b) The parties of the second part agree to pay to the party of the first part as rent a sum equal to the taxes, both real and personal, town, county and state, and all assessments which may be levied or assessed against the above property. The amount of said taxes shall be agreed upon between the parties hereto or, in the event of dispute, said amount shall be determined by an umpire.
- (c) The parties of the second part agree to maintain the property in good repair and first-class condition and to maintain the road leading to the property from the Creek Road, or such portion of said maintenance as their share of the use of said road shall determine.
- (d) The parties hereto agree that the value of the house now being erected on said property is \$8,000 and the parties of the second part shall have the right, on giving one year's notice, to terminate this lease and to receive payment for the value of said house on the following basis:

January 1, 1927	\$7,840.00,
January 1, 1928	7,680.00,

and upon each succeeding first of January, a sum One Hundred and Sixty Dollars (\$160.00) less, the intention being that this reduction in value shall in full cover depreciation, and will at the end of fifty (50) years vest the full property rights in said building in the party of the first part.<sup>10</sup>

The agreement was signed well after the idea of building a residence had been born. Note that the agreement refers to a "house now being erected on said property." The land itself was never deeded to Eleanor as her son James Roosevelt had long believed. It was not until 1977 that he finally recognized this fact.<sup>11</sup>

While it was clear that the idea of establishing Val-Kill was first a social one--where Eleanor and her two friends could live from time to time--the idea of establishing an industrial complex followed soon thereafter. Exactly when the idea of creating an industry arose is not too clear, but it is obvious that it had already surfaced long before the lease agreement had been signed, since reference is made in the lease to the land's industrial or manufacturing uses. Moreover, as early as February 1925, when designs for the stone cottage had still to reach agreement among the participants, Nancy wrote to Franklin that the women had given up the idea for a garage for a year and that when they did build one, it would be attached to a separate building housing a "rough shop" where men could do all the "rough work." In the meantime, she added, they would use the house shop for finishing.<sup>12</sup> Thus,

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10. Memorandum of Agreement, signed by Franklin D. Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, Marion Dickerman, and Anne E. Roosevelt, January 26, 1926, F.D.R. Collection, F.D.R. Library.

11. James Roosevelt and Sidney Shalett, Affectionately, F.D.R.: A Son's Story of a Lonely Man (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1959), p. 23; Roosevelt to Dickerman, 1977, Marion Dickerman Papers, F.D.R. Library.

12. Cook to F.D.R., ca. February 1925, F.D.R. Papers, F.D.R. Library.

the idea of establishing an industry must have developed soon after the women decided to make Val-Kill their home. In This I Remember Eleanor hints that the idea of Val-Kill as a place of residence was not "an end in itself." It was a place, she said, in which Nancy and Marion were not only to live but a place from which Nancy would direct a furniture factory.<sup>13</sup>

The idea of an industry at Val-Kill was the result of several factors, some not very clear. Nor can we conclude with any certainty who among the three women was the compelling force behind the idea. It is clear that the manufacture of furniture was to be the first industry to be undertaken, but as the work progressed, other industries would be added.

Marion's memory was faulty when she recalled that it was in June 1925, at another picnic in Val-Kill during which a fourth woman, Caroline O'Day, was present besides the usual group, that the idea of an industry arose. Caroline O'Day, who was born in Georgia and had married a vice-president of Standard Oil Corporation, was active in politics and had been elected to Congress representing a district in New York State. She was active in the feminist movement, and had become chairwoman of the Women's Division of the New York Democratic Committee of which Nancy was executive secretary. Stimulated by the beautiful rural setting, the conversation drifted to the subject of rural youth who gave up their native farms and villages to flock to the big cities. This, they all agreed, was unfortunate. Eleanor noted on that day that she and Franklin had often wondered if it would be possible to establish small industries in local communities to provide not only

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13. Eleanor Roosevelt, This I Remember (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 32.



income for local men who could not make an adequate living in farming but also to provide an interest in a craft for rural women. According to Marion, it was Nancy who remarked "Why not start a small factory and copy early American furniture, doing it as nearly as possible in the same way as the early Americans had done? Why not do it right here, when our cottage is built?" Eleanor said she was sure that Franklin would approve, and he did when the idea was later discussed with him.<sup>14</sup> Marion may have been substantially correct in establishing the picnic as the place where the idea of an industry did arise, but she was wrong about the date.

In her writings Eleanor gives much of the credit for the industry to Nancy. Nancy, she claimed, had distinct artistic ability. She had been educated in the fine arts and had taught them in New York schools. Nancy had always longed to make reproductions of early American furniture by employing methods used by early cabinet makers. Her idea was to manufacture reproductions by using machines, but the finishing would be done by skilled hands. "Because the finishing was all done by hand, the wood looked and felt as though it had been used and polished for years."<sup>15</sup>

In later years Eleanor confessed to Marion that she had gone into the industries at Val-Kill "because I felt that Nan was fulfilling something which she had long wanted to do." She admitted that she would never have done it alone for she had neither the knowledge, background, nor interest.<sup>16</sup> It is difficult to reconcile

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14. David, Invincible Summer, p. 45.

15. Roosevelt, This I Remember, pp. 32-3.

16. Roosevelt to Dickerman, November 9, 1938, President's Secretary's File, F.D.R. Library.

this last statement, particularly as it refers to her interest, with what did go on in her mind in the mid-1920's. Nevertheless, it was probably true that Nancy spearheaded the whole idea of an industry largely because of her background, skill, and interest. Marion had said in later years that the Val-Kill Industries was largely Nancy's conception and predominantly her's in execution.<sup>17</sup>

Eleanor also gave some credit to her husband, if not for the idea but for the encouragement which he gave the ladies. In her own words in later years Eleanor said that

My husband had very little interest in the production of furniture but he was greatly interested in finding some industry that could be developed in country areas such as ours, and that could perhaps furnish occupations for some of the younger men who would otherwise leave the farms. By giving them work in an industry which would yield them a fairly good income during the slack period on the farms, he thought one could keep the progressive, more active group of young people working steadily and so raise the standard of farm development in our area.

Franklin had heard the story of a small community in Vermont where the people loved their homes and the countryside, but could not quite make a living on the farms. One enterprising citizen went away for a time and on his return suggested using certain kinds of wood which could be found in that neighborhood for some industry. They put up a small factory in which, during the winter months, they made wooden handles and wooden saucepan knobs, finding an outlet through one of the large manufacturers. By producing large quantities of the little wooden knobs and handles, they raised their standard of living and held on to the farms and homes they loved.

This experiment made my husband eager to find out whether in our neighborhood something of the same kind could be done. He had a great love for the soil and

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17. Davis, Invincible Summer, p. 80.

wanted to see it developed; but he realized that many of the farmers around us had a difficult time holding their young sons on the land because the return and strenuous work was meager. His interest in our enterprise was therefore in the training and the employment of young men in the vicinity.<sup>18</sup>

In more recent years Eleanor's son Elliott has provided a less serious interpretation of his mother's story. Speaking of his father's role in the industry, Elliott said that his father's interest in furniture production was "minimal at best, but he humored Mother in his customary fashion." What stirred his imagination, said Elliott, was the potential for finding something like a cottage industry that might be developed around Hyde Park in order to provide occupations for young men who would otherwise drift away from farming.<sup>19</sup>

Three years after the industry was in full swing one local newspaper reported that the idea of an industry occurred to Mrs. Roosevelt while she was accompanying her husband, then governor of New York State, on a tour of the state. She noted, said this newspaper, that during the long post-harvest period many of the more ambitious men and boys were drawn to the cities for work until the next planting season arrived. The article quoted Eleanor as saying that in this group existed a latent artistic talent. "There are," she said, "undeveloped and incompletely developed artists in wood and iron work and in design." But, she added, "our first

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18. Roosevelt, This I Remember, pp. 33-4.

19. Elliott Roosevelt and James Brough, An Untold Story: The Roosevelts of Hyde Park (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), p. 236.

thought was the economic loss caused by the draining of the best from the farm to the city."<sup>20</sup>

Another factor, perhaps of lesser significance, which may also have had a part in the birth of the industry, is well-stated in an early promotional brochure. This publication noted that

For a long time the fact has been brought home to many of us, who are fond of old furniture, that authentic early American pieces are becoming more and more difficult to secure. Some of us have a few pieces which we would like to have surrounded by others that are in keeping and so the Val-Kill Shop was started with the idea of making reproductions of those in the Metropolitan Museum or in the other good collections.<sup>21</sup>

While different reasons may have been given for the birth of the Val-Kill Industries, basically the idea was a humanitarian desire to improve the economy of the area and the quality of life. This had always been the basic characteristic of the philosophy espoused by Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt during the 1920's and the years of the New Deal. While there can be no question concerning the motives that prompted the idea, it is difficult to say which of the persons involved was the one single force behind it. While Nancy Cook may have been the "brains" behind the total effort, one must conclude that the idea of an industry was probably the cooperative effort of all three women and probably more if we count Caroline O'Day and Franklin D. Roosevelt.<sup>22</sup>

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20. Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier, April 27, 1930, pp. 1, 24, copy made available by Charles W. Snell, Historian, N.P.S.

21. Val-Kill Shop: Roosevelt Industries, Hyde Park, New York, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection, F.D.R. Library.

22. Elliott Roosevelt has stated that Nancy was the brain who came up with the notion that she and Eleanor should go into the furniture-manufacturing business. Roosevelt, An Untold Story, p. 235.

## The Land

In 1911, Franklin D. Roosevelt purchased the Bennett Farm from Annie M. Bennett for the sum of \$10,000. The farm consisted of 194 acres, and in the description provided by the deed reference is made to the Tompkins land which bordered the Bennett Farm on the south.<sup>23</sup>

Other than growing trees for commercial purposes, Franklin did little to develop the land. Meanwhile, the condition of sale stipulated that all structures built by the owner were to be removed from the premises. Thus, the land remained largely in a pristine condition, attracting the Roosevelt family to picnic near the Fallkill Creek.

With the construction of the stone cottage in 1925 and the eventual development of the Industries which the ladies had in mind, Franklin may have been prompted to add an addition to the old Bennett property. In July 1925 he purchased 192 acres of the Tompkins Farm just to the south of the Bennett Farm. One of the conditions of this transaction permitted Sarah C. Tompkins, the grantor, the right to live and use rent free during the remainder of her life, the dwelling house, out buildings, chicken house, and cow barn that were located off of Violet Avenue, near the junction of Creek Road. Franklin was to provide her with suitable land sufficient to feed her cows. In addition, he was to provide her with insurance on the house, and in the event it should burn down

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23. Liber of Deeds 370, September 5, 1911, p. 494, County Clerk's Office, Dutchess County, Poughkeepsie, N.Y. (hereafter all deeds cited in this study are understood to come from the County Clerk's Office in Dutchess County). An 1878 deed provides a similar description of the land. See Liber 192, April 1, 1878.

he would have it replaced. Finally, he was to provide her with sufficient firewood and a new stove.<sup>24</sup>

While additional lands adjoining these farms were later added to the Roosevelt estate, it was essentially the Bennett property that witnessed the development of Val-Kill structures, roads, and landscaping upon it.

The land that was leased by Franklin to Eleanor, Marion, and Nancy represented a small parcel, approximately eight acres. It bordered on four sides: one side consisted of 500 feet, a second side was 700 feet, a third was also 700 feet, and the fourth side, which was coterminous with the boundary line between the Bennett and Tompkins Farms, consisted of about 450 feet. The Fallkill Creek cut the land almost in half as it flowed through it.<sup>25</sup>

An historical base map showing the existing property (Val-Kill) with its structures is included as Appendix I.<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that although the boundary established by the 1926 lease was

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24. Liber 454, July 3, 1925, p. 426. This deed describes the land essentially as it appears in a map drawn in 1905 of the Tompkins Farm. See map, "Plan of Farm, Mrs. Sarah C. Tompkins, Hyde Park, Dutchess County, N.Y., 1905," copy made available by the Park.

25. Memorandum of Lease between Franklin D. Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, Marion Dickerman, and Anna E. Roosevelt, January 29, 1926, Hackett Collection, F.D.R. Library.

26. The historical base map is drawn from a map entitled "F.D. Roosevelt Property/Hyde Park, N.Y./Plotted from Deeds and survey maps/ scale 1" = 300'/O.A.D'Luhosch/Civil Engineer/Poughkeepsie," drawn for the Eastern Office of Design and Construction, National Park Service, Map No. 3008, July 26, 1962, Park files. Although the land is drawn to scale, the structures are not and their locations are approximate.

plotted on the basis of the description provided in the lease, it is obvious that some of the structures built by the three women over the years fell outside of this boundary. On this point, Franklin, apparently, had no objections as long as the tenants paid their taxes on the property.

The natural characteristics of the Val-Kill area were generally similar to those of the whole Roosevelt estate. The western half was low, relatively flat, and open. The eastern half was hilly and densely forested with a rich variety of natural and planted trees, reflecting Franklin's interest in conservation and forestry. Franklin sometimes purchased land upon which he experimented with the growing of different kinds of trees. He operated his land as a productive farm. At Val-Kill he cultivated most of the tree plantations with the advice of the State Conservation Department at the Syracuse College of Forestry. Among the many trees that could be found were the European larch, Scotch pine, and Dahurian larch from Korea.<sup>27</sup> From the numerous trees he had on his estate Franklin sold cross-ties, telegraph poles, pilings, saw logs, and cord wood. During the war, he timbered the largest wood lot for shipbuilding. In a letter to his employer, Moses Smith said, "You have hundreds of cords of wood East of Val-Kil [sic] Cottage [that] could be turned in[to] money to a very good advantage. . . ." <sup>28</sup> "Forest operations on a farm," said Franklin, "can and should be used to meet the entire tax burden levied against the

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27. Olin Dows, Franklin Roosevelt at Hyde Park: Documented Drawings and Text (New York: American Artists Group, Inc., 1949), p. 102. Dows was a neighbor of the Roosevelts. The Henry Toombs Collection in the Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Ga., contains a number of illustrations depicting Val-Kill before structures were built (Illustrations Nos. 1, 2, and 3).

28. Smith to Roosevelt, December 1, 1926, F.D.R. Papers, F.D.R. Library.



Illustration No. 1

Val-Kill, 1925  
(Before stone cottage was built)

Henry J. Toombs Papers  
Courtesy of Georgia Department of Archives and History





Illustration No. 2

Val-Kill, 1925

Original bridge (site of stone cottage at upper right)

Henry J. Toombs Papers

Courtesy of Georgia Department of Archives and History

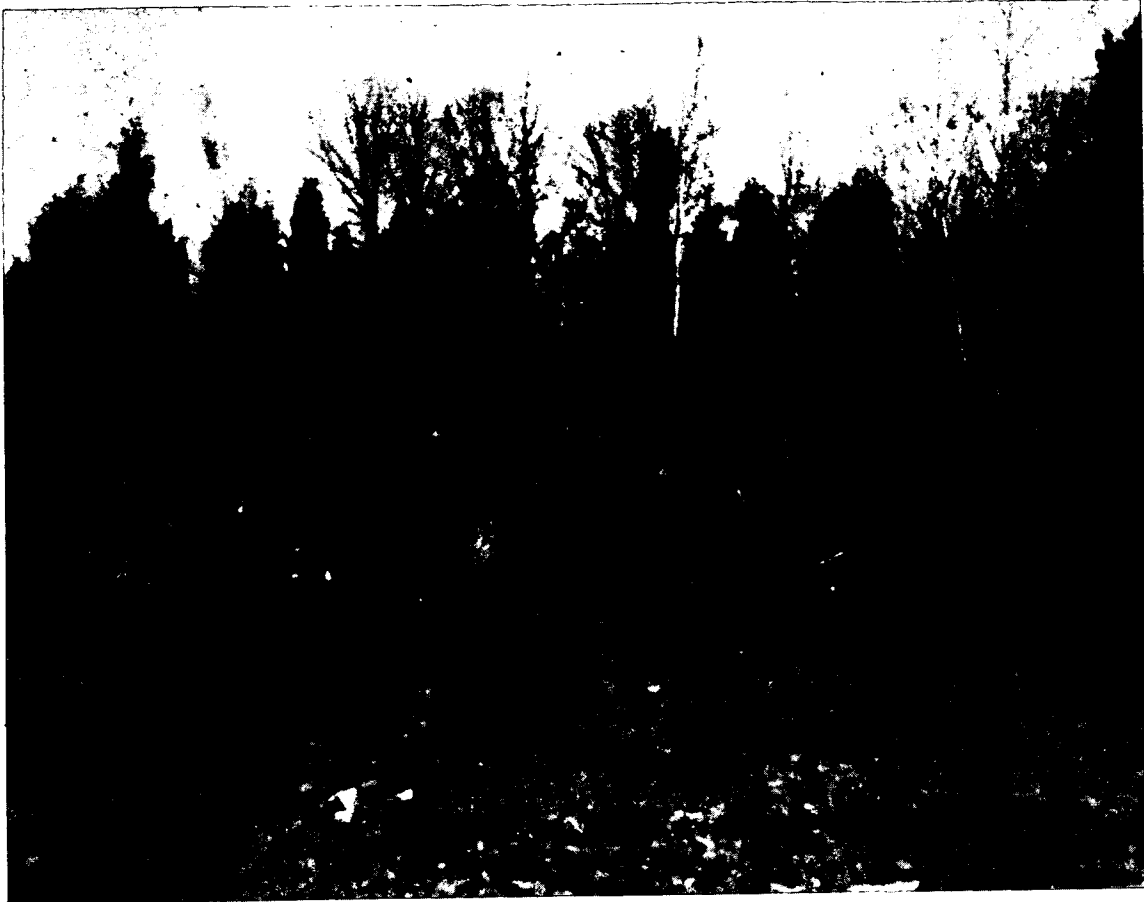


Illustration No. 3

Val-Kill, 1925  
Fir trees probably planted by F.D.R.  
(Before stone cottage was built)

Henry J. Toombs Papers  
Courtesy of Georgia Department of Archives and History

property."<sup>29</sup> Though he loved the trees for themselves, he also thought of them as an asset to a working farm. In a letter written in 1925, he provides us with some idea of the cost of this lumber. In 1921, for example, he received \$7.00 for each tree used in building ferry piles. Prices, he noted, were rising for lumber, so that by 1925 he estimated he could receive \$6.00 for each 30-foot pole with a circumference of 36 inches "at the butt," \$7.00 for each 35-foot pole with a circumference of 40 inches, and \$10.00 for each 40-foot pole with a circumference of 43 inches. To Nancy, who was interested in oak floors for her new cottage, he indicated that for an oak tree 28 feet long, having a diameter of 15 or 16 inches at the base, it would cost her \$12.00.<sup>30</sup> The lumber business at Hyde Park had been a profitable one for Franklin, and it continued to be, at least for awhile, in the hands of his heirs.

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29. Dows, Franklin Roosevelt at Hyde Park, p. 102.

30. Roosevelt to Cook, September 20, 1925, Marion Dickerman Collection, Park Files.

CHAPTER II  
THE STONE COTTAGE, 1925-1947

Architect and Builder

There is an abundance of evidence to prove who designed and built the stone cottage. We can conclude without a doubt that Nancy Cook, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Henry Johnston Toombs, and Henry Clinton all played a major role in the design of the structure. Toombs and Clinton may have provided the professionalism, with Franklin following closely behind. Some writers like Elliott Roosevelt may have given Franklin more credit than he deserves; on the other hand, there is little doubt about the extensive role he played in supervising the building's construction.<sup>1</sup> The same writer has also placed unwarranted emphasis on the role which his mother Eleanor played in the design of the interior of the cottage.<sup>2</sup> While there is some evidence that Marion Dickerman did from time to time inject her opinions on the design of the cottage, there is, to this writer's knowledge, no evidence that Eleanor ever did.

Although we know the individuals who were involved in creating the designs for the cottage, we do not know under what circumstances each person became involved. To be sure, Eleanor, Nancy, and Marion, the people who gave birth to the idea, must have discussed among themselves what they wanted in the way of a residence. Probably through the efforts of Caroline O'Day, her cousin Henry Johnston Toombs, a young architect from Georgia, entered the picture sometime in the winter or spring of 1925.

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1. Elliott Roosevelt and James Brough, An Untold Story: The Roosevelts of Hyde Park (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), p. 227 (hereafter cited as Roosevelt, An Untold Story).

2. Ibid.

There is little doubt that despite the active role played by other people, it must be said that Toombs, as the only professional architect in the group, must take most of the credit for the final designs.

Toombs was born in Cuthbert, Georgia in 1896. He entered the United States Naval Academy in 1913, and after resigning his appointment, he was commissioned in the United States Navy in 1917 where he served in World War I. At the conclusion of the war he studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, graduating in 1921. For a brief spell he worked for the architectural firm of Paul P. Cret of Philadelphia, after which time he received his master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1923. He then travelled abroad principally in Italy and France for more than one year.

Upon returning to the United States he worked for the well-known firm of McKim, Mead and White in New York City where he became well acquainted with Eric Gugler, the sculptor and architect. He remained with this firm for about four years where, in his own words, he did his first independent work, including some designs of residences and a memorial library on the Roosevelt estate. In 1929, he and Gugler formed a partnership that lasted until 1933. During that period he became the architect for the Warm Springs Foundation where he was responsible for doing many of the structural designs at Warm Springs for Franklin Roosevelt. He died in 1967. (Illustration No. 4).<sup>3</sup>

Nancy Cook had the distinction of being the first person to draw sketches of the cottage. Unfortunately, Franklin, who was

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3. Biographical Sketch of Henry J. Toombs, typewritten Ms., n.d., Henry Toombs Collection, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Ga.



Illustration No. 4

Eleanor Roosevelt and Henry J. Toombs  
at Warm Springs, Georgia  
ca. 1934

Henry J. Toombs Papers  
Courtesy of Georgia Department of Archives and History

first to see them, did not approve. Franklin, who liked to think of himself as an architect, had his own ideas of Colonial Dutch Architecture in the Hudson River Valley. Probably at the suggestion of Caroline O'Day, Toombs was invited to Hyde Park one weekend in 1925. There, according to Marion, he established a rapport with Franklin, and he too agreed that Nancy's preliminary sketches were not to his liking.<sup>4</sup> Toombs then offered his advice and services to the ladies to which they quickly acceded. Thus, in his own words Toombs said, "The transition of their status from that of delightful ladies being architecturally advised to that of clients was, as I remember, swiftly and painlessly made. It was a heady experience for me."<sup>5</sup>

Following this meeting with Franklin and the ladies, both he and Franklin collaborated in preparing the designs. According to Toombs, he was the one who actually drew the plans, but he admits that Franklin had much to do with the designs. To what extent they actually collaborated is not too clear, but it is certain that Franklin was quite adamant in forcing his opinions upon Toombs who seemed to readily accede. The ladies, especially Nancy, having made their initial contribution to the overall design, now preferred to sit back and leave it to these two men.

Franklin was, of course, not a trained or licensed architect; nevertheless, he liked to imagine himself as another Thomas

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4. Kenneth S. Davis, Invincible Summer: An Intimate Portrait of the Roosevelts Based on the Recollections of Marion Dickerman (New York: Atheneum, 1974), p. 44. This book contains a photograph of Henry Toombs, Marion Dickerman, Henry Clinton, and stonemason George Van Aken in which they are reviewing blueprints. This photograph was probably taken just before construction got underway and was one of many meetings on and off the site held by the parties concerned. See ibid., following p. 65.

5. Henry J. Toombs, "Doing Architecture with F.D.R.," typewritten Ms., ca. 1949, Henry Toombs Collection.

Jefferson. He was enamored of the Colonial Dutch Architecture of the Hudson River Valley. Nearly all structures on his Hyde Park estate carried this motif. This together with his great sense of history led him to hold some very definite ideas about structural designs in the area.

Franklin became very fond of Toombs, for it was not long after the cottage was built that he hired Toombs to design many of the Warm Springs projects so dear to his heart. Warm Springs was by far the biggest project in which Franklin was personally involved, but it did not end there. In 1937, Franklin asked Toombs to design his Dream Cottage, or Top Cottage, as it was more commonly known, only a stone's throw from Val-Kill.

It was during the period when both men were involved in the designs for the Val-Kill cottage that Toombs formulated some very basic opinions about Franklin as an architect. In describing some of his attitudes, Toombs had this to say:

The plans and agreement. . . proceeded smoothly until F.D.R. discovered that I was proposing a large semi-circular headed window at the end of the living room where the fireplace had initially been intended. His denunciation of this as an alien, 'Italian', and most unhappy feature in a house intended to follow his beloved New York Dutch Colonial tradition precipitated a family discussion of no small amount. My four clients tended to back my suggestion. Discussion slipped into argument. That window became a very hot potatoe. His position was so stoutly maintained that I, frightened that the issue had attained such proportions, 'Compromised' by restoring the fireplace and omitting the 'Italian' window (and I seem to recall that the issue provoked a little research on my part--which persuaded me he was probably right). I can recall this as my first experience of a client's being 'difficult.' I perhaps thought at the time 'stubborn'. It left no question but that he intended to and got his way. Thus I was initiated to compromise by the future great President. This little incident became a kind of joking 'cause celebre' between us and many times in later years



he would refer to it as the only time he won,<sup>6</sup> but this, I assure you, was far from the truth.

The incident to which Toombs refers was very characteristic of Franklin in projects that involved both men. As in his political career, Franklin overwhelmed his opponents until they eventually gave in. Both Toombs and the ladies conceded on the question of the "Italian" window. In his own inimitable way, Franklin warned them that if they persisted on keeping the "Italian" window, he would never visit them.<sup>7</sup>

Franklin's strong interest in architecture led Toombs to play a practical joke which caused a stir in the architectural profession. In 1938, Franklin, again in collaboration with Toombs, designed his Dream House. Perhaps motivated by his respect for President Roosevelt's ability as an architect, Toombs, with his mentor's approval, placed Franklin's name on the drawings with the title of "Architect," while labeling his own name with the title of "Associate."<sup>8</sup> This drew sharp criticisms from the architectural profession, which felt that only licensed architects should bare this distinction on drawings.<sup>9</sup> When Toombs recalled this incident in later years, he had forgotten that when the Val-Kill cottage was being designed thirteen years earlier, a similar incident had occurred. In the Toombs Collection is a ground floor plan of the

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6. Toombs, "Doing Architecture with F.D.R.," Henry Toombs Collection.

7. Marion Dickerman, "The Val Kill Industries: Furniture-Pewter-Homespun," n.d., Marion Dickerman Papers, F.D.R. Library.

8. "Forum of Events," The Architectural Forum, November 1938, pp. 34-5.

9. Toombs, "Doing Architecture with F.D.R.," Henry Toombs Collection.

stone cottage in which the name of Franklin D. Roosevelt appears along with Henry Toombs, William Creighton, and James K. Smith (the latter two being partners of Toombs) as "Architects." Was this an earlier joke to which Toombs had also lent his efforts?

Toombs, who had collaborated with Franklin on several architectural projects both in Warm Springs and at Hyde Park, had this to say about the latter's architectural abilities:

It would be strange, possessing his varied interests, his knowledge of American history and his strong historical sense, if F.D.R. did not make note of himself contributing plans of a house on a hilltop, as had another President, Jefferson, more than a hundred years before. But however pleasant, I question if his mind dwelt but fleetingly on the architectural identification. He did have, in my opinion, a strong if untutored architectural sense. He was quick to grasp, to see relationship in plans, and fertile in suggestions and ideas. He loved to build. Any project, new or in progress, excited his interest. His secretaries frequently would save plans sent for his interest or approval as items of relief from the grind of his work, for the obvious pleasure it gave him to look at and work over them. I would not exaggerate the extent of his architectural interest, but clearly both his interest in, and comprehension of<sup>10</sup> building far exceeded that of average educated laymen.

If Franklin collaborated on the designs for the stone cottage, he also shared in the responsibilities of a general contractor, contracting for services and supplies and supervising the general construction. When he procured bids for the construction of the stone cottage, he felt they were much too high. After reviewing the bids, he characteristically suggested to the ladies that he could do the job of a general contractor for less than the lowest bid. Receiving the ladies' blessings, he, with the help of Henry Clinton,

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10. Toombs, "Doing Architecture with F.D.R.," Henry Toombs Collection.

a friend and professional builder, proceeded to act as general contractor. Clinton had already made some helpful suggestions to lower the cost and improve the design of the stone cottage. Franklin, meanwhile, employed local sub-contractors for most of the work.

### Construction and Description

Up until the time that designs were finally approved by everyone, there was a great deal of disagreement over designs, materials, dimensions, etc. Early in the process of formulating plans, Nancy had presented a plan that would include a cellar and a garage under the cottage. Eleanor's brother, Hall Roosevelt, and Elliott Brown dissuaded her from this course, feeling that they would get water in the basement. As a result, Nancy produced a new sketch omitting the garage and basement. The idea was to build a separate garage later on. In her sketch of the ground level, she showed a large living room and bedroom fronting the north side and a bath, kitchen, and shop on the south side.<sup>11</sup>

Franklin was pleased with Nancy's decision to eliminate the garage, but he believed that since he knew the height of the creek so well, he was "convinced a cellar down say 4 feet below top surface would always be dry and I think there should be that much cellar at least under part of the house if only for purpose of keeping the house warm and dry. That much excavation would cost very little." In regard to her ground floor plan, he had some very important observations that reveal how well versed he was in the principles of architecture. "I have only one suggestion--the same one I have had all along," he said, "i.e., to put the sitting room

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11. Cook to F.D.R., ca. February 1925, F.D.R. Papers, F.D.R. Library.

and bedroom at south end of house instead of north end and the bath, kitchen and shop at the north end. This merely carries out the old principle that the south is and should be the real living end of the house--more sun, more view, less cold, etc." He then went on to draw his own sketch.<sup>12</sup>

It was not long before Nancy wrote to Franklin to tell him the news he wished to hear. "Henry," referring to Toombs, "is at work on the new plans this week and the living room is to be placed on the end towards the swimming pool as you suggested. We have all voted with you." "As soon as Henry gets these plans ready I will send them to you."<sup>13</sup> Not only did Nancy and Marion accede to these wishes and also eliminated the garage, but apparently a cellar was also retained, one that was of full height under the rear of the cottage.

When Toombs completed his drawings in May 1925, based upon some of the decisions agreed upon by Franklin and Nancy, they were met with some disapproval by Franklin.<sup>14</sup>

Toombs apparently made several different sketches of the cottage which were not acceptable either to the ladies or to Franklin, although they were based on the sketches earlier provided by Nancy. It is obvious from the existing cottage that

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12. F.D.R. to Cook and Dickerman, March 6, 1925, F.D.R. Papers.

13. Cook to F.D.R., ca. March 1925, F.D.R. Papers.

14. There are at about forty drawings of the stone cottage and the service house (shop building) by Henry Toombs in the Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Ga., copies of which were made available to the author. Many of these appear in the appendix of the Historic Structure Report (Historical Data Section) and all have been made available to the park.

these drawings were not finally executed. On the other hand, a four-part sketch by Toombs in the Marion Dickerman Collection, with some important modifications, is the drawing that was finally executed.<sup>15</sup> The thing in dispute in this drawing was the large semi-circular Venetian window on the south end of the cottage. Franklin was strongly opposed to an alien style in a cottage that was essentially in the Hudson River Valley Dutch. It was clear that Franklin could not stomach such a distortion of his beloved Colonial Dutch Architecture. Marion recalls this event rather vividly:

As for the cottage itself, they all quickly agreed that it should be built of fieldstone and should be of traditional Hudson River Dutch farmhouse design. Toombs departed from this design to the extent of including a tall, south-facing window in the living room, with a curved instead of a flat top. F.D.R. made strong objection to this. He also objected to having the ridgepole of the ell at the same height as the ridgepole of the main house. It ought to be 'without fail' one foot lower he insisted. 'If you build it that way,' he threatened the three women, 'I'll never come to visit you!' The design was of course changed as he wished.<sup>16</sup>

Toombs, who was responsible for the Venetian window, received the brunt of Franklin's disapproval. We have already read what Toombs and Marion had to say about this incident. After Toombs resubmitted the drawings by July 1925, not only had the Venetian window disappeared but there were other changes as well. The fireplace was now where the Venetian window once stood, and happiness finally reigned among the planners at Val-Kill.

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15. Marion Dickerman Collection, Park files. An illustration of this drawing, under the caption "Val Kill Cottage at Hyde Park," appears in Davis, Invincible Summer, following p. 65.

16. Davis, Invincible Summer, p. 45.

According to the drawings, the main part of the house, that is, under the living room and bedroom, was unexcavated. These two rooms were level with the ground. The wing at the rear rested on a full basement or cellar as it still does today.<sup>17</sup> The first floor plan contained a large two-story living room (on the south), a bedroom, shop, bathroom, kitchen, and pantry (the latter four areas in the wing at the rear).<sup>18</sup> The second floor plan consisted, in addition to the upper part of the living room, of a second bedroom and a second bathroom plus hallways leading to these rooms.<sup>19</sup>

There is some conflict as to the reported cost of building the stone cottage. During the early stages of planning in 1925, the estimated cost of building the cottage was smaller, but as the months went by and as changes to plans were formulated, the estimated cost assumed greater proportions. Franklin, with the aid of Elliott Brown, invited bids from general contractors. The lowest bid was \$15,500. Brown felt that because changes in the original plans had increased considerably the size of the cottage, the price was a fair one.<sup>20</sup>

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17. Drawing No. 1, Foundation Plan, House at Hyde Park for Miss Nancy Cook and Miss Marion Dickerman, revised July 15, 1925 by Henry J. Toombs, Henry Toombs Collection.

18. Drawing No. 2, First Floor Plan, revised July 20, 1925, Henry Toombs Collection.

19. Second Floor Plan, Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman House, Henry Toombs Collection. In addition to these drawings, there are several others in the same collection depicting the roof plan, cross sections of the living room, south, north, east, and west elevations, and details of various parts of the structure.

20. Babcock to Toombs, June 20, 1925, and Brown to Toombs, July 17, 1925, Henry Toombs Collection.

Eager to be of assistance and prompted by his own egotism in such matters, Franklin concluded that he could do the job for less than the lowest bid submitted. After some negotiations, he was able to convince the women of this. He therefore undertook the contract with the stipulation that the actual cost would not exceed the lowest bid. His own calculations on what it would cost after receiving estimates for work from subcontractors, came to a total of \$12,000. In a letter addressed to "Dear Val-Kill Industries Founders," he delighted in saying, "You got a wire today making firm bid of \$12,000," and he then went on to provide an estimated cost for each stage of construction.<sup>21</sup> Three days later, Franklin jubilantly wrote his half brother "Rosy" Roosevelt that "Clinton and I have taken the contract for the cottage and the estimate is \$4,000 under that of the Poughkeepsie contractors."<sup>22</sup> In November 1925, while the cottage was nearing completion, Toombs wrote to Franklin that while the cottage was progressing in fine order, "it is going to run something over the original \$12,000 bid. I don't know how much but I don't think a serious amount."<sup>23</sup>

According to Franklin's meticulously kept records the cost to the ladies, and the amount paid to him by them, was \$12,592.08.<sup>24</sup> The memorandum upon which this figure appeared differs somewhat from the records kept by Toombs. The latter's records reveal that while the ladies paid Franklin \$12,560.07 for his contract, it actually

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21. F.D.R. to Val-Kill Industries Founders, July 19, 1925, F.D.R. Papers.

22. Elliott Roosevelt, ed., F.D.R.: His Personal Letters, 1905-1928, 4 vols. (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1947-50), II, pp. 583-84.

23. Toombs to F.D.R., November 4, 1925, F.D.R. Papers.

24. Memorandum by F.D.R., paid by Cook, Dickerman, and Eleanor Roosevelt, February 1, 1926, F.D.R. Papers.

cost him \$14,406.67.<sup>25</sup> The difference in cost as revealed by these two records was explained by Toombs in later years. According to him, the women had suspected that the job had cost more than the contract price. "I don't recall that he ever enlightened us at the time as to what his sanguine expectations had cost him," said Toombs. Toombs's records did not show the amount of Franklin's contract for the cottage, but they did show that at the conclusion of the job his costs were \$15,593.47, both on the contract and on the extras, and that he was paid only \$12,560.07 by the owners. Toombs has given the following explanation, which reveals a lot about Franklin:

I believe his experience in contracting cost him the difference, but no man may say it was not worth the fun he had. For truly he loved to build, and had persistent interest in the details of the building. His interest in this first project (of which I had knowledge) was characteristic, as was his undertaking the contract to build the cottage for less than the bids of local contractors. When he met an obstacle, it seemed to me he so frequently sought to go around it; only when hemmed in, over it.<sup>26</sup>

If Toombs's version of the cost was the correct one, and it was probably so, Franklin never did admit it. In 1942 he wrote a

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25. Memorandum, "Val-Kill Cottage," n.d., Henry Toombs Collection.

26. Toombs, "Doing Architecture With F.D.R.," Henry Toombs Collection. In a letter to Olin Dows of Rhinebeck, N.Y., who had just recently written a book on Roosevelt, Toombs stated essentially the same thing: "My recollection is that at the conclusion of the job, he was quite mum as to how he had come out and I seem to recall that there was some little snickering among Marion Dickerman, Nancy Cook, Mrs. Roosevelt and myself as to the probability that he had lost some money on the deal and I don't remember that the point was ever clarified at the time . . . . Of course, Mrs. Roosevelt, Nancy and Marion could have paid him the difference later on and I not have known about it." Toombs to Dows, May 11, 1949, Henry Toombs Collection.



memorandum on White House stationary in which he said the following:

I enclose rather an interesting item--the check book and many of the vouchers for the building of the Val-Kill cottage at Hyde Park in 1925. I suppose this should be put in whatever you have in the way of a personal Roosevelt file. For the historical record, it is worth noting that I asked for bids from two or three contractors. Their lowest bid was \$15,000 and some odd dollars. I shopped around myself and found sub-constructors to do foundations, stone work, trim, plumbing, etc., took the contract myself and did it for \$12,000 and some odd dollars.<sup>27</sup>

A statement prepared by Marion Dickerman for her lawyer several years after the cottage had been constructed reveal that Toombs's figure on the original cost of the cottage was correct. At this time Marion indicated that all three women had contributed almost an equal amount that totalled \$15,459.50 to build the stone cottage.<sup>28</sup>

Construction was well underway by July 1925 when Franklin and Henry Clinton accepted the contract as general contractors. A foundation had been dug and the concrete was about to be poured. That same month Franklin established a time schedule: stone work to begin August 1 and completed about September 1; carpentry to begin September 1; roof to be on around October 1; finally, interior

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27. Memorandum, F.D.R. to M.L.S., February 23, 1942, F.D.R. Papers.

28. Dickerman to Hackett, July 8, 1947, with enclosure "Original Investment in the Val-Kill Cottage," Hackett Collection, F.D.R. Library. In her letter, Marion notes that these figures include, besides the construction, work on other smaller structures at Val-Kill, such as the bridge, landscaping, etc. Thus, in all fairness to Franklin, his figure may not have included these additional services.

finish, plumbing, heating, etc., were to be completed around November 1.<sup>29</sup> Franklin enjoyed his job as general contractor. At one point, he even bragged to his daughter Anna, "Your Pa is some little contractor!"<sup>30</sup>

As is frequently the case in construction projects, actual progress did not meet the expected timetable. Although New Years Day, 1926 was celebrated at the stone cottage with a dinner employing all sorts of make-shift furnishings, by March 1926, there were still a number of miscellaneous things that had to be attended to before the cottage could be considered livable. In a letter to Franklin in March 1926, Nancy noted that there were still a few things that had to be done before the cottage could be declared satisfactory. Yet, she felt constrained to declare that "The cottage is getting to look too grand for words and by the time you get back [from Florida], I hope it will be quite a livable place. You will be surprised at what a nice 'old ladies home' it has developed into. I guess we will not mind sitting before the fire with our white caps on and knitting."<sup>31</sup>

There were delays of one kind or another, some because materials did not arrive on time, others because there were last minute changes made in the types of materials to be used. Originally, according to the specifications, chestnut plank top flooring was to be installed in the living room and shop, but this was later changed to native oak, to be well seasoned and

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29. F.D.R. to Val-Kill Industries Founders, July 19, 1925, F.D.R. Papers.

30. Roosevelt, F.D.R.: His Personal Letters, II, p. 582.

31. Cook to F.D.R., March 15, 1926, F.D.R. Papers.

laid during the summer of 1926.<sup>32</sup> Exterior paint was not put on until the first half of 1926, certainly not earlier than March, for in a letter to Franklin, Nancy noted that the specifications called for three coats of paint on the outside and that Toombs was getting bids on this work.<sup>33</sup>

### Changes Over The Years

During the 21 years that Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman lived in the stone cottage there was one or two major changes to the structure affecting both its exterior and interior. These major changes were made in 1936-1937. Before this time and afterwards, only minor alterations were accomplished (Illustration No. 5).<sup>34</sup>

In a letter written by Nancy in late 1934, she mentions her desire to obtain plans from Toombs for an addition to the cottage.<sup>35</sup> About two weeks later, she wrote Toombs that if she and Marion did decide to place an addition on the cottage, they might make it a story and a half "as it will be cheaper," and besides, Marion preferred her bedroom to be upstairs. She indicated that she would

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32. Memorandum of Proposal Submitted to Miss Nancy Cook, Miss Marion Dickerman, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt for building house, Creek Road, Hyde Park, N.Y., July 20, 1925, and Cook to F.D.R., n.d., F.D.R. Papers.

33. Cook to F.D.R., March 15, 1926, F.D.R. Papers.

34. Accession No. NPX 53-227 (700), taken before 1935, F.D.R. Papers, F.D.R. Library. See also illustrations in Davis, Invincible Summer, following p. 65, for years before 1935. These early illustrations depict the stone cottage essentially as it was when first completed except for the landscape which does show extensive man-made growth.

35. Cook to Mrs. Toombs, December 17, 1934, Henry Toombs Collection.



Illustration No. 5

Stone Cottage, ca. 1930

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

send him a sketch of what they would like. The rough sketches prepared by Nancy would have added a one and a half story wing jutting out in a southward direction from the rear of the house. In essence, this would have filled in the area left vacant by the ell-shape of the house.<sup>36</sup> Toombs, who thought the idea workable, immediately drew up his plans based upon Nancy's sketch.<sup>37</sup>

For some unknown reason the whole idea was dropped, since the plan was never executed. In place of this plan, the existing one was executed. On the first level, a large room was added at the rear of what was once called the shop room. A corner fireplace was built in this room that also combined with a back-to-back fireplace on the outside of the house on the patio. Adjoining this large room was a new bathroom. The kitchen was also extended a few feet. On the second floor a bedroom was provided for Marion by building a large dormer window that faced the north. This dormer window consisted of four double casement windows that provided a handsome addition to the cottage.<sup>38</sup>

Although there are no known drawings of the wing that was added at the rear of the cottage, there can be no doubt that the existing wing was built at this time. In a memorandum prepared by Marion in 1947, she refers to the investment costs made by both she and Nancy on the stone cottage during 1936-37. Under the cost item of \$4,236.76, "new construction, room, bath, patio, [and] vestibule" were added. Also added to this was the cost of \$705 for

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36. Sketches of Nancy Cook, n.d., Henry Toombs Collection.

37. Toombs to Cook, n.d., Henry Toombs Collection.

38. Bay window for Miss Marion Dickerman, Plan, Side Elevation, Dormer Window, Elevation, by Henry J. Toombs, September 3, 1936, Henry Toombs Collection.

an "addition on room up-stairs." Comparing these cost figures with cost figures for other years up to 1947, there can be no question that the major addition to the stone cottage was done in 1936-1937.<sup>39</sup>

### Furnishings

Since Nancy was the skilled craftsman among the ladies, it was natural for the stone cottage to be largely furnished with products made by her and other skilled craftsmen of the Val-Kill Industries.<sup>40</sup> In the large collection of photographs among the Marion Dickerman Collection is an illustration depicting the living room of the stone cottage. According to Marion, the big table and desk were designed by Nancy.<sup>41</sup>

Of extremely great importance is a large collection of memorabilia formerly owned by Miss Dickerman but recently purchased by the park, which were once furnishings at the stone cottage. Many of the items were manufactured by the Val-Kill Industries. Because of their great significance, they are listed as follows according to the rooms in which they once stood:

#### LIVING ROOM:

55" walnut cupboard base hutch

Set of 6 rush seat ribbon back dining chairs; stamped "Val-Kill"; 2 arm chairs and 4 side chairs, all stamped "Frank."

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39. Dickerman to Hackett, July 8, 1947, with enclosure, Hackett Collection, F.D.R. Library.

40. Frieda Wyandt, "A Governor's Wife at Work," Your Home, September 1929, p. 69.

41. This illustration appears in Davis, Invincible Summer, following p. 65.

2 copies of Dutch tavern tables in diminutive size, 32" long, 12" wide, 15" high, both numbered "39B" with maker's mark "A.R.N."

Upholstered three cushion 8' long box style sofa; slip-covered; not Val-Kill, but said to have been used in Val-Kill living room.

Val-Kill mahogany dropleaf table, Duncan Phyfe style, all four legs swing, stamped "Val-Kill," but no maker's mark, top size 48" long, 11-1/2" wide, 22-1/2" deep leaf.

Two-drawer maple chest with Dutch onion feet (bun feet); copy of Dutch two drawer blanket chest; William and Mary drop drawer pulls; no maker's mark.

Two arched-back Sheraton style leg arm chairs (upholstered chairs), not Val-Kill furniture, but reputed to have been used at Val-Kill.

Pair of Val-Kill (round) oak stools, stretcher base, turned legs; 17" high, 13" diam. at top; one stamped "Val-Kill," numbered "29A," marked "Otto"; one numbered "29A," marked "Otto."

#### KITCHEN

Walnut gateleg dropleaf table; copy of Pilgrim table; bulbous turned stretcher base and bulbous leg turnings; stamped "Val-Kill"; no visible number or maker's mark; top size 39" x 15-1/2" with 19" leaf.

Walnut corner cupboard, small in size (71" high), cupboard upper and lower doors, each upper door having double raised panels, single raised lower door and panels, typical of ValKill.

15 old metal top apothecary jars.

#### BEDROOM OFF KITCHEN:

Queen Ann style elongated maple frame looking glass, approximately 34" long, 17-1/2" wide, fine shaped top, unmarked.

Three-drawer cut-out bracket base chest with three half drawers on top; maple; copy of 18th century Chippendale chest; drawer stamped "Val-Kill," stamped "Otto."

Pine corner cupboard with cupboard base and open top shelves; no visible marks; reputed to be used in entryways at Stone Cottage.

MARION DICKERMAN BEDROOM:

Two-drawer maple chest with Dutch onion feet (bun feet): copy of Dutch two-drawer blanket chest; William and Mary style drawer pulls.

Queen Anne style elongated maple frame looking glass; marked "Val-Kill"; stamped "Frank"; approx. 34" long, 17-1/2" wide, fine shaped top.

Cut-out bracket base maple Chippendale style chest, four elongated drawers, two half drawers, turned wooden drawer pulls, stamped "Otto"; no visible Val-Kill marks; copy of 18th century Chippendale chest.

Walnut kneehole desk, three extremely thin top drawers, three large drawers on each side, paneled ends, book shelf back, cutout bracket base, typical Val-Kill work, but no mark seen; top size 53" x 29".

Commercially-made slipcovered overstuffed chair; owner says it was used at stone cottage; matches living room sofa.

Walnut-upholstered gout stool, no visible maker's mark; owner said it was used at stone cottage.

Maple Canterbury style magazine rack, stamped "Val-Kill," copies from rack at Monticello; no visible maker's mark.

Mahogany three-shelf, stamped "Val-Kill," numbered "I32B," maker's mark "Arnold."

One rectangular Indian rug.

MIDDLE BEDROOM:

Maple Queen Anne looking glass with shaped pierced top pendant, numbered "I08A," stamped "Frank," 30-1/4" long, 16" wide.

Cut blue and white homespun spread.

Cut-out bracket base maple Chippendale style chest; four elongated drawers, two half drawers, turned wooden drawer pulls, numbered "73A," stamped "Otto," no visible Val-Kill mark.



### NORTHWEST BEDROOM:

Miniature two-drawer chest, shaped bootjack ends, turned wooden pulls, stamped "Val-Kill," no visible number or maker's mark, top size 28" x 13" x 17-1/2".

Dropleaf two-drawer base cabinet on casters, originally a higher serving table cut down and modified.

### PATIO FURNITURE:

Round wrought iron table with glass top and 4 matching chairs, table top size 54" diameter.

Two cushioned wrought iron arm chairs.

Three wrought iron canvas sling chairs.

Two wrought iron glass top stands.

Wrought iron glass top serving table.

Wrought upholstered iron chaise lounge.

### MISCELLANEOUS FURNITURE:

Two pine top dropleaf harvest tables, shoe foot, double gateleg supports both stamped "Val-Kill," 64" long, 13" wide, 13" leaf.

Breadboard top two-drawer pine table with wooden drawer pulls, turned legs, no visible marks, top 48" x 24", 22-1/2" high casters, reputed by owner to have been used at stone cottage.

Two shoe foot (one maple, one pine) benches, stamped "Val-Kill;" maple one stamped "Otto," maple one top size 41" long, 12" wide, 17" high; pine one top size 58" long, 12-1/2" wide, 17" high.

Pine drawer, base solid back wing end settle with cushion seat, marked "Val-Kill" on drawer, 75" long, back height 43-1/2.

Letter opener, carved wooden with brass plaque inserted in back stating wood was part of White House roof erected about 1817 and removed 1917; reputed by owner to have been made by Val-Kill Industries, no marks.

Carved wooden bowl, approximately 11-1/2" diameter, stamped "Nancy Cook" on base.

Delft plate, presentation to Val-Kill "Greetings from the School Children of Holland," July 1934.

Eggshell china plate, 7-3/4" diameter, map of North Carolina and Tennessee in center, commemorative of Tennessee Valley Authority trip taken by Eleanor Roosevelt and Marion Dickerman.

10 1/2" blue and white Adams plate, the Old Dutch Tower, Jamestown, Virginia.

Early 19th Century pine lift top blanket chest, panel front, cut out bracket base, relined with cedar lining, reputed to have been given to Nancy Cook by Eleanor Roosevelt and used at Stone Cottage.

Two original etchings, "White House, Washington, D.C." and "Christ Church, Alexandria, Virginia"; limited edition to 50 prints and signed by artist, Hirst Hilhollen; reputed by owner to have been given to Marion Dickerman by Eleanor Roosevelt.

Pair of wrought iron adjustable reproduction candle floor lamps electrified, one reputed to be photographed in book at stone cottage, neither have Val-Kill identification marks, but believed by appraiser to be Val-Kill Productions.

Wrought iron single torchier-style electric lamp with ornate base, no mark, believed by appraiser to be Val-Kill production.

VAL-KILL RELATED ITEMS IN DICKERMAN LIVING ROOM  
(1978):

Pair of black and white steel engravings, English, owned by James Fittler; British war ships at battle; reputed by owner to have been given to stone cottage by Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Colored steel engraving, harbor scene with clipper ship, European coastline; reputed by owner to have been given to stone cottage by Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Rectangular copper single burner heating griddle.

Copper single burner chafing dish warmer.

Rectangular copper chafing dish with single burner.

Hand-beaten 12' diameter metal measurer.

Brass apple butter bucket, late, dovetailed base.

Large brass wood bucket, wrought iron handle.

Pair of urn finial blade and irons.

Two pieces, with cut ends, red woven material, made at Val-Kill.

20 pieces of linen monogrammed "EMN" and "ER" including bureau scarves, tea placements, etc.; reputed by owner to have been used at stone cottage and embroidered by Eleanor Roosevelt.

Four costume evening clips, rhinestone and semi-turquoise; reputed by owner to have been Eleanor Roosevelt's.

Commercially made stripe coverlet, reputed by owner to have been on Marion Cook's bed at Stone Cottage.

18" American Indian woven basket, reputed by owner to have been used at celebration for King and Queen of England at "hot dog" picnic.

Todhunter School seal, school owners: Cook, Roosevelt and Dickerman.

12 sterling demitasse spoons, twisted handle with enamel decoration on handle and back of bowl, maker's mark obliterated, reputed by owner to have been purchased by Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt on honeymoon and became part of Val-Kill silver.

#### VAL-KILL PEWTER

Pewter boat-shaped hand beaten vessel with applied molded base ring, 9-1/2" long, 3-3/4" wide, stamped "Val-Kill."

Three polished pewter match cases, one stamped "Val-Kill," dated 1940 with donkey and initialed "AER," two with presidential seal, one with initials "EMN," one initialed "DHG 1935 AER."

4" high ringed tapered side pewter vessel (flower pot shape), stamped "Val-Kill, Hyde Park, N.Y."

Three Val-Kill pewter ashtrays, one with presidential seal and stamped "M.D. 1935 F.D.R.," one stamped "D G," one stamped "MD-NC."

Stamped "Val-Kill" polished pewter card case with President Franklin D. Roosevelt seal, monogrammed "N.C."

Two polished pewter note pad holders, both stamped "Val-Kill," one with applied full wing copper bird, the other with Roosevelt coin and practice monogram stamp and carvings on back.

Pewter handle cheese knife with stainless blade, reputed by owner to have been made at Val-Kill.

Two 8-1/2" polished pewter plates, stamped "Val-Kill."

One polished pewter plate, stamped "Val-Kill."

15" polished pewter trencher, stamped "Val-Kill."

Six pewter Georgian pattern style pewter candlesticks, stamped "Val-Kill."

Five individual pewter stamped "Val-Kill" electric table lamps.

Small pewter measure, stamped "Val-Kill."

#### MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:

Very large American flag, used at Val-Kill pond, given MD, NC and ER by FDR.

Blue homespun fabric made at Val-Kill for men's suits.

Two small tinted prints of the Hudson River by Bartlett.

CHAPTER III  
THE SHOP BUILDING, 1926-1936

Designer and Builder

Considerable planning on the shop building at Val-Kill was begun soon after the idea of an industry was born. In fact, planning went on while the stone cottage was already under construction. Since the original structure was an unpretentious building, both on the inside as well as the outside, built of simple and rather crude materials, there was not the same controversy that surrounded the stone cottage. Moreover, the evidence is quite clear that Franklin had perhaps no say in the matter of its design and construction whatsoever.

Since the structure was to serve as a shop, practicality rather than aesthetics may have weighed very heavily in determining what was to be built. And, since Nancy was the person most familiar with the furniture industry and the kinds of machinery and space needed, it is very likely that she had much to say on what the plans should contain. Marion has stated that the shop was largely Nancy's conception and predominantly hers in execution.<sup>1</sup>

At first, a small, one-room shop was conceived as part of the stone cottage, and this was actually executed. However, even while the stone cottage was still a plan, the women were giving serious thought to future expansion. When Franklin objected to a garage being built underneath the stone cottage, Nancy agreed with him, stating that "we have decided to forget the garage and not

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1. Kenneth S. Davis, Invincible Summer: An Intimate Portrait of the Roosevelts based on the Recollections of Marion Dickerman (New York: Atheneum, 1974), p. 80.

build one for a year . . . and when we do we will build a cheap fireproof garage away from the house and attach to it two room [sic] for a man & woman to live in and as our business in the shop [at the stone cottage] increases we will build a rough shop on to the man's house and garage. This will give a place for the men to work in to do all the rough work and we will use the house-shop for finishing. You see with this new idea we are making a way for growth in the future for our Business." This was said sometime in February 1925, long before any final plans on the stone cottage were drawn.<sup>2</sup> Franklin, to whom this statement was addressed, agreed with a separate garage and shop extension, and noted that "this was really what we originally thought of."<sup>3</sup>

Soon after this Nancy sent off another letter to Franklin, who was then in Florida enjoying his houseboat, to say that Toombs was changing his drawings on the stone cottage to reflect the latest thinking. In the same letter she also stated that

We even selected a spot for the garage & place for the man and woman to live in and the enlarged shop. Mr. [Elliott] Brown says we ought to build that very cheaply [sic]--a two story building with shop & garage underneath and rooms to live in upstairs--heated by stoves or stove. We shall probably have to start this addition before long for we are all getting excited over our future 'business.' Caroline [O'Day] wants to open the shop in New York in about a year so we will have to get a few good workmen and get some of our furniture made up.<sup>4</sup>

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2. Cook to F.D.R., ca. February 1925, F.D.R. Papers, F.D.R. Library.

3. F.D.R. to Cook & Dickerman, March 6, 1925, F.D.R. Papers.

4. Reference to opening a "shop" in New York is misleading; a showroom was probably intended. In any case, this letter reveals how well advanced was the thinking on the Industries at this time. See Cook to F.D.R., ca. March 1925, F.D.R. Papers.

Unlike the drawings of the stone cottage, Franklin had nothing, or at least very little, to do with either the design or construction of the shop building. Nancy, on the other hand, had much to do with its general plan, and Toombs was the architect who ultimately drew the designs and saw that the shop building was built to specifications. The general contractor was John Eylers, who had been the mason contractor for the stone cottage. On May 19, 1926, he entered into a contract with Eleanor. Henry Clinton did the excavation and Van Aken was the mason.<sup>5</sup>

Eleanor financed the construction of the shop, while all three women joined equally in the purchase of machinery and tools. Although the contract price was set at \$10,969, after additions and changes were made during construction, the actual cost amounted to \$11,470.<sup>6</sup> These figures differ somewhat from those provided by Marion in later years. Marion has indicated that during 1926-1927 it cost the three women \$10,200 to build the shop. \$8,200 represented Eleanor's share while the balance was paid by Marion and Nancy.<sup>7</sup>

Since Eleanor was underwriting the cost of the shop, she did feel compelled to make some special requests concerning construction from time to time. Thus, in November 1926, while the shop was rising, she instructed Toombs to have double screens installed on the dormitory windows of the shop.<sup>8</sup>

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5. Agreement between Eleanor Roosevelt and John Eylers, May 19, 1926, Henry Toombs Collection, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Ga.

6. Memorandum by Toombs, n.d., Henry Toombs Collection; Davis, Invincible Summer, p. 56.

7. Dickerman to Hackett, with enclosure, July 8, 1947, Hackett Collection, F.D.R. Library.

8. Roosevelt to Toombs, November 12, 1926, Henry Toombs Collection.

## Construction

Construction of the shop building got underway before work ended on the stone cottage. Cost estimates were obtained by Toombs in early 1926, and by May a contract was signed between Eleanor and the general contractor. By the end of the year the structure was largely completed, and new machinery was finding its way into the new shop. Otto Berge, an employee of the Industries, who came to Val-Kill in July 1927, has noted that the shop had already been in operation for about six months and although "it was well equipped . . . it was not sufficiently [equipped] to operate properly."<sup>9</sup>

After the original shop building was built, several other wings were added over the years resulting in an overall structure that was irregular and bizarre in shape. The Historic Structure Report (Historical Data) has made an attempt to provide this history. Most of the additions were made between 1928 and 1929, for it was during these years that the industry enjoyed its greatest growth. From the offset, while the original shop was under construction, the four organizers had anticipated the day when their little industry would grow from a factory manufacturing only furniture to one that would also include weaving, pewter, and other metal wares. In a news article written in 1930 it was announced that after "three years of quiet, steady growth in the little plant at Hyde Park, Val-Kill now will step out into the battle area of the competing world, offering its product--meticulous reproductions of authenticated early American furniture--to metropolitan and foreign buyers."<sup>10</sup>

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9. Interview with Mr. Otto Berge by Dr. Thomas F. Soapes, Oral Historian, F.D.R. Library, September 19, 1977.

10. "Mrs. Roosevelt to Market Hyde Park Shop Products in New York. Wide Expansion of Val-Kill Shop to be Made," Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier, April 27, 1930, a copy made available to the author by Charles W. Snell, Historian, N.P.S.



The same newspaper observed that in 1930 the employee rolls represented an increase of 1800 percent, and the factory area had increased as much as 500 percent over the original setup.<sup>11</sup> Allowing for some exaggeration on the part of this newspaper, there can be no mistake that the whole operation at Val-Kill had grown considerably since the time when the first and original shop building had been built.

### Furnishings

There is little historical data concerning the furnishings of the whole shop. We do have some idea of what the various rooms were used for (see Historic Structure Report), and from this perhaps we can draw some conclusions. There are also a number of early illustrations of the interior of the furniture shop, some of which have appeared in various publications, showing a number of craftsmen at work around their machinery and work benches. Thus, it would be fairly simple to recreate this scene as part of the shop building if so desired (Illustration Nos. 6, 7).<sup>12</sup>

There is an interesting letter written by Nancy in 1926 in which she tells Toombs that she hopes to see the machinery she ordered shipped within three weeks. She cautions Toombs that until the machinery is delivered and they know exactly where it will go, it would not be wise to install electrical wiring since the latter was to come up from the floor. She suggests that the wiring be postponed until the machines are in place. "I will hand Mr. Innes [sic] the details about motor's voltage, phase and cycles of each machine--so he will know the kind of wiring to be done . . . ." <sup>13</sup>

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11. Ibid.

12. Accession No. NPX 72-137 and Accession No. NPX 72-168:2, F.D.R. Library.

13. Cook to Toombs, ca. November 1926, Henry Toombs Collection.

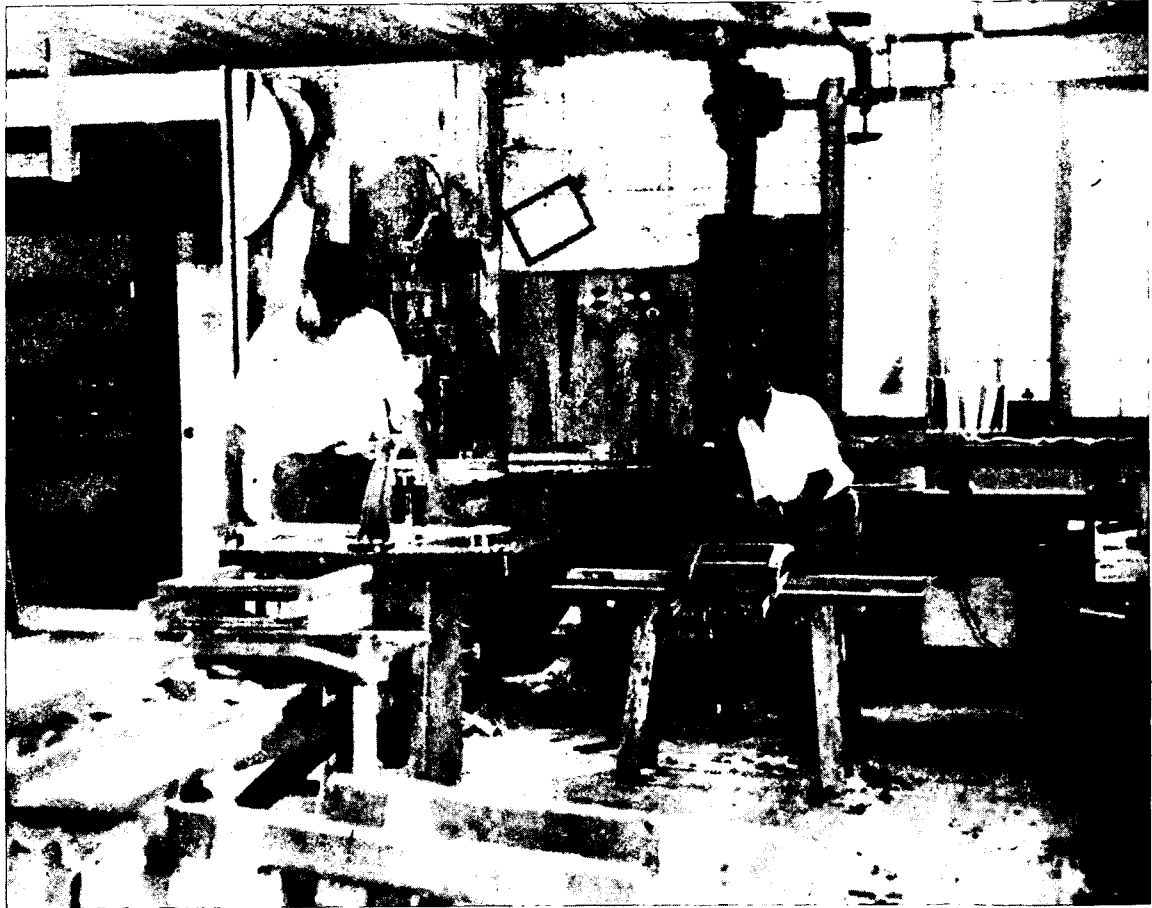


Illustration No. 6

Furniture Shop, ca. 1930

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library  
Courtesy of Frank Landolfa



Illustration No. 7

Furniture Shop, ca. 1930

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

## CHAPTER IV OTHER STRUCTURES, 1925-1962

In addition to the stone cottage and the shop building there were a number of other structures that were built from time to time, depending upon the needs of the ladies at Val-Kill. Landscaping will be treated in this chapter as encompassing a wide range of facilities that either added to the beauty of the area or provided some form of convenience.

### Swimming Pool

The swimming pool, which is the predecessor of the existing one, was the first structure to rise at Val-Kill, even before the stone cottage. Franklin, who had always been a swimming enthusiast before and after he contracted his crippling disease, wanted to build a swimming pool close to the Big House where he could easily reach it for his swimming exercises, but Eleanor talked him out of it. Why not have the pool located where everyone can enjoy it, she thought. The most logical place, she felt, was Val-Kill, where the site of the stone cottage had been decided upon, but was not yet built. Although the records are not clear, the exact site for the stone cottage must have been selected, for Franklin went immediately to work building his swimming pool. He wrote his friend Elliott Brown in his own inimitable way:

My missus and some of her female political friends want to build a shack on a stream in the back woods and want, instead of a beautiful marble bath, to have the stream dug out so as to form an oldfashioned swimmin' hole. Apparently the girls think that this will get them more closely back to nature, and I foresee that I shall have to put a substantial board fence around the swimmin' hole to keep interested neighbors from seeing how close they can get back to nature when they take the morning plunge. I

know your Missus would love it, too--aren't these wives of ours funny things?

Apparently the idea of an "old-fashioned swimmin' hole" was Eleanor's, while Franklin had planned for a more elaborate one. In any event, work on the pool got underway in August 1924, long before work on the stone cottage was started. John Roosevelt, youngest of the Roosevelt sons, has provided this writer with the location of that original pool. He has said that it was just west of the existing pool and adjacent to the creek in what is now a low-lying area.<sup>2</sup>

In a letter to Franklin in August 1924, William A. Plog, Sara Roosevelt's superintendent of her estate, revealed that he had cut and cleaned away all the brush where the swimming pool was to go. He also indicated that Mr. Clinton was to begin excavating and grading around the pool. The pool was to be 50 feet long by 25 feet wide. One end was to be 6 feet deep while the other end was to be 4 feet deep. The length of the pool was to run east and west.<sup>3</sup>

According to Marion Dickerman, Elliott Brown had suggested the use of water from the nearby brook by diverting it for the pool.<sup>4</sup> Elliott Roosevelt's description of the pool in later years

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1. Elliott Roosevelt and James Brough, An Untold Story: The Roosevelts of Hyde Park (New York: G.P. Putman's Sons, 1973), p. 203.

2. Interview with John A. Roosevelt by the author and Clyde Schroeder, Architect, D.S.C., October 5, 1978.

3. Plog to F.D.R., August 13, 1924, F.D.R. Papers, F.D.R. Library.

4. Marion Dickerman, "The Val-Kill Industries: Furniture-Pewter-Homespun," n.d., Marion Dickerman Papers, F.D.R. Library.

provides an element of confusion. Thus, he says,

The stream was dammed and the swamp cleared but it was an abortive effort. The little man-made lake constantly silted up and water lilies flourished. When we went to swim there<sup>5</sup> we had to cut out the vegetation before we took a dip.

The impression given is that the dammed stream was itself the swimming pool. Such was not the case for we know conclusively that the pool was a separate facility. In fact, John Roosevelt has indicated that the pool was made of concrete. There are two illustrations of the pool, taken in 1932, which appear in Davis's, Invincible Summer.<sup>6</sup> A photograph in the Marion Dickerman Collection and another in the Henry Toombs Collection show the pool enclosed by a concrete abutment in the area said to have been the site of the old pool (Illustration Nos. 8, 9).<sup>7</sup>

The winter of 1924 apparently had interfered with the construction of the pool for in July 1925 Franklin reported that the "swimming pool is completed except for a little work to tighten the bottom."<sup>8</sup> Three days later he wrote his half brother Rosy, "the swimming pool is just about finished and I hope to swim in it next Saturday."<sup>9</sup>

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5. Roosevelt, An Untold Story, p. 227.

6. Kenneth S. Davis, Invincible Summer: An Intimate Portrait of the Roosevelts based on the Recollections of Marion Dickerman (New York: Atheneum, 1976), following p. 65.

7. Photograph in the Marion Dickerman Collection; Photograph 13, Henry Toombs Collection.

8. F.D.R. to Val-Kill Industries Founders, July 19, 1925, F.D.R. Papers.

9. Elliott Roosevelt, F.D.R.: His Personal Letters, 1905-1928, 4 vols. (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1947-1950), II, pp. 583-84.



Illustration No. 8

Old swimming pool, ca. 1930  
(Henry Toombs, Marion Dickerman, Eleanor Roosevelt)

Henry J. Toombs Papers  
Courtesy of Georgia Department of Archives and History



Illustration No. 9

Old swimming pool, ca. 1928  
(stone cottage in background)

Marion Dickerman Collection



Although the pool was intended for everyone at Val-Kill, Franklin paid for its maintenance, which, judging from the records, had to be quite frequent. One bill for \$65 was for "pumping, cleaning out, painting and repairing swimming pool at Val-Kill."<sup>10</sup> The expense for maintaining the pool may have been equally shared later on between Franklin and the ladies. In fact, by this time both Franklin and the ladies were sharing expenses in the maintenance of not only the pool but the bridge, dam, and other facilities around Val-Kill.<sup>11</sup>

In 1935, prompted by the President's doctor's warnings that the swimming pool with its water from the creek might be harmful to the President's health, a new swimming pool was built. This is the pool that exists today, almost directly south of the stone cottage.<sup>12</sup> The pool was designed by M.K. Hasbrouck, a leading swimming pool engineer who had also designed the pool at the White House.<sup>13</sup> A description of the new pool and its maintenance problems in later years are discussed in the Historic Structure Report of Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site.

#### Landscape

Even before the stone cottage had been completed efforts were underway to make the area habitable. The swimming pool was being

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10. Davis, Invincible Summer, p. 59; Bill for F.D.R. by Ackert, August 1, 1932, F.D.R. Papers.

11. [LeHand] to Cook, July 28, 1933, with bill enclosed, F.D.R. Papers.

12. Dickerman, "Val-Kill Industries: Furniture-Pewter-Homespun," Marion Dickerman Papers; Interview with John A. Roosevelt.

13. "New Pool for President at East Park," Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier, May 26, 1935, a copy of which was made available to the author by Charles W. Snell, N.P.S.

constructed, and the area surrounding it was being cleared of wild underbrush. A large gang of workers were at work grading and gravelling roads that ran through woods. By July 19, 1925, Franklin could report that the "new road south of the pool is laid out, graded and gravelled," and that "grass seed will go on in a few days."<sup>14</sup>

By spring and summer of 1926 the grounds around the cottage had been landscaped with Nancy doing most of the planning and a good part of the labor itself. A flower garden and a vegetable garden had been planted and a beautifully grassed and tree-shaded picnic area had been developed.<sup>15</sup> A statement prepared by Marion in later years revealed that in 1939 a sprinkler system had been installed in the lawn and gardens at a cost of 1,500.<sup>16</sup> Landscape architects have confirmed that the large rectangular area behind the old playhouse was once a garden. In fact, the remains of a sprinkler system still exist. This is confirmed by an early illustration of that garden showing numerous plants. The garden is surrounded by a tall hedge at the rear of which is a large shed (Illustration No. 10).<sup>17</sup> This shed still exists today albeit in a dilapidated condition.

The Marion Dickerman Collection of photographs and movie films, recently acquired by the park, contains several excellent views of the landscape around the stone cottage, which clearly

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14. Plog to F.D.R., August 13, 1926; F.D.R. to Val-Kill Industries Founders, July 19, 1925, F.D.R. Papers.

15. Davis, Invincible Summer, p. 56.

16. Dickerman to Hackett, July 8, 1967, with enclosure, Hackett Collection, F.D.R. Library.

17. Accession No. NPX 59-181a, "ER's garden at Val-Kill," F.D.R. Library.



Illustration No. 10

Flower garden with shed, ca. 1935

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

demonstrate how adept Nancy was in creating designs. Some of these views have been reproduced in Davis's Invincible Summer and could be used very effectively if the area was to be restored.

The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library is also in possession of several illustrations depicting the landscape at Val-Kill before and after 1935. One of these illustrations views the cottage from the north and depicts a small retaining wall about two feet high with three steps leading up to a terrace adjoining the stone cottage. This view was taken before 1935 because the larger dormer on the north side of the cottage is missing (Illustration No. 5).<sup>18</sup>

Another illustration views the terrace from the front or west side of the cottage (Illustration No. 11).<sup>19</sup> Finally, there is an illustration that views the cottage from the north and is a much later view of the landscape because it shows the large dormer on the north side of the cottage. The retaining wall and terrace are still visible, however (Illustration No. 12).<sup>20</sup>

In later years, after Eleanor converted the old shop building to her cottage, she had two gardens. According to Joseph Lash, one was a flower, or rose garden, and the other was a vegetable garden. The vegetable garden, the remains of which still exist, was put up under John Roosevelt's direction for his mother in 1960 (Illustration No. 13).<sup>21</sup>

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18. Accession No. NPX 53227 (700), F.D.R. Library.

19. Accession No. NPX 61-32(9), F.D.R. Library.

20. Accession No. 61-32(11), F.D.R. Library.

21. Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor Roosevelt: A Friend's Memoir (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 143; Interview with John A. Roosevelt; Illustration, Accession No. NPX 65590(267), 1962, courtesy of George I. Browne, F.D.R. Library.



Illustration No. 11

Landscaping around stone cottage, ca. 1938

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library



Illustration No. 12

Landscaping around stone cottage, ca. 1938

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library



Illustration No. 13

Vegetable garden with Eleanor Roosevelt's  
cottage on the left, ca. 1962

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library  
Courtesy of George I. Browne

Many changes took place in the landscape of Val-Kill over the years. The early years--1926-1937--probably saw Nancy's skillful hand in much of what was designed and grown. After 1937, when Eleanor made Val-Kill her permanent residence, some changes undoubtedly occurred to suit her own convenience. The small vegetable garden built by her son was one of these changes.

#### Stable-Garage

Talk of constructing a stable for Eleanor began in late 1934. In a letter to Toombs, Eric Gugler, architect and one-time partner of Toombs who had been redoing some of the White House for President Roosevelt, mentioned the construction of a stable at Val-Kill desired by Eleanor.<sup>22</sup> Eleanor, who was doing some horseback riding in Washington, now wanted her stables nearby at Val-Kill. In a letter to Mrs. Toombs, Nancy told her to remind her husband that "Eleanor wants to start her stables in March [1935]."<sup>23</sup> Toombs did not hesitate very long to design a structure that would meet his client's needs. It also showed that he was quite knowledgeable about such specialized structures. In January 1935 he submitted his sketches of the stable to Eleanor. Apparently, acceding to some of her wishes, he included an apartment, four stalls, corridor, feed storage room, tack room, entrance, and stairs. The structure was to be strictly a stable. The stalls were to be 10 feet by 12 feet, which made them a little larger than the minimum standard of 10 feet by 10 feet.<sup>24</sup>

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22. Gugler to Toombs, December 7, 1934, Henry Toombs Collection.

23. Cook to Toombs, December 17, 1934, Henry Toombs Collection.

24. "Stable Talk" by Toombs, January 2, 1935; Toombs to Roosevelt, January 7, 1935; Sketch Specifications for Stable For Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt to be located near the Val Kill Shop, n.d.; and Memorandum Specification for Stable for Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Hyde Park, N.Y., n.d., Henry Toombs Collection.



Eleanor seemed pleased with the sketches and Toombs proceeded to request construction bids. The smallest bid set the cost at \$11,675. At this Eleanor balked. "My dear Henry," she wrote to him, "If the stable is to cost so much, I think I really will have to wait awhile to build it . . . . I will just hold it and wait until I have a little more money."<sup>25</sup>

More than two years passed before a stable was finally built, and when completed, it did not resemble the earlier plans drawn by Toombs. In fact, Toombs was not the architect of the new structure. H.A. Osthagen, who did all the extensive alterations to the shop building at this time for Eleanor, designed the structure and supervised its construction. Osthagen was an able construction engineer who was a friend of Malvina (Tommy) Thompson, Eleanor's personal secretary for many years.

The main difference between the 1935 proposed design and the existing structure was the addition of a garage. The few documents relating to the existing stable-garage reveal that the construction of a garage as part of the stable may have been a later consideration--while construction was underway. Two letters, for example, written in July 1937--one by the builder, the other by Osthagen--refer to an "addition to the stables." The builder's letter states, "Your letter received in regards to the addition to stables. I have talked with Mr. Teal and we decided to build it on the back wall as per sketch enclosed. Will you kindly let me know if the size and location is O.K.?" He concludes his letter as

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25. Roosevelt to Toombs, February 7, 1935; Break-Down of Estimate of Adams-Faber Company for Construction of Stable for Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt at Hyde Park, New York, January 29, 1935; Toombs to Roosevelt, February 4, 1935, Henry Toombs Collection.

follows: "We have the main walls up and the carpenter is shingling now."<sup>26</sup>

Osthagen answered this letter, saying, "I have your letter of July 27th with reference to the addition to the stables which you can go ahead with according to the sketch you have made and which I am returning herewith."<sup>27</sup>

From these two letters there can be no mistake that while a structure was rising, namely the stable, an addition to the stable was soon to rise even though the stable was not entirely finished. The only conclusion that one can draw from this is that the addition was to be the garage. A garage is never mentioned in the correspondance and in other records, but since a garage does appear in the existing structure, we must conclude that the addition was the garage. To some extent, this conclusion is supported by a letter from Nancy to Franklin, only one week after Osthagen agreed to the builder's sketch for the addition. In that letter she says, "Marion and I are taking over the running of the Cottage. Eleanor is doing the old shop building, new garage stable etc."<sup>28</sup> Thus for the first time we learn about a combined stable and garage.

In her new stable Eleanor kept her favorite horse Dot where from time to time she would stop to feed her sugar (Illustration Nos. 14, 15).<sup>29</sup>

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26. Mathews to Osthagen, July 27, 1937, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

27. Osthagen to Mathews, July 29, 1937, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

28. Cook to F.D.R., August 6, 1937, President's Secretary's file, F.D.R. Library.

29. Lash, Eleanor Roosevelt: A Friend's Memoir, pp. 37, 43; photographs of stable-garage taken by Les Hyde, October 1976, Park files.



Illustration No. 14

Garage-Stable  
viewed from stable side, 1976

Photograph by Les Hyde  
Park files



Illustration No. 15

Garage-Stable  
viewed from garage side, 1976

Photography by Les Hyde  
Park files

When John Roosevelt moved to Val-Kill in 1951, he kept several horses in the stable both for his and his children's use.<sup>30</sup>

### Playhouse

As it exists today, the playhouse is a long one-story frame building located close to the old shop building. According to one observer, who had worked at Val-Kill, this structure was built in 1928 to serve as a three-car garage and toolshed. In 1936 it was enlarged and converted to serve as a forge where pewter and other metal products were manufactured.<sup>31</sup> Pewter-making was already an industry at Val-Kill by 1930, and this operation was carried on in the shop building until it was transferred to the playhouse in 1936. An early promotional brochure, commenting on the pewter industry at Val-Kill, noted that iron, pewter, and other metals were being crafted in a building at the rear of the old shop.<sup>32</sup> The only sizable structure at the rear of the shop building had to be the playhouse.

The structure has undergone some changes since it was first built with additions made to it and alterations on the inside. In 1941, for the first time, we hear of a reference to a "play room." A local news article observed that the Democratic candidates for town offices were to speak at a meeting of the Women's Democratic Club of Hyde Park to be held in the "new play room" at Val-Kill.<sup>33</sup>

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30. Interview with Archibald (Tubby) Curnan by Leon Froats, Park Technician, N.P.S., April 1, 1977; interview with John A. Roosevelt.

31. The author is grateful to Emily L. Wright for this information.

32. Brochure, titled "Val-Kill Forge," Marion Dickerman Collection, in Park Files.

33. Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier, October 22, 1941.

Thus, we can conclude that a major change to this structure occurred just prior to the publication of this news article.

The playhouse, as it has become known, was used by the Roosevelt clan for square dancing and other social events from time to time. Eleanor, herself, enjoyed square dancing. In later years the playhouse was used as an office by Elliott Roosevelt, presumably, when he lived at the Top Cottage, and by employees as a residence. In 1962, John Roosevelt had the patio enclosed, adding a room to the structure. He had the whole structure converted to an apartment which was then leased to tenants (Illustration No. 16).<sup>34</sup>

#### Miscellaneous Structures

There are several structures of one type or another that were built from time to time in order to satisfy the needs of those who lived at Val-Kill. Some of these no longer exist. Unfortunately, in some cases too little is known about them. Two of these structures are the bridge and the dam underneath it. An old bridge, where the existing one now is, was at Val-Kill long before the stone cottage was built. Franklin had been using it to haul timber. The area had also been used by the three women for their picnics, and a bridge was important for them to get to their destination. Two old illustrations, one taken just prior to the time the stone cottage was built and a second one taken just after the structure was put up, show a flat wooden bridge (Illustration Nos. 17, 18).<sup>35</sup>

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34. Interview with John A. Roosevelt; photograph of playhouse taken by Les Hyde, October 1976, Park files.

36. Photograph No. 4, showing bridge before stone cottage was built and a second photograph, No. 16, showing the same bridge after the cottage was up. Henry Toombs Collection.



Illustration No. 16

Playhouse (formerly the forge), 1976

Photography by Les Hyde  
Park files



Illustration No. 17

Flat Bridge, ca. 1925  
(before stone cottage was built)

Henry J. Toombs Papers  
Courtesy of Georgia Department of Archives and History





Illustration No. 18

Flat bridge after some cottage  
was built, ca. 1925

Henry J. Toombs Papers  
Courtesy of Georgia Department of Archives and History

There is evidence that in 1933 the dam and the bridge were repaired, and the following year a new bridge and dam were constructed. The new bridge had new planks and railing. This work cost about \$1,600.<sup>37</sup>

Repairs to the dam and bridge were apparently made frequently for in 1938 Mr. Ackert was again seen making repairs. Repairs were probably extensive, since Ackert noted that they would be expensive. In a letter to Eleanor that same year Franklin said, "Many Happy Returns! This is toward the new 'Lake Eleanor' at Val-Kill, I will take you cruising on it."<sup>38</sup> Nor did the repairs end here. John Roosevelt, who lived at Val-Kill as early as 1951, has said that during the time he lived there he had new planks put on the bridge at least three times. The existing boards were probably put in by later owners since they are tarred, and John used to oil them instead.<sup>39</sup>

A small structure, no longer extant was the dock located close to the bridge. Unfortunately, this writer has not seen any references to this structure in any of the collections, but there are a number of illustrations which clearly depict it (Illustration No. 19). It is not known when this dock was removed, but probably in recent years.

A handsome structure in this group of miscellaneous structures is the outdoor fireplace that was constructed in 1933 within the old picnic

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37. Bill for F.D.R., July 1, 1933, enclosure, [?] to Cook, July 28, 1933, F.D.R. Papers; statement by Nancy Cook, ca. 1935, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection; Dickerman to Hackett, July 8, 1947, with enclosure, Hackett Collection.

38. Ackert to [Osthagen], March 13, 1938, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection; F.D.R. to Eleanor, October 11, 1938, F.D.R. Papers.

39. Interview with John A. Roosevelt.



Illustration No. 19

Dock, ca. 1952  
(Mrs. Roosevelt and grandchildren)

Photo by Dr. David Gurevitsch  
Park Files

area. Nancy, as in many other things, also spearheaded this construction. Although she prepared simple sketches of what she wanted as a fireplace, because he was so busy at Warm Springs, Toombs did not make the drawings until several months had elapsed.<sup>40</sup>

The fireplace was large and made of fieldstone. There are several illustrations of the fireplace taken over the years, usually during picnics and outdoor events (Illustration No. 20).<sup>41</sup> Davis's Invincible Summer contains a photograph of Eleanor standing in front of the fireplace at a picnic in 1934.<sup>42</sup> What is significant about this photograph is that the fireplace does not have the metal relief figure that it did in later years. After 1934, and before 1953, when the above photographs were taken, a metal relief figure, about three feet high, of a boy eating a frankfurter was hung on the face of the fireplace. One writer has said that it was Earl Miller who gave this metal relief to Eleanor.<sup>43</sup> Another writer, quoting a former employee of Eleanor's, has made the following observation: "Over the cold fireplace was a sculpture of a boy in blue jeans eating an ear of corn. The eyes seemed strange. Charles [Curran] explained that a blind man had done the sculpture for Mrs. Roosevelt."<sup>44</sup> Thus, there are two versions of how the sculpture came to be there.

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40. Cook to Toombs, April 27, [1933]; Toombs to Cook, May 26, 1933; Toombs to Cook, June 5, 1933, Henry Toombs Collection.

41. Accession No. PX 62-127a, F.D.R. Library.

42. Davis, Invincible Summer, following p. 65.

43. This same writer called the figure a pickaninny eating a water-melon and thought it was "a strange gift to one famous for her commitment to full racial equality." See Davis, Invincible Summer, p. 89.

44. Stella K. Hershan, A Woman of Quality (New York: Crown Publishers, 1970), p. 213.



Illustration No. 20

Outdoor fireplace, ca. 1962

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

The tennis court that now exists was installed in 1950, and it appears that Earl Miller had much to do with the general supervision of its construction. In a letter to Eleanor in 1950 he reveals that he had "checked into tennis courts, of the black top type and clay" and would soon have estimates of cost.<sup>45</sup> Within three weeks Earl accepted a proposal from a contractor to construct a tennis court for the sum of \$764.<sup>46</sup> The tennis court still exists today in relatively good condition.

There is some evidence that while the tennis court was being built a badminton court was also constructed. There is such a plan, possibly drawn by Earl Miller himself.<sup>47</sup> John Roosevelt has pinpointed the site of this court as being where Eleanor's vegetable garden now is. Apparently, the badminton court was removed when John had the garden put in for his mother in 1960.<sup>48</sup>

Val-Kill contained a number of shed-type structures some of which still exist today. Many of them were used to store garden tools and heavy landscaping equipment. There is an excellent illustration of a shed lying on one side of the large flower garden behind the playhouse. Although the garden is no longer there, the dilapidated shed is. It is obvious that this illustration was taken in earlier years since the condition of the shed as well as the garden is excellent. If it is decided to restore the garden, the shed should also be restored (Illustration No. 10).<sup>49</sup>

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45. Miller to Eleanor, July 1, 1950, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

46. Gleason to Miller, July 20, 1950, with enclosures, plan, and painted markings, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

47. Drawing, Badminton Court (Doubles') and memo to Mr. Linaka from Miller, n.d., Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

48. Interview with John A. Roosevelt.

49. Accession No. NPX 59-181a, F.D.R. Library.

Two small structures that no longer exist are the bath houses adjoining the pool. The first bath house was built in 1930 and cost the three ladies \$142.98. The second bath house was built in 1935 at a cost of \$168.<sup>50</sup> It is not known what these two structures looked like nor when they were torn down.

A fine structure that still exists at Val-Kill, near the picnic area, is the so-called Doll House. This small but aesthetically-pleasing structure was built in 1935 not far from the Roosevelt mansion. It was built at the request of Mrs. James Roosevelt for two of her great grandchildren, offsprings of Anna Roosevelt Dall. When first built it was called the "Swan House." In 1945 this structure was moved to Val-Kill to be used by the evergrowing number of Eleanor's grandchildren (Illustration No. 21).<sup>51</sup>

Although some changes have been made to the interior of this structure, it is in fair condition.

A structure that was demolished several years ago was the greenhouse, which was located just to the rear of the playhouse at the north end of the "big garden" (Illustration No. 22). One section was the "hot house," the other was probably the "cool house," an area that was shaded for certain types of plants requiring little or no sun. The exact date this structure was razed is not known, but a photograph taken by Dr. David Gurevitsch, Eleanor's physician, in 1958 shows a section of the greenhouse in

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50. Dickerman to Hackett, July 8, 1947, with enclosure, Hackett Collection.

51. "Miniature Summer White House For Dall Children at Hyde Park," Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier, September 1, 1935, copy made available by the Park; Master Plan, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1962, a N.P.S. study.



Illustration No. 21

Doll House, 1976

Photograph by Les Hyde  
Park files





Illustration No. 22

Greenhouse, ca. 1940

Marion Dickerman Collection  
Park files

the distance. Thus, the greenhouse must have been demolished after 1958, probably after Eleanor died.<sup>52</sup>

The largest and latest structure in this miscellaneous category was a house built by Charles Curnan. Charles was a longtime employee of the Roosevelt estate, and in later years had become the caretaker of Val-Kill. The frame two-story house, which was built in 1964, is located away from the cluster of structures built by the three ladies. The Curnan house was sold to the purchasers of Val-Kill in 1970.<sup>53</sup>

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52. Photograph appears in Eleanor Roosevelt, On My Own (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers), ff. p. 82, and a copy can be found in the Historic Structure Report, Historical Data Section.

53. Interview with Archie Curnan by Leon Froats, Park Technician, N.P.S., April 1, 1977.

CHAPTER V  
LIFE AT VAL-KILL, 1926-1937

Eleanor Roosevelt and Val-Kill

The stone cottage was not yet completed on New Years Day, 1926. Yet, Eleanor and her two friends and some members of her family, including Sara Roosevelt, had their first meal at the cottage. The furniture was improvised, and they sat on nail kegs and used boards that rested on saw horses for a table. Later everyone joined in playing games.<sup>1</sup> From this day forward until her death in 1962 Val-Kill assumed a special meaning in the heart of Eleanor Roosevelt.

Although during the years from 1926 until her husband's death in 1945 her duties, first as a governor's wife and later as the First Lady, did not permit her the pleasure of using Val-Kill as her permanent residence, Val-Kill was the place she sought as a refuge when life at the Big House, or at the Albany mansion, or at the White House became too oppressive. There on the second floor of the stone cottage was her bedroom where embroidered on the bed sheets and pillowcases were the initials of the three close friends "EMN."

At Val-Kill Eleanor sought the privacy and intimacy of her family and her dear friends. Although her public life during these years often separated her from her family, she tried hard to bring them together on every possible occasion at Val-Kill. Thus, she was victorious in convincing Franklin to build his swimming pool at Val-Kill rather than at the Big House, knowing that by doing so it

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1. Marion Dickerman, "The Val-Kill Industries: Furniture-Pewter-Homespun," n.d., Marion Dickerman Papers, F.D.R. Library.

would be one way of compelling the family to meet there. Her efforts were not always successful, because her three oldest children were by then old enough to follow their own interests. Nevertheless, she was successful to the extent that she was able to keep her two youngest sons--Franklin Jr. and John--under her close supervision at Val-Kill.

Here for the first time it gave her the opportunity to fulfill an ambition she so desperately needed. Val-Kill became a vital center in Eleanor's world, a place where she lived whenever and as long as she could. She was happy there as nowhere else. Soon after the stone cottage became liveable, she wrote her husband "The peace of it is divine."<sup>2</sup> In another one of her letters to Marion she describes a day at Val-Kill:

Here we are in Hyde Park & I miss you very much at the cottage for as I work over there with Malvina [Thompson] I go every morning & afternoon and on hot days we take from 12-1 & swim & again when Franklin comes over in the afternoon. . . . Of course there is a good deal of coming & going & everyone who comes wants to see the Shop. I only hope it brings us some orders.<sup>3</sup>

Much of the success enjoyed during those early years at Val-Kill was due to the very close relationship that existed between Eleanor and her two friends. Each had something to give to the other. There is little doubt that Eleanor gained enormously from this close association. When she was away from Val-Kill, she missed her companions in a way that few friendships did. "I miss you so much," she once wrote to Nan on one of her frequent

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2. Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of Their Relationship, based on Eleanor Roosevelt's Private Papers (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1971), p. 305.

3. Roosevelt to Dickerman, n.d., Marion Dickerman Collection, Park files.

travels.<sup>4</sup> In a letter to Marion she once wrote, "I wish you & Nan were here. I feel I'd like to go off with you and forget the rest of the world existed. . . . Marion dearest I love & miss you & no amount of excitement could make me miss you less."<sup>5</sup> Her detached relations with her husband and her mother-in-law drew her closer to her two friends. To them she unburdened herself in a way that few friends do. She frequently made known to them her most private feelings, and she often used them as a bridge to her husband.<sup>6</sup>

Marion's account of those early years at Val-Kill is filled with emotions. Eleanor's account of those days and her relationship with Marion and Nancy are far less emotional. Perhaps, Eleanor's more universal interests in later years had made her forget the significance of those earlier years. Still, there can be no doubt that this relationship had meant a great deal to her. Similarly, both Nancy and Marion had much to gain from their friendship. After all, it was because of Eleanor that they were drawn into a dynamic family circle and a fascinating group of friends. It was because of Eleanor that they became closely involved with Franklin's politics and his New Deal programs. He even included them in his famous social club, the "Cuff Links." There was a psychological need for the close relationship that existed between the three women. Meanwhile, if Franklin did not benefit personally from this relationship as his wife had, he did benefit politically. Through the Women's Division of the New York Democratic Committee, both

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4. Roosevelt to Cook, n.d., Marion Dickerman Collection, Park files.

5. Roosevelt to Dickerman, August 24, 1925, Marion Dickerman Collection, Park files.

6. Kenneth L. Davis, Invincible Summer: An Intimate Portrait of the Roosevelt's based on the recollections of Marion Dickerman (New York: Atheneum, 1974), p. 65.

Nancy and Marion campaigned for him both in his gubernatorial and presidential races.

In practice the relationship between the three women began rather smoothly with little noticeable friction. Nancy handled most of the money matters and she paid the bills. Eleanor gave her her checks as part of her share in maintaining the cottage. A manuscript in the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library reveals how Nancy prepared her 1937 joint budget based upon expenditures of the previous year. Among expenses incurred in 1936 were such items as wages for the caretaker and his wife and other helpers, servicing and gasoline for their Ford car, snow removal, cutting grass, sharpening lawn mowers, painting outdoor furniture, road scraping and gravel, fertilizer and peat moss for lawn and gardens, garden tools and snow shovels, spraying trees and gardens, and cans for canning--a sum total of \$2,336.40.<sup>7</sup>

#### Val-Kill Industries

Its use as a residence was one purpose for the establishment of Val-Kill. The other reason was economic and social. Thus, Val-Kill Industries was founded. When the whole idea of a Val-Kill Industries originated, the women had ambitious plans that included the introduction of several crafts. However, because Nancy's expertise centered largely around furniture-making, it was natural that the initial craft to find its way into the Industries would be furniture. Similarly, while the Industries first stressed the employment of male youths from rural areas, eventually some emphasis would be directed towards women in rural areas. Finally,

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7. Roosevelt to Hackett, November 17, 1944; Budget 1937, Joint Val-Kill Account (Eleanor, Marion, Nancy), Eleanor Roosevelt Collection, F.D.R. Library.

while the Industries would at first have to concentrate on the production of goods, it would ultimately have to look towards the training of young men and women in the home crafts. The idea that women should play a major role in these home crafts was always uppermost in Eleanor's mind.<sup>8</sup>

The idea of an industry that was based upon hand craftsmanship with a minimum use of machinery was not entirely new. It had been attempted in isolated areas of the country. Thanks to Val-Kill, however, for the first time it was receiving national and widespread attention. In applauding the efforts of Val-Kill Industries, one economist had this to say:

I have devoted a great many years to the study of the history of textiles in different museums; and have long held the belief that the modern machine industry both in England and America, needs the stimulation and creative impulse of hand craftsmanship in fabrics;--and, of course, I recognize that the same must be true in all industry. The machine age is so recent, and yet has been so devastating in its effects, that we have lost, in many instances, the dignity of work, and that charm and directness of purpose which can only result from inspired craftsmanship.

Eleanor, of course, welcomed this support, but since the idea was still too young and Val-Kill efforts were still very limited, the support she could give to other similar efforts around the country had to necessarily be limited. Thus, in answer to an appeal for support from a small college in North Carolina devoted to the teaching of home crafts, Eleanor wrote, "I have only started in my own county and I have a struggling time to get things going and

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8. "Mrs. Roosevelt Plans to Teach Home Crafts," New York Times, April 8, 1930.

9. Crawford to E. Roosevelt, April 9, 1930, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

so I fear that your idea of my helping any one else is out of the question."<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, while Eleanor and her colleagues were very much aware of the limiting factors of their young industry, they were hopeful that if their undertaking would become a success, the idea would spread nationally.

### Furniture

The first craft to be introduced at ValKill was furniture. Although financial support was shared by the four organizers, it is not clear whether this was shared equally. Nancy, the expert of furniture-making and the moving force behind the industry, was president and treasurer of the organization. She knew what materials had to be purchased, and she paid the employees. In reality, she managed the day-to-day affairs. Besides purchasing materials, she trained employees, inspected the finished product, did much of the finishing herself, and in general managed each stage of production.

The other three women, including Eleanor, were designated vice-presidents and they performed all sorts of functions. Eleanor, never skilled with her hands, was instrumental in publicizing the Industries, marketing the products, and in general handled the promotional end of the operations. The fact that she was a Roosevelt contributed much to her success in this work. She was also frequently instrumental in recruiting workers and young people willing to be trained.

Marion and Caroline helped in whatever capacity they could, but other than lending financial and moral support this help was minimal. Caroline, a Congresswoman and political leader from New

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10. Tufts to E. Roosevelt, April 12, 1930; E. Roosevelt to Tufts April 17, 1930, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.



York State, and Marion, an educator and later principal of Todhunter School, were too busy with their own work to provide much assistance to the Val-Kill enterprise.

During the early years of the Industries when production and marketing were doing well, all profits were put back into the business in the form of equipment and expansion. However, in later years, especially when the Great Depression had set in and the Industries had slowed down considerably, Eleanor found herself giving more and more financial aid to the Industries from earnings in her syndicated news column "My Day" in order to carry on with the Val-Kill experiment.<sup>11</sup>

The construction of the original shop and the later additions made to it up through 1928 were largely financed by Eleanor, but all the women purchased the machinery. An interesting document prepared by Marion in later years reveals that while this was true, construction and alterations made after 1928 were largely accomplished through financing by Nancy and Marion, albeit some of this came from the Industries' profits. So that by the end of 1936, Marion could say that all construction work pertaining to Val-Kill Industries was equally divided between Eleanor on the one hand and Marion and Nancy on the other.<sup>12</sup> Eleanor could always boast with pride, at least in the early years of the Industries, that the enterprise never borrowed any money.<sup>13</sup>

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11. Eleanor Roosevelt, This I Remember (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 13.

12. Dickerman to Hackett, July 8, 1947, with enclosures, Hackett Collection, F.D.R. Library.

13. "Mrs. Roosevelt Tells of Women-Run Factory," New York Times, November 16, 1930.

Nancy's managerial role in the Industries cannot be minimized. She was the "moving force" in all its undertakings.<sup>14</sup> Eleanor never minimized this role. From the time when the subject of an industry was first broached, Eleanor was quick to grasp the significance of Nancy's plans for it. Moreover, she realized that the type of industry that stressed a need for home crafts demanded a certain expertise in management which could oversee a product from start to finish. Only Nancy among the four women could fill this bill. Thus, in giving Nancy the credit she deserved, Eleanor said,

The success of the Val Kill Shop is due entirely to its manager, Miss Nancy Cook. Miss Cook is able to do what she asks the men under her to do. They know that she knows when corners are properly joined, when stain is applied with fine regard for the grain of the wood, when polishing has produced the proper satin texture. Without this close attention to the details of a business, any business or any enterprise for that matter there will not be success.<sup>15</sup>

At first the furniture industry had anticipated facilities in a room at the rear of the stone cottage. On Toombs' drawings this room is designated "shop." This was obviously a temporary measure until the shop building would be completed sometime later. There is evidence that some aspect of furniture-making went on in this room. An article published in 1929 notes that the stone cottage was used as a "demonstration shop" for the furniture.<sup>16</sup>

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14. Mrs. Danial O'Day, "Bringing Back Artistic Furniture of the 17th Century," Motordom, March 1929, p. 9. This article was largely reprinted in "The Art of Creating Heirlooms," Alumni News, Syracuse University, September 1930.

15. "Mrs. Roosevelt Tells of Women-Run Factory," New York Times, November 16, 1930.

16. Davis, Invincible Summer, p. 56; Dickerman, The Val Kill Industries: Furniture-Pewter-Homespun; Frieda Wyandt, "A Governor's Wife at Work," Your Home, September 1929.

The sources are not clear whether the workers to be hired at the furniture shop were to consist largely of master craftsmen, trainees, or both. We do know that the first employee hired was a master craftsman. One of the purposes of the Industries was to provide offseason employment or employment for youth in rural areas of Hyde Park. The object was to give local youths an opportunity to work in the shop and learn a craft, believing that by doing so, they might find it profitable to remain in rural areas. In any case, if unskilled youths were to be trained, the Industries would need instructors and the master craftsmen would have to serve this purpose. One writer has said that having accomplished this, the ladies went one step further in deciding to market the furniture which their shop produced.<sup>17</sup>

This conclusion seems to be contradicted by other writers and by statements made by the ladies themselves. One biographer of Eleanor's has said that insofar as aiding the local community in finding offseason employment, Val-Kill was not entirely successful. "Nan Cook's standards were meticulous," said this writer, "and unskilled farmers were not often able to meet them adequately." To support this position, he quoted a statement made by Eleanor in 1930 in which she said,

we were obliged to hunt until we located American citizens who had learned from their fathers and their grandfathers in the old world the secrets of handcraftsmanship and the need for patient labor, young men filled with the old ideas of craftsmanship. . . .

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17. "A Governor's Wife and Her Workshop," The Home Craftsman, ca. 1930, p. 82.

18. James R. Kearney, Anna Eleanor Roosevelt: The Evolution of a Reformer (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968), p. 169. The quotation is taken from a radio interview of Eleanor Roosevelt in November 1930, Eleanor Roosevelt Speeches and Articles, Box 1, F.D.R. Library.

To some extent, Marion has also supported this position when she said that the hiring of youths locally "did not prove successful and Nan was fortunate in finding some very fine cabinet makers of Italian and Norwegian descent. At times as many as twenty men were so employed."<sup>19</sup> An article published in September 1929 notes that in the three years since the Val-Kill shop started, the number of workmen had increased from one to eight and "at the present time that number is being doubled." Quoting Eleanor, the article went on to say that "eventually we plan to have a school for craftsmen at Val-Kill where the young boys and girls of the neighborhood can learn cabinet making or weaving and where they can find employment, rather than have to go down to the city to work."<sup>20</sup>

Another article appearing that same year noted that there were eighteen boys employed in the shop, and still another news item said that the shop had fourteen boys in training while employing nine "expert workmen."<sup>21</sup>

About one year later in an interview with Eleanor, one newspaper reported that the factory had grown from a small shop with six workmen to one employing nearly thirty expert craftsmen. Quoting Eleanor, this paper said

We now have nine expert cabinetmakers and a staff of experienced craftsmen recruited from Italy and the Scandinavian Countries. Other employees, many of whom

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19. Dickerman, the Val Kill Industries: Furniture-Pewter-Homespun.

20. Frieda Wyandt, "A Governor's Wife at Work," Your Home, September 1929, p. 68.

21. "Mrs. Roosevelt Plans Furniture Exhibit," New York Times, November 28, 1929; "Exhibit by Mrs. Roosevelt," New York Times, December 3, 1929.

live in the factory neighborhood and are members of farmers' families, are learning the trade.<sup>22</sup>

Many of the above figures are apparently contradictory. Statements and figures showing the number of craftsmen are probably correct. Eye witness accounts have provided enough evidence to support them. On the other hand, figures concerning young trainees are contradictory. One especially cannot reconcile these optimistic figures with statements made later by both Eleanor and Marion to the effect that the Industries had been a failure in gaining the interest of the local youth.

Frank Landolfa was the first employee and master craftsman to be hired in the furniture shop. Frank was born in Italy and had immigrated to the United States in 1925. He had learned his trade as a cabinetmaker from his father who owned a furniture factory in Italy. In 1926 he was referred to Eleanor and Nancy by an administrator of an industrial school in Greenwich Village, New York City. He was convinced to come to work for the infant industry in Hyde Park. The shop building was in the process of being constructed, recalls Frank.<sup>23</sup>

Machinery for producing furniture had not yet been acquired, and Nancy relied upon Frank for the selection of this equipment. Both he and she went to New York City to purchase circle saws, bench saws, lathes, joiners, and work benches (one of which Frank now owns). Nancy also asked Frank to help recruit workers, especially among Italian communities of New York and Poughkeepsie,

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22. "Mrs. Roosevelt Tells of Woman-Run Factory," New York Times, November 16, 1930.

23. This account concerning Mr. Landolfa is taken from an interview with Frank Landolfa by the author, June 23, 1978.

the latter place being Frank's residence ever since he accepted the job. Thus, the first small nucleus of workers consisted of Italians.<sup>24</sup>

Frank was an experienced cabinetmaker who did all the turning on lathe, all the carving, and the layout work for Nancy. He became the foreman of this small crew of workers (although paid at the same rate as other craftsmen), but he took direct orders from Nancy who gave up none of her managerial prerogatives. Although Nancy made the furniture designs, Henry Toombs helped for a time also. According to Frank, Nancy knew designs but was actually not skilled in the making of furniture.

At first, relations between Nancy and Frank were good, but as time went by these relations deteriorated, usually the result of misunderstandings caused when two qualified and sensitive individuals who took pride in their work disagreed. In one moment of anger Frank threatened to quit. Regretting what had happened, Nancy quickly wrote Frank a letter, a letter that reveals much about her personality. In it she said,

I am sorry I seemed to have scolded you this morning, but I really did not mean it--I am worried to death most of the time over money to run the shop and the serious illness of my father--and sometimes my nerves are not too good.<sup>25</sup> You are a good boy & I like you so please forgive me.

This was not the only incident that tended to strain matters between the two. Sometime in 1928-1929, Frank was injured on the

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24. Another employee from the Poughkeepsie area was Mathew Famiglietti.

25. Cook to Landolfa, ca. 1929, owned by Frank Landolfa, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

job, and upon returning to work after a stay in the hospital and a period of convalescence, he found that his desk had been removed. He was told by Nancy that he was no longer the foreman. Henceforth, everyone was on an equal plane under Nancy. Since Norwegian immigrants and their descendants were being employed, Frank felt threatened. The removal of his desk and his "foreman" position, both symbols of the status and seniority he had attained during his tenure at Val-Kill, was the fuse that angered him. Fortunately, he was appeased and he remained at Val-Kill.

While there were a few disagreeable moments between the two, perhaps normal in many employer-employee relations, Frank had the highest praise for both Eleanor and Nancy. Not knowing English and in a strange environment, Frank felt completely lost when he came to Hyde Park, but Eleanor and Nancy quickly took him under their wings. Eleanor personally opened up a bank account for him and did everything to persuade a homesick Frank to stay on. She even managed to have him attend night classes in Poughkeepsie so that he could learn English, even supplying a driver to take him there. Eleanor also arranged to have him purchase an automobile so that he could commute to work and not feel so isolated. Nancy, meanwhile, bought him a commuter ticket so that he could visit friends he missed so badly in New York City. Finally, when Frank was hospitalized because of the injury, the women paid the hospital expenses and paid him compensation, an example perhaps of some of their social thinking long before the introduction of such programs as the New Deal. Needless to say, Frank was deeply touched by this display of friendliness. Had the ladies of Val-Kill not come to his rescue, Frank would probably have left Val-Kill, and Val-Kill would have lost an able and skilled worker. Instead, Frank remained to work for ten years.

Frank recalls that there were as many as ten people working in the shop most of whom were Italians and Norwegians. Not all

worked in the furniture shop; some in pewter and others in weaving, handicrafts that were introduced in later years. John Fitzgerald and his wife were the caretakers who lived in the apartment on the second floor of the original shop. Nellie Johannsen with her three boys, who also worked for the Industries, lived there for a time. Nellie handled the weaving when that was introduced in the Industries, and two of her sons were cabinetmakers. Her third son did odd jobs around the shop. The finishing of furniture, Frank recalls, was done on the second floor of the shop. When the pewter industry was started, it also was done on the second floor.

Frank remembers that the master craftsmen in the furniture shop worked from 40 to 48 hours a week before the Great Depression, earning about \$65. This was about \$20 more than what he had earned in New York City.<sup>26</sup> Once the effects of the depression set in, the work-week was reduced to four days with earnings of \$4 a day. Although his wages were the same as the others, Frank was frequently awarded bonuses.

Another prominent member of the work force was Otto Berge. Berge was a Norwegian who migrated to America in 1913. He had learned his trade largely through his father.<sup>27</sup> Otto became very knowledgeable about old furniture and the English masters by working for an antique dealer in New York City. Through Morris Schwartz, an authority on antique furniture, Berge was introduced

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26. One writer has said that employees worked a 40-hour week. See Sidney Greenbie, "Wither Eleanor Roosevelt? A Refuge from Speed and Monotony--Val-Kill," Leisure, May 1934.

27. This account about Otto Berge and Val-Kill is developed from an interview with Otto Berge by Dr. Thomas F. Soapes, Oral Historian, September 19, 1977, F.D.R. Library, and an interview with Otto Berge by Leon Froats, Park Technician, N.P.S., March 11, 1977.



to Eleanor and Nancy in 1927, and that same year he accepted employment with Val-Kill. The furniture shop had already been in operation for almost a year, and the work force consisted of three master craftsmen and one or two helpers who did the finishing. Frank Landolfa, who in Otto's opinion was a "wonderful wood carver and wood turner," headed the list of workers. Otto's opinions of Nancy were not as complimentary. On the contrary. He accused her of mismanaging the shop and showing a lack of understanding of designs for antique furniture, the models of which were used to create reproductions at Val-Kill. He accused Louis Macumber, an architect and friend of the ladies who also did some of the furniture designs, of not fully appreciating the designs of the early master craftsmen.

Berge's figures regarding wages were somewhat different from those cited by Landolfa. Berge said that in 1927, the year he came to Val-Kill, a cabinetmaker earned \$50 for a 44-hour week. After the Great Depression set in, his pay was reduced to \$8 a day, and at one time the workweek was reduced to three days. The average wage during the depression at Val-Kill was \$24 a week. According to Otto, Val-Kill employees fared better than most of their Hyde Park neighbors. He attributed this to Eleanor's generosity and charitable spirit in trying to help her workers as much as possible despite the fact that she suffered a financial loss by doing so.

Besides Landolfa and Berge there were other employees that stood out prominently during those years of the Industries. Three in particular stand out because they were part of a single family. These were Karl, Roy, and Harry Johannsen, sons of Nellie Johannsen, one-time cook and housekeeper for Eleanor and later her principal weaver in the Val-Kill Industries. The three brothers were born in America of Norwegian and Swedish parents (their father

was Norwegian and their mother was Swedish).<sup>28</sup> At an early age Nellie, then widowed, took her three boys to Norway where they remained for thirteen years. Karl and Roy, the two oldest, learned to become cabinetmakers, and soon after the family returned to America. Through the efforts of Otto Berge, Karl was hired at Val-Kill in 1928. Later that year Nellie accepted a position as cook for Eleanor, and with her three sons moved into the Val-Kill shop apartment. She worked as a cook for two or three years. Roy also worked in the furniture shop and Harry became a handyman who on occasion helped in the finishing rooms rubbing raw wood and wherever he was needed.

Harry Johannsen had the highest praise for Nancy and Marion, especially with the former with whom he dealt closely. He thought they were the "two nicest persons" that he ever met, and he did not think there was "anybody in this world that could be anymore understanding than that woman [i.e. Miss Cook] was."

The first furniture to be manufactured at Val-Kill may have had its start in the small shop room of the stone cottage. This furniture furnished the cottage itself.<sup>29</sup> The production of furniture for commercial purposes did not start until 1927, after the new shop building was in operation. An early promotional brochure made note of the fact that the

Val-Kill Shop was started with the idea of making reproductions of the Metropolitan Museum or in other good collections. At present we are making only early American 17th century furniture but we could reproduce pieces from any other period in which our customers might be interested.

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28. This information on the Johannsens is largely developed from an interview with Harry Johannsen by the author, June 23, 1978.

29. Davis, Invincible Summer, p. 56.

Our object is to give our furniture the care which was given by the early cabinet makers so that the workmanship and the finish may show some of the charm which those early pieces acquired because their makers really loved the work which they did.

We are indebted for encouragement, advice, and aid in the planning and starting of our shop to Mr. Charles Cornelius of the Metropolitan Museum; Mr. Morris Schwartz, one of the foremost authorities on early American furniture in this country; and Mr. Henry Toombs,<sup>30</sup> architect, who is helping with some of our designs.

Toombs and Macumber may have been responsible for the early drawings of the furniture, but Nancy prepared the rough sketches. In the Marion Dickerman Collection are Nancy's detailed drawings of furniture produced at Val-Kill.<sup>31</sup> Nancy also selected the wood from seasoned lumber. She tried to follow as closely as possible the selection of woods that resembled the woods of a particular historic period. When designs were those which were first made in oak or in maple, reproductions were then made in the same wood, although a customer had the choice of another wood if he so preferred.<sup>32</sup> The wood was furnished by a lumber company unless a customer specified that it wanted the wood to come from trees from his

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30. "Val-Kill Shop: Roosevelt Industries, Hyde Park, New York," n.d., promotional brochure, F.D.R. Collection.

31. Sketches, Marion Dickerman Collection, Park files.

32. Unless otherwise noted, this discussion concerning the process of manufacturing the furniture is developed from the following sources: Marion Dickerman, "The Val-Kill Industries: Furniture-Pewter-Homespun," n.d., Marion Dickerman Papers, F.D.R. Library; "A Governor's Wife and Her Workshop," The Home Craftsman, ca. 1930, pp. 90, 93; Mrs. Daniel O'Day, "Bringing Back Artistic Furniture of the 17th Century," Motordon, March 1929; Frieda Wyandt, "A Governor's Wife at Work," Your Home, September 1929; and "The Art of Creating Heirlooms," Alumni News, September 1930.

estate. In the latter case, the trees were cut, sawed into boards, and aged before they were used.

Once the wood was selected, the job of producing the piece of furniture rested with one craftsman, usually a person skilled in that type of furniture. The craftsman carefully measured and cut the wood following the drawings. Afterwards came the turning and carving which were meticulously done, and the parts were carefully fitted together with mortise and tennon joints pinned with wooden pegs.<sup>33</sup> When this was completed the unstained piece was taken to the finishing room where the staining process began. A little color was applied first and carefully rubbed in; then a second or third coat was applied always preserving the beauty of the grain in the wood. Gradually each piece took on the desired richness and tone. When this process was finished, the polishing began, done largely by hand, until the wood became almost like velvet. Nancy then would put the Val-Kill stamp on each piece, indicating her approval. On each piece of furniture was inscribed the first name of the craftsman who made it, for example, "Karl," "Otto," "Frank," or some other craftsman.

A brochure published by the Industries reveals at least 25 standard pieces of furniture produced at Val-Kill. The list did not end here, however, for if a customer wanted a piece of furniture not on the list and made according to his wishes, the shop would gladly oblige. The list of more frequently made furniture, with their prices, was as follows:<sup>34</sup>

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33. This procedure differed considerably from the common way of putting furniture together in the mass production of furniture with dowels and glue, none of which was part of the production procedure at Val-Kill.

34. Val-Kill Shop: Roosevelt Industries, Hyde Park, New York, promotional brochure, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection. See also Illustrations Nos. 23 through 29; Folder: Hyde Park, N.Y.--Val-Kill Furniture Shop, 1928-1938, F.D.R. Library.

Maple tavern table . . . . .	\$ 85.00
Maple scroll mirror . . . . .	65.00
Maple low chest . . . . .	160.00
Tavern table . . . . .	85.00
Oval tavern table, small . . . . .	45.00
Bedside table, maple . . . . .	50.00
Early four-post bed, maple . . . . .	65.00
Walnut stool, small . . . . .	50.00
Bedside table . . . . .	50.00
Large maple chest of drawers . . . . .	175.00
Early maple mirror . . . . .	65.00
Butterfly table, maple . . . . .	50.00
Bedside table . . . . .	50.00
Oak stool . . . . .	45.00
Trestle table, round . . . . .	40.00
Walnut four-post bed . . . . .	110.00
Maple four-post bed . . . . .	75.00
Chest-on-Frame (letter and card file and shelves for account books inside) . . . . .	250.00
Butterfly table . . . . .	50.00
Maple arm chair, rush bottom . . . . .	90.00
Small walnut desk . . . . .	135.00
Large oak table . . . . .	150.00
Maple stool . . . . .	40.00
Fireside chair . . . . .	90.00
Gate-leg table (tea table) . . . . .	90.00
"Cromwellian" chair (red leather seat and back) . . . . .	90.00
Walnut stool . . . . .	50.00
Long bench . . . . .	65.00
Large trestle table (two leaves) . . . . .	125.00
Pennsylvania table, large . . . . .	160.00

After the stone cottage was furnished with Val-Kill-made furniture, other furniture was produced for the Roosevelt family. In fact Eleanor became a big customer of the Industries for many years, buying pieces for wedding and Christmas gifts. Much of this furniture still remains in the possession of the family.<sup>35</sup> One of the first projects undertaken by the furniture shop was the

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35. Elliott Roosevelt and James Brough, An Untold Story: The Roosevelts of Hyde Park (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), p. 13.



Illustration No. 23

Furniture produced by Val-Kill Industries ca, 1930

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library



Illustration No. 24

Furniture produced by Vall-Kill Industries ca. 1930

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library



Illustration No. 25

Furniture produced by Val-Kill Industries ca. 1930

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library





Illustration No. 26

Furniture produced by Val-Kill Industries ca. 1928

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

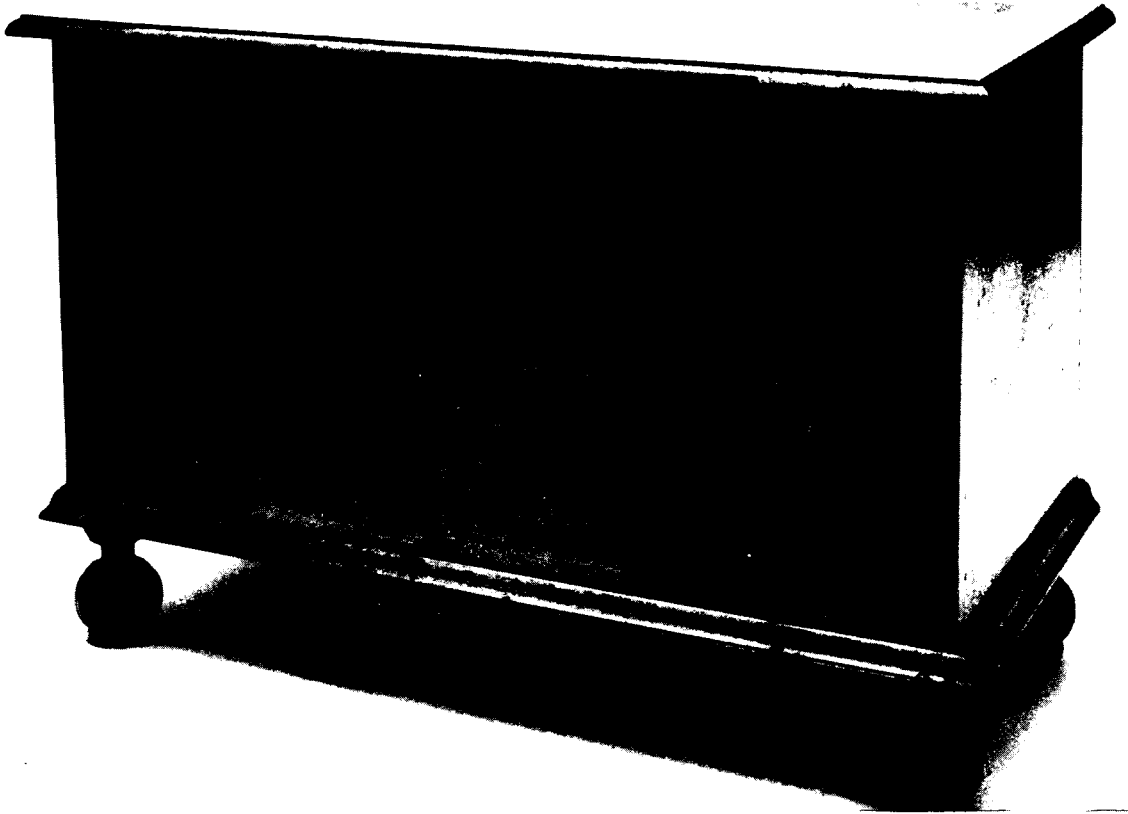


Illustration No. 27

Furniture produced by Val-Kill Industries ca. 1930

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

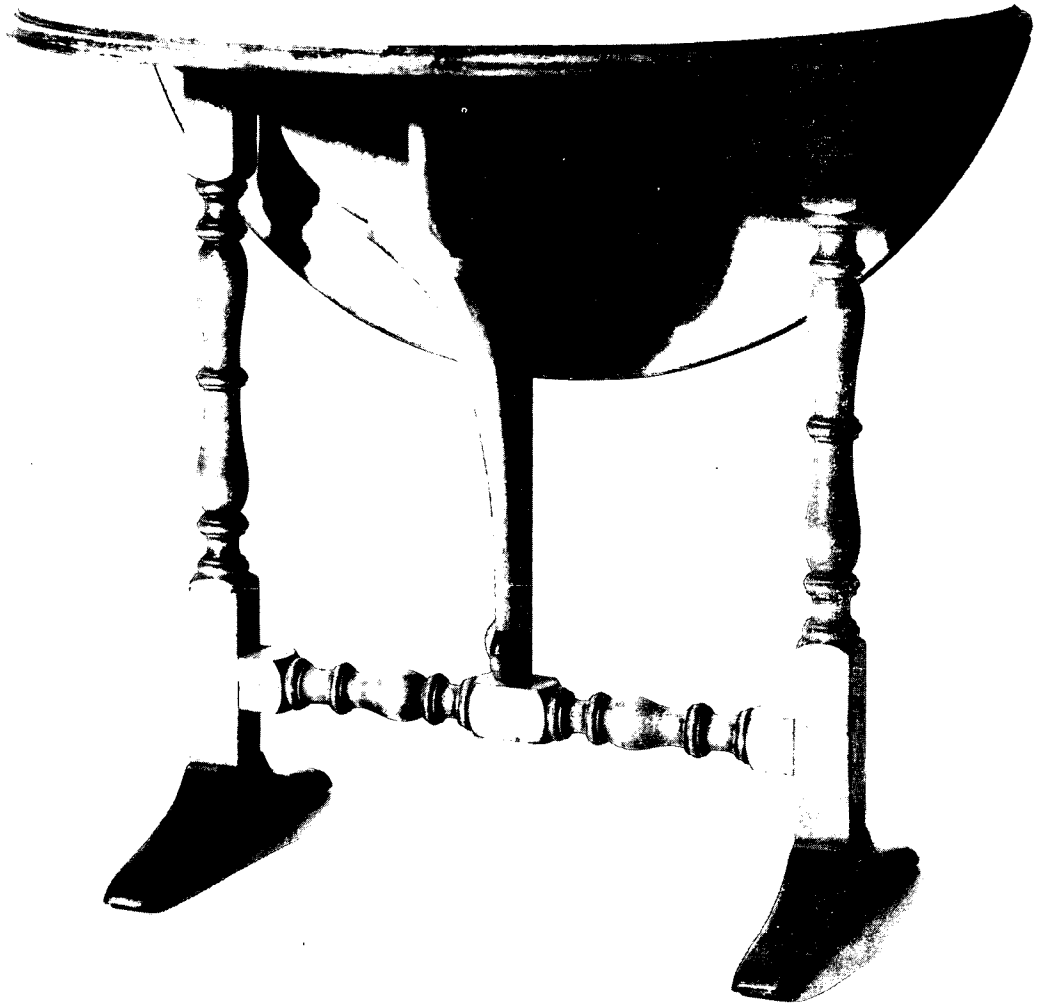


Illustration No. 28

Furniture produced by Val-Kill Industries ca. 1930

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

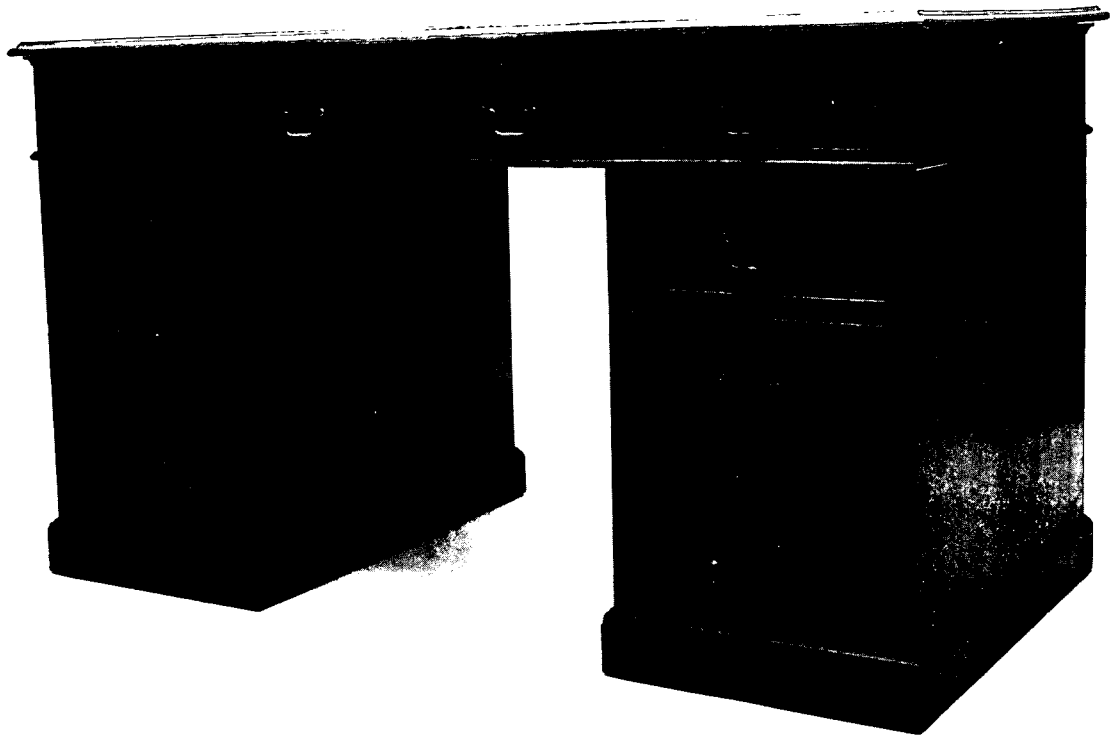


Illustration No. 29

Furniture produced by Val-Kill Industries ca. 1930

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt

production of furniture for Franklin's new cottage in Warm Springs, Georgia. Franklin was extremely pleased with the results, and he wrote his mother that "the new furniture fits perfectly and is just the right color." Eleanor, who had gone to Warm Springs, reported to Nancy that she had "put all the beds up yesterday, & today the table & box came & they are both in the room & you can't think how lovely they all look--Franklin is delighted with them and can hardly wait to get in." She also pointed out to Nancy that Franklin wanted another chest of drawers and a folding table.<sup>36</sup>

When Franklin became President, the White House also became the recipient of several pieces of furniture from Val-Kill. Before he took office in 1932, Franklin, with his usual great sense of humor, wrote Nancy the following verse on the occasion of her fiftieth birthday:

"In the Val-Kill Shop they say  
"Nan has hidden safe away  
"(So the little birds declare)  
"One large Presidential chair."<sup>37</sup>

In later years Eleanor wrote,

When I inspected my husband's bedroom, I discovered that the brass bed which had been put in there was too short for him, so Miss Cook had made in the Val-Kill shop a four-poster bed of extra length, which he used all the years we were in the White House. Finding that my own bed was also too short, I ordered a new one for myself as well, and later had an extra-long

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36. Roosevelt to Cook, Marion Dickerman Collection, Park files.

37. This verse is written on the back of a photograph of himself which he gave to Nancy on this occasion. Marion Dickerman Collection, Park files.

one made for the room which our youngest son usually occupied when he came home.<sup>38</sup>

A reproduction of Thomas Jefferson's swivel chair at Monticello, said to have been made by Otto Berge, was placed in the President's Oval Office.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to the Warm Springs cottage and the White House, furniture also found its way into various public buildings. A small memorial library as well as the children's room in the Natural History Museum in Buffalo, New York, were furnished. Displays were also made at museums in New York City. Ultimately furniture was even shipped to Czechoslovakia and Hawaii.<sup>40</sup>

As the shop expanded and more employees were hired, production was geared towards the general public. It was Eleanor's job to promote the Industries and to bring it to the public's attention. Her name, of course, made it easier. Good promotional literature was important, however, and this clearly had Eleanor's stamp mark. In one of the first pieces of literature to be prepared by Val-Kill, Eleanor wrote the following:

#### Buying Heirlooms for Your Great-Great-Grandchild

There is something fascinating in the idea of preserving not only our name, but some tradition of what manner of person we were, in the memories of our Great-Great-Grandchildren a hundred years and more from now. Few of us can hope to do things noteworthy

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38. Eleanor Roosevelt, This I Remember (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 81.

39. Interview of Otto Berge; Alfred Steinberg, Mrs. R., The Life of Eleanor Roosevelt (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1958), p. 192.

40. Dickerman, The Val-Kill Industries: Furniture-Pewter-Homespun; "A Governor's Wife and Her Workshop," The Home Craftsman, ca. 1930, p. 93.

enough to be remembered long after our contemporaries are forgotten, but there is still one way left.

If we acquire something so beautiful, in the best sense of the word, that it will be preserved for its own sake and so sturdy in its construction as to defy time, we may be sure that it will be handed down from generation to generation with some clinging tradition as to who we were and what we did.

Val-Kill Furniture is built, not 'manufactured,' as the old master craftsmen of the days of Sheraton and Chippendale built: mortise and tenon, perfect fitting joints.

Most modern furniture will hardly survive a decade of even careful usage. They will never become the heirlooms of the future.

We will be glad to show just how Val-Kill Furniture is made and why; when you secure a piece with the Val-Kill 'Hall-Mark' you have an heirloom by which your Great-Great-Grandchildren will still remember you.

Val-Kill Industries had a New York Show Room at 331 Madison Avenue (Room 706), New York City, which incidentally was Nancy's office of the Women's Division of the New York Democratic Committee. There was no connection between Val-Kill Industries and the committee other than the fact that both were run by Nancy Cook. The New York office merely provided a facility to promote the furniture.<sup>42</sup>

Eleanor often dropped into the offices of furniture buyers in New York City. With her kit of photographs of Val-Kill productions, she tried in her fervant ladylike manner to get them to carry her wares.

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41. Accession No. NPX 63-182(II), "Val-Kill/Hyde Park, Dutchess Co./ New York, Folder, Val-Kill Furniture, F.D.R. Library.

42. See visiting card of Eleanor Roosevelt in Davis, Invincible Summer, following p. 65.

By the spring of 1927 the shop was ready for its first exhibition, which was held at the Roosevelt house on 65th Street, New York City. The price list ranged from \$40 for a round trestle table to \$175 for a large maple chest of drawers. "The work is handwrought and beautifully finished in every detail and copied with exactness from genuine antiques," said The New York Times.<sup>43</sup> Every year Eleanor opened up her home for this exhibit.<sup>44</sup> Through these exhibits and her personal visits to large department stores she was able, at least in the early years, to get stores like Abraham and Straus and Gimbels Brothers to place Val-Kill products on their counters.

The first few years of business saw extensive activity. Special orders came from several sources. At the conclusion of one of her many exhibits Eleanor could write "sold everything."<sup>45</sup> Demand for items was so great that within three years the number of employees in the furniture shop reached sixteen. Success of the venture had been so satisfactory and the demand so great that as 1930 was approaching the Industries was seriously thinking of expanding both its output and its variety. Just as soon as arrangements could be made, quarters prepared, and workers secured, said two articles, the shop was expected to add patchwork quilt-making, hooked rug weaving, and other artistic handcrafts.<sup>46</sup>

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43. New York Times, May 17, 1927.

44. Ibid., December 3, 1929; Ibid., May 13, 1930.

45. Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of their relationship, based on Eleanor Roosevelt's private papers (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1971), p. 321.

46. Wyandt, "A Governor's Wife At Work"; Ray Watson, "Revival of Hand Craft," The Modern Home, ca. 1929.



In April 1930 Val-Kill Industries announced its plans for expansion. "A program of wide expansion for the Val-Kill shops, unique experiment in rural community esthetic and industrial development, was announced Saturday by Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt," said one local newspaper. "After three years of quiet, steady growth in the little plant at Hyde Park, Val-Kill now will step out into the battle area of the competing world, offering its product--meticulous reproduction of authenticated early American furniture--to metropolitan and foreign buyers."<sup>47</sup> As its principal outlet and salon the Industries selected the Gift and Art Division of the Rush Terminal Sales Building on West 42nd Street, New York City.

By now the employee rolls of the Industries represented an increase of 1800 percent, and the original shop area had grown 500 percent. Eight boys from Hyde Park were enrolled as student craftsmen. The turnover of labor was remarkably low, one man only having left after being hired.<sup>48</sup>

### Weaving

Weaving was probably introduced to the Val-Kill Industries around 1930. Weaving never received the same attention that furniture-making had, and perhaps the logical reason was that there never was a person like Nancy Cook in immediate charge of that craft. Another reason was that it was difficult to hire women in sufficient numbers to make weaving a full-time production. Whatever little success was achieved in this craft at Val-Kill was largely due to the efforts of Eleanor. She consumed much time, money, and effort to organize the craft, but she could only accomplish little. The result was that the Industries had to be satisfied

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47. Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier, April 27, 1930.

48. Ibid.; New York Times, April 25, 1930.

with a small product much of which had been produced by women who had learned the art of weaving on a part-time basis. The emphasis at Val-Kill, therefore, was in the training of women in the Hyde Park area most of whom accomplished their work at home.

One summer in the late 1920's the proprietors of Val-Kill visited Mr. Fred L. Seeley's homespun plant in Ashville, North Carolina. Mr. Seeley had about twenty weavers at his looms which were kept busy for ten months out of the year. Among their products were woven suits for the orphans of the state. Mr. Seeley offered the Val-Kill ladies a loom and to have any person they selected to come down and be trained for one week.

Nellie Johannsen, then Eleanor's cook, had shown some ability in the art of weaving. She was therefore selected to attend this training. After she returned from her training, a small shop, financed by Eleanor, was built and furnished with several looms. This small structure, located just outside Val-Kill on Route 9G (Violet Avenue), became known as the Val-Kill Tea Room. Thus, weaving began as an industry at Val-Kill.<sup>49</sup>

Harry Johannsen, Nellie's son, has provided a somewhat different story about how his mother got started in the Industries. He said that after his mother had indicated to Eleanor that she was familiar with weaving, Eleanor sent her to a place in Connecticut where they were doing homespun. While there as a trainee, Nellie designed a loom of her own that "was a beauty."<sup>50</sup>

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49. Dickerman, The Val Kill Industries: Furniture-Pewter-Homespun.

50. The loom, which was actually constructed by a Dane from Fairfield, Conn., has been donated to the F.D.R. Library. Interview with Harry Johannsen by the author, June 23, 1978.

For several years Nellie produced some beautiful weaving including woven suits for the President.<sup>51</sup> There is an interesting memorandum owned by Frank Landolfa containing instructions to him from Nancy Cook. The memorandum reads as follows:

Nellie wants 4 maple turned sticks 17" long about 1 1/4" diameter. Before you take them out of your lathe make them very very smooth--She wants to wind yarn on them and there can be no bad places--or the yarn will catch.<sup>52</sup>

One newspaper in speaking of Nellie's skill as a weaver said,

Besides being chief birthday cake maker and picnic basket packer for President and Mrs. Roosevelt and their children during the family vacations at Hyde Park, Mrs. Nelly Johanssen performs a most unique service for the 'First Family' in whose employ she has been for six years.

Very soon both the President and his wife will boast additions to their wardrobes contributed by Mrs. Johanssen, for 'Nelly' as she is known to Roosevelts and her friends, among her many other duties, finds time to weave, and during the past few months she has been busy at her primitive loom in Hyde Park turning out lengths of cloth for two suits. The President's suit will be of a medium colored herring bone weave while the material for Mrs. Roosevelt is a broken twill in black and white destined for a sevagger ensamble.<sup>53</sup>

Nellie's role in this craft was not the only weaving associated with the Val-Kill Industries. Her prominence in this role may have been due mostly to her personal association with the Roosevelts for whom she did her weaving. In September 1929, while speaking for the Val-Kill Industries, Eleanor announced that

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51. Dickerman, The Val Kill Industries: Furniture-Pewter-Homespun.

52. Cook to Landolfa, n.d., owned by Frank Landolfa, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

53. Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier, May 20, 1934.

We have already had a little start in weaving. We have a weaving teacher who has classes for the girls in the neighborhood, and we have started a little hooked rug making. Gradually we want to expand this into as important a department as that of the furniture, for there are as many originalities in the old American weaving and the old American <sup>54</sup>egg making as there are in the old American furniture.

Eleanor tried to interest local women by recruiting them for a weaving class and by joining the class herself.<sup>55</sup> According to the Eleanor Roosevelt Collection, Miss Hoagland was the teacher, but the teaching was somewhat sporadic since it had to depend upon her availability and the availability of the students. Nellie was also a teacher who was paid for her work. Meanwhile, Eleanor depended on women like Gertrude P.W. Ballard and Grace Kilmer to organize classes, stir up interest among the women, and order the wool, warp, and other incidentals.

Things did not always work out smoothly, and the problem seems to have stemmed from the voluntary nature of the work. Thus, in one of her many letters to Eleanor, Gertrude Ballard says, "We are not going along as we should, some hardly at all, but I suppose it can't be helped, as they do it on the side, at home, and not as a regular business."<sup>56</sup> Although Eleanor and these women tried to find outlets for their products, the results were minimal. "We'll stick to it . . . until we find a way of selling them," hopefully said Mrs. Ballard in another letter.<sup>57</sup> Eleanor appreciated the help she was getting from Mrs. Ballard when she

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54. Wyandt, "A Governor's Wife at Work."

55. Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, pp. 305-306.

56. Ballard to Roosevelt, December 11, 1930, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

57. Ballard to Roosevelt, ca. 1930, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

told her, "I think it is splendid all the things that you are doing."<sup>58</sup>

Eleanor sought every opportunity to place the weaving produced by Val-Kill on exhibit, frequently with poor results. Even holding exhibits at her New York City home and at the Bush Terminal Sales Building did little to improve the marketability of the products. Such items as handbags, towels, table scarfs, and breakfast sets were common products sold at these sales.<sup>59</sup> A letter written to Mrs. Ballard reveals Eleanor's discouragement after one of these sales:

Enclosed is a check for what little weaving we sold. I am more than sorry that we were not more successful, but I do not think this is a very good time of year. I made some suggestions to Mrs. Nesbitt and hope we may now get to work on some real outlet. I think, however, that you will have to do different kinds of things before we really sell any quantity.<sup>60</sup>

#### Pewter

Pewter-making, like weaving, also did not have the extensive production and wide distribution that furniture had experienced. Neither did it offer the training opportunities which both furniture-making and weaving had offered to the local people of Hyde Park.

According to Marion, Nancy had become interested in pewter-making and this prompted a trip to England, Belgium,

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58. Roosevelt to Ballard, December 16, 1930, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

59. New York Times, November 28, 1929; Ibid., April 25, 1930; Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier, April 28, 1935.

60. Roosevelt to Ballard, May 14, 1930, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

Germany, and France. French pewter seemed to have more silver than the pewter made in other countries, so that when the forge was established at Val-Kill the sheets of pewter were lighter in character and contained more silver. Nancy copied some of the pieces which had been brought back from Europe but she also made several new and original designs. Articles such as pitchers, plates, vases, porringers, bowls, and other items were produced at Val-Kill (Illustration No. 30).<sup>61</sup>

Although there is no record of when the production of pewter got underway at Val-Kill, in all probability it was begun in 1929-1930, judging by the references made to its establishment in the near future in news items of the time. An early promotional brochure reads as follows:

The Forge was established in the village of Hyde Park by Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt with the idea of giving employment to a few young men and to renew interest in the age old art of metal craft.

Beautiful articles of pewter, brass, copper and iron are fashioned by hand. All pieces are made out of the very best of materials, they are heavy and have the rich texture which gave such charm to many of the old pieces. Each article bears the Val-Kill trademark.

Let Us Do Your Gift Shopping For You! Samples of these articles are on exhibition at 331 Madison Avenue, at 43rd Street, Room 704, New York City.<sup>62</sup>

There is some evidence, albeit inconclusive, that the first forge was set up in the alcove on the first floor of the last unit built. It finally ended in the structure known as the playhouse in 1936.

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61. Dickerman, The Val Kill Industries: Furniture-Pewter-Homespun; Illustration, Accession No. NPX-168:4, Folder: Hyde Park, N.Y.--Val-Kill Furniture Shop, 1928-1938, F.D.R. Library.

62. "The Forge/Val-Kill Lane," F.D.R. Collection.



Illustration No. 30

Pewter produced by Val-Kill Industries ca. 1930

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

Arnold Berge, younger brother of Otto Berge, became the first pewterer at Val-Kill. A second craftsman, Clifford Smith, was later hired to assist Arnold. Both worked directly under Nancy's supervision.

In the small Arnold Berge Collection at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library are a number of orders taken by Arnold and the cost of items produced. Several dealers and individual customers from a wide area requested orders. As usual, Eleanor was one of the forge's best customers, ordering several items for the White House and for friends.

Although the period covered by these orders and receipts is sometime after the Industries had ended (Arnold taking over the production as sole proprietor while still at Val-Kill), they do provide us with some idea of the production, cost of items, and customers dealing with pewter-making at Val-Kill. Items produced varied widely. Some of them consisted of napkin rings, steak sets, small match boxes, butter dishes, bud vases, salad bowls, knives, forks, spoons, sugar and cream sets, oval bowls, letter holders, child's knives and forks, cheese server, plates of varying sizes, bottle openers, tomatoe servers, pitchers, two-piece roast sets, and porringers. One document provides a list of prices to dealers as well as the dealer's price.<sup>63</sup>

#### Other Interests at Val-Kill

##### A Variety of Social Causes

In 1933 Eleanor Roosevelt wrote the following:

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63. Orders, receipts, price lists, etc., Arnold Berge Collection, 1938-1942, F.D.R. Library.



With advancing years I feel I must give this question of what I wanted to leave behind me greater thought, for before long I shall be moving on to fields unknown, and perhaps it may make a difference if I actually know what I would like to bequeath to a new generation. Perhaps the best I can do is to pray that the youth of to-day will have the ability to live simply and to get joy out of living, the desire to give of themselves and to make themselves worthy of giving, and the strength to do without anything which does not serve the interests of the brotherhood of man. If I can bequeath these desires to my own children, it seems to me I will not have lived in vain.<sup>64</sup>

Eleanor lived by this philosophy. She was always moving on to "fields unknown," as she put it, and these fields were almost always directed towards the betterment of mankind. Nancy stated it simply when she said, "Eleanor is as busy as ever with all her jobs to do for everybody."<sup>65</sup>

Eleanor was not satisfied with making moral and idealistic pronouncements. She was by nature a doer always realizing that it was not enough to have just a belief and a philosophy; it was essential that we follow through with some form of action no matter how small nor how impractical it might seem in its application. The Val-Kill Industries was one such action. The Arthurdale experiment in homecrafts in West Virginia was another. In education, it was not enough to hold ideas, it was necessary to act, and she did so by becoming actively involved in the Todhunter School.

Val-Kill produced the setting for much of Eleanor's thinking and activity. Encouraged by Louis Howe and her close friends--Nancy, Marion, and Caroline O'Day--she threw herself into

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64. Eleanor Roosevelt, "What I hope to Leave Behind," Pictorial Review, April 1933, p. 45.

65. Cook to F.D.R., March 15, 1926, F.D.R. Papers.

the feminist movement, attempting along the way to define women's role in politics. In this respect, she was well ahead of her times. Eleanor was particularly involved with the Women's Division of the New York Democratic Committee of which Caroline O'Day was its chairman and Nancy its actual manager. In the late 1920's, along with the help of her four friends, she organized and edited the Women's Democratic News. Much of this work was carried on from Val-Kill.<sup>66</sup>

Her ideas on women's role in politics and industry, still relatively new in American life, placed her in the limelight, and she was in constant demand as a speaker (something she dreaded but had learned to overcome, thanks to Louis Howe). The New York Times noted that there were few women in politics who could speak more authoritatively on the question of women's role in politics than Eleanor.<sup>67</sup>

Eleanor took serious issue with Henry Ford, who was of the opinion that women were by nature not suited for industrial work and that their place was in the home. Speaking at the Eighth Annual Exposition of Women's Arts and Industries, she retaliated by saying that "the best answer to Mr. Ford is this exposition." She was extremely optimistic about women's role in business and foresaw the day when nothing will be closed to women because of sex.<sup>68</sup>

The public causes which Eleanor espoused were indeed many. Speaking about these causes in 1928, one writer said, "A woman

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66. The first issue of the News appeared in 1925 and the last in 1935. See photograph of the four women in Davis, Invincible Summer, following p. 65.

67. New York Times, April 8, 1928.

68. Ibid., October 1, 1929.

who teaches school, runs a factory, edits a journal, and is a member of a half dozen civic organizations would appear to have her hands full."<sup>69</sup> After she became a governor's wife, Eleanor still carried on unrelentlessly with public causes. After becoming the First Lady, she needed to establish priorities on all she undertook, but her enthusiasm for all causes never diminished. Only now the causes she undertook were frequently connected with her husband's political and social programs. Some of the causes she had so avidly undertaken before 1933 had to be dropped, and her energies had to be redirected into other channels.

#### Todhunter School

Although Eleanor was an organizer of the Val-Kill Industries and she handled much of the promotional end of the Industries, she never had a direct role in the management of the shop, partly because she did not have the skills, partly because as the wife of a prominent politician she had other commitments, and partly because her very nature would not permit her to be satisfied with one interest alone. It was probably because of this last reason more than any that Eleanor became involved with the Todhunter School in New York City. As Nancy was the force behind the Industries, so was Marion the force that led Eleanor to the Todhunter School. Eleanor describes this event in her autobiography as follows:

During the early years of my acquaintance with Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman, I became associated in the Todhunter School with Miss Dickerman, who was first the assistant principal and then the principal. It was a private school for girls from the primary grades through high school. Miss Todhunter, who was British, finally sold the school to Marion Dickerman, Nancy Cook, and myself and went back to England. I began teaching there

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69. Ibid., December 2, 1928.

in 1927. I taught only the older girls because I considered that it took less training to teach them than to teach the younger children. I gave courses in American history and in English and American literature and later we tried some courses in current events which I hope were more practical than are many of the courses given to sixteen-and seventeen year-old girls. We visited the New York City courts, and I think many young people learned a great deal from sitting in one of the children's courts for an hour. Those whom their parents allowed to go I took to see the different kinds of tenements that exist in a city like New York, as well as the big markets and various other places. All this made the government of the city something real and alive, rather than just so many words in a text book.<sup>70</sup>

As a teacher, Eleanor was as critical of herself as she was of her students. She left constant written reminders and admonitions to herself in her classbooks such as "look up Vikings," "trace the trade routes better," and "be more exact."<sup>71</sup> In her history classes she very appropriately stressed the connection between the past and the present.<sup>72</sup>

In spite of her many activities even while she lived in the Executive Mansion in Albany, she continued to teach for two and one half days a week, leaving Albany on Sunday evenings and returning Wednesday afternoons. After she became the First Lady, she conducted a class for graduates and their friends, first on a weekly basis and then monthly.<sup>73</sup>

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70. Roosevelt, This I Remember, p. 36.

71. Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 306.

72. Ibid.

73. Roosevelt, This I Remember, pp. 36-7.

### Social Events

Val-Kill was more than a home to Eleanor. If she had her way she would have made it her sole residence and meeting place of her family. Val-Kill became the meeting place of an ever-growing family and circle of friends, thanks to her husband's rising political star and to her own widening interests. Val-Kill witnessed a multitude of social events at which politicians, business and labor leaders, journalists, educators, and almost every conceivable professional and nonprofessional groups were in attendance. No group was beneath her dignity. Eleanor took the time to entertain the Hyde Park Girl Scouts and the Women's City and County Club as well as a multitude of other similar groups.<sup>74</sup> Eleanor's daughter Anna recalled one of these social events in later years:

Father, after he became President, was always accompanied on his visits to Hyde Park by members of the press. Many times mother and father would invite them to picnic lunches or supper cooked out of doors over the grill at Val-Kill. Often father would sit there with correspondents gathered around him on benches or on the grass, while he carried on very informal and strictly 'off-the-record' discussions.<sup>75</sup>

In addition to these meetings of special groups, Val-Kill was also the scene of great reunions of the Roosevelt clan and a host of intimate friends of both Franklin and Eleanor, some of whom even stayed for days. These occasions were usually filled with merriment.

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74. Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier, September 30, 1934; Ibid., June 6, 1937.

75. Olin Dows, Franklin Roosevelt at Hyde Park (New York: American Artist Group, 1949), p. 131.

The Christmas season was always a great time at Val-Kill. With the help of Marion and Nancy, Eleanor took great pains to provide a party for both the employees of the Roosevelt estate and the employees of the Industries. No matter how busy her schedule, even as the First Lady, she found time to be at Val-Kill on this occasion. She frequently gave gifts to her employees and to her friends, served refreshments, and led in the singing of Christmas carols. In speaking of this event in 1934, one newspaper said,

To give such a party has been Mrs. Roosevelt's custom for 11 years and she has always made a point of being in attendance although doing so frequently necessitated several hours journey. The party is an event eagerly anticipated by the employees of the President's estate, those of the mother, Mrs. James Roosevelt, and her cousin, Mrs. J. Roosevelt. The Val-Kill craftsmen and their families are also included in the party each year.<sup>76</sup>

Manuscript collections at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and the Marion Dickerman Collection, particularly the latter, are replete with moving pictures and photographs of these events. They are an exhaustive and rich record of the innumerable events that went on at Val-Kill.<sup>77</sup>

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76. Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier, December 31, 1934.

77. Some of the illustrations in the Marion Dickerman Collection are reproduced in Davis, Invincible Summer, others are reproduced in the many books written on the Roosevelts.

CHAPTER VI  
ON HER OWN

The End of An Experiment

The Val-Kill Industries flourished for about ten years. It had reached its peak of activity in the early 1930's and suddenly by 1933, there was a downward trend. The Great Depression undoubtedly had much to do with the failure of the Industries. Prices of articles produced at Val-Kill were obviously higher than the mass-produced items of a factory. Consumers, even those who were at one time financially able, had to tighten their belts. As a result demand for Val-Kill products dropped off considerably. Although Eleanor did much to promote the Industries and she was perhaps its best customer, it was obvious that the Industries could not rely upon this sole source for its existence. Profits fell rapidly.

Economic conditions, though paramount, were not the only reasons for the ultimate failure of the Industries. After Eleanor became First Lady, she found she could spend less and less time promoting Val-Kill products, leaving more and more to Nancy, who was already weighted down with the management of production and with her management of the Women's Division of the New York Democratic Committee. Moreover, Eleanor had called upon her to help establish the handcraft center at Arthurdale in West Virginia. The assignment meant many trips to West Virginia. Marion said that this was a serious drain on her health, and the time came when Nancy's health necessitated giving up the Industries. Eleanor has substantially supported this statement.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Marion Dickerman, "The Val-Kill Industries: Furniture-Pewter-Homespun," n.d., Marion Dickerman Papers, F.D.R. Library; Eleanor Roosevelt, This I Remember (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 34.

On May 14, 1936, after the women had given it their most serious consideration, they publicly announced the dissolutionment of the Industries. A press release was issued that read as follows:

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt announced today that henceforth the Val-Kill Furniture Shop at Hyde Park, New York, with which she has long been identified will be taken over and operated by one of the expert craftsmen employed there, Otto Berg of East Park, New York.

Miss Nancy Cook, President of Val-Kill, who has conducted the shop since its founding, finds the various craft projects have grown to such an extent that she can no longer give them her personal attention.

'Our Craft Workers', said Mrs. Roosevelt, 'have wanted a shop of their own for some time. Now we are helping them all we can to get started. Since they have been with us many years we are assured that the beauty and workmanship of Val-Kill models will be retained,' Miss Cook will still continue to give them advice and help.

The forge, where pewter and iron work is made, will be under the direction of Arnold Berg and Clifford Smith, both of Hyde Park, New York.

The weaving will continue under the direction of Nellie Johannsen. During the winter months she will teach the art<sup>2</sup> of weaving to any Hyde Park women who wish to learn.

While both Eleanor and Marion have given Nancy's health as the main reason for the Industries' demise, certain writers have cited other reasons, which in this writer's opinion cannot be entirely reconciled with the facts. Joseph Lash in his very interesting and detailed works about the Roosevelts, especially Eleanor Roosevelt, was told by Malvina (Tommy) Thompson, Eleanor's personal secretary, that the shops never showed a profit and that Eleanor had been underwriting the losses. Eleanor's

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2. News Release, Val-Kill Shop, Thursday, May 14, (1936), Eleanor Roosevelt Collection, F.D.R. Library.



friends therefore suggested that she get a business-minded person to manage the enterprise. When Nancy objected to this arrangement, they decided to dissolve the partnership.<sup>3</sup>

This writer must accept the Eleanor and Marion version of why the Industries shut down. Economic reasons did play a role, but mismanagement as Tommy had hinted was not the real reason. Money problems are always at the core of any business's problems and Val-Kill Industries was probably no different. According to Frank Landolfa, Eleanor and Nancy did on occasion disagree over money, but they always resolved their differences rather amicably.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, a letter written by Nancy to Eleanor outlining what she thought should go into the news release of May 14, 1936 was very friendly and gave no hint that mismanagement was at the basis of their difficulties. If mismanagement was a reason, Nancy would probably have made some disclaimer, but such was not the case.<sup>5</sup>

The dissolution of the Industries was a disappointment to Eleanor as well as to her husband, who had hoped that the Industries might be a small sample of what could be established on a broader scale nationally in his New Deal programs. Although a few similar industries established nationally had succeeded, few had returned the original investment to their organizers. Nevertheless, these industries did serve a purpose if only for a brief period. In Eleanor's own words, "in the crises (of the Great Depression) they

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3. Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor Roosevelt: A Friend's Memoir (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1964), p. 142; Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of their relationship, based on Eleanor Roosevelt's private papers (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1971), pp. 476-77.

4. Interview with Frank Landolfa by author, June 23, 1978.

5. Cook to Roosevelt, March 18, 1936, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection, F.D.R. Library.

took people off relief and gave them back self respect and a sense of security--a considerable achievement."<sup>6</sup>

Eleanor was aware of an inherent weakness in the Val-Kill Industries. She found that as soon as a young man had learned a trade in which he could make more money than on a farm, he turned his back on the latter preferring to remain where he could make more money and enjoy regular hours. It was true that when work decreased in the cities, some would return to the farms, but as soon as work picked up, the urge to leave the farm was great. Thus, the lure of the city was greater than the sense of security and pride which farm work and living could provide.<sup>7</sup>

Although Eleanor was disappointed in the failure of the Industries, it did not disturb her for long. She was satisfied that the experiment had been attempted and that there had been some sense of accomplishment. Besides, Eleanor was not the sort of person that made something the end in itself. Her philosophy, which she always found time to pass on to the youth, was to be always ready to go on to other things, and she lived by this principle until her death.

The news release that was issued in May 1936 stated that the furniture, weaving, and pewter shops would continue to operate under the management of former employees of the Industries. Although Otto Berge was to continue to produce furniture in a barn at the rear of his house in East Park, a subdivision of Hyde Park,

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6. Roosevelt, This I Remember, p. 36.

7. Ibid., pp. 34-5.

machinery tools, samples, and other items were leased to him by the three ladies (Appendix 2).<sup>8</sup>

The weaving was to continue under the direction of Nellie Johannsen, and during the winter months she was to teach the art of weaving to anyone in Hyde Park willing to learn. Both Nancy and Marion were to lease their share of ownership in the Weaving Cottage (Val-Kill Inn), actually a small amount, in return for their use of the guest rooms from time to time. Nellie was to live at the Weaving Cottage at Eleanor's pleasure (Appendix 3).<sup>9</sup>

The forge, which was then in the building that later became the playhouse, was leased to Arnold Berge with all the machinery, tools, and equipment (Appendix 4).<sup>10</sup>

Although the operation of the Industries was no longer under the guidance of the three women, the three units continued to use the name of Val-Kill Industries.<sup>11</sup> Eleanor had some reservations about this point. She did not think they should have permitted the three leasees, particularly Otto Berge, to assume the trademark of Val-Kill Industries "as we have no assurance of the way in which

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8. Copy of Memorandum of Lease: Otto Berge, Loan of Machinery, Tools, Equipment, Etc., ca. 1936, Marion Dickerman Collection, Park files.

9. Memorandum of Lease, Weaving Cottage and Handicraft Center, ca. 1936; Memorandum, Weaving Cottage and Center for Handicraft, for, Construction, Furnishings, Equipment, ca. 1936, Marion Dickerman Collection, Park files.

10. Memorandum, The Forge Lease, ca. 1936; Memorandum, The Forge Inventory December 31, 1937, Marion Dickerman Collection, Park files.

11. Cook to Roosevelt, March 18, 1936.

the furniture will be made in the future, nor of the general policy."<sup>12</sup>

In 1938 the three ladies agreed that Eleanor should assume complete ownership of the furniture-making equipment. Although she received no interest on the capital represented by this equipment, she did expect Otto to set up a fund in order to amortize the value of the machinery so that he would be able to replace it as it wore out.<sup>13</sup>

Nellie Johannsen probably owned her weaving looms (while some materials were still owned by the three ladies), but the Val-Kill Tea Room belonged to the former proprietors of the Val-Kill Industries. The 1938 agreement between the former proprietors of the Industries now gave the tea room to Eleanor. Arrangements were made to pay Nellie for her teaching, the money probably coming from a handcraft fund formerly set up by the Industries. Eleanor, meanwhile, demanded a periodic accounting from Nellie of the condition of the tea room and the status of materials which Eleanor now owned.<sup>14</sup>

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12. Roosevelt to Cook, ca. 1936, Marion Dickerman Collection, Park Files.

13. Roosevelt to Berge, December 5, 1938, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection. A letter from Hackett to Marion (Hackett was then handling some of her legal affairs) reveals that Marion held a \$1,000 second mortgage on certain property owned by Otto Berge, "and he has promised to pay it off." Hackett to Dickerman, July 6, 1940, Hackett Collection, F.D.R. Library.

14. Cook to Roosevelt, March 18, 1936; Roosevelt to Cook, March 19, 1936; Roosevelt to Johannsen, December 6, 1938, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

The three separate shops continued to use the promotional literature once belonging to the defunct Val-Kill Industries, and during the early years they were still accountable for either the facilities or the equipment to the three ladies, and after 1938, to Eleanor alone. In the meantime, the former employees of Val-Kill Industries continued to take orders for the White House or for Eleanor's personal list of Christmas, wedding, and birthday gifts.

### Friendships Cool

The association between Eleanor, Nancy, and Marion in the late Twenties and early Thirties had been a very close one. In Chapters One and Five we have tried to show what this association meant to one another. It was inevitable, however, that as Franklin's political star rose, culminating in the Presidency, and as he learned to rely more and more upon Eleanor to spread the gospel of the New Deal this close association would ultimately wane. All sorts of explanations have been given for the drift between Eleanor and her two friends, but perhaps there are no better explanations than those given by Joseph Lash and Kenneth Davis, if only because they represent different views. Meanwhile, Eleanor's writings provide few clues as to what really did happen.

Lash's basic argument is that the break between Eleanor and her two friends came as a result of a shift in Eleanor's interests and that both Nancy and Marion "reacted possessively" towards them.<sup>15</sup> The break came when the three women agreed to discontinue the Val-Kill Industries and convert the shop building into a residence for Eleanor. The objection came when Eleanor

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15. This account is largely based upon Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, pp. 476-79.

demanded clear title to the shop in return for her share in the stone cottage. Both Nancy and Marion refused, which, according to Lash, may have been because they sensed a change in Eleanor's relationship and withdrawal from them. Franklin, said Lash, believed that Nancy and Marion had become too possessive.

In the summer of 1938, while Marion was on an assignment to England, Eleanor and Nancy had an intimate talk in which regrettable words were exchanged between the two. When Marion returned from England and wished to see Eleanor about that talk, the latter refused to see her.

Having failed to receive approval for the exchange of interests in the shop and stone cottage, Eleanor now offered to turn over her share in the Todhunter School fund for clear title to the shop. Marion accepted Eleanor's decision to sever her connections with Todhunter School, but objected to receiving the school fund. She objected because she felt that the school fund was a trust fund, which could not be transferred, and not the personal property of the three women. In the second place, she did not consider it a fair way of compensating Nancy for her share in the shop building. Eleanor retaliated on the first objection on the grounds that all three women had paid income tax on their share of the fund which came out of school profits. If she were to die, she pointed out, her executors would be forced to get her share of the fund for her estate. On the second objection, Eleanor was prepared to make a cash payment. When her lawyer, Harry Hooker, explained to her that she did not have to file a gift-tax return in connection with the transfer of funds to Marion and Nancy, Eleanor insisted she would rather pay the tax since she wanted it recorded that she gave up something which she had possessed in joint ownership.

Lash, it should be said, was a favorite of Eleanor's in the 1930's, and this friendship grew even further in later years. When

Lash had become disenchanted with the American Youth Congress and the German-Soviet nonaggression pact of 1939, Eleanor consoled him and even went so far as to make available her Val-Kill residence which he could retreat to at any time. To him, Eleanor was a heroine who could make few mistakes. Thus, Lash's views on this incident between Eleanor and her two friends are understandably colored.

Kenneth Davis has painted a different picture of what happened in those unfortunate days.<sup>16</sup> He has implied that relations were becoming strained between Eleanor and her friends perhaps as early as 1936 or 1937 when Eleanor proposed that she take over the shop and transform it into her own residence. Nancy and Marion looked upon this as a loosening of the old ties. During this time Eleanor became less and less involved with Todhunter, undoubtedly because of her active schedule as the First Lady, which took up more and more of her time. Unfortunately, this coincided with Marion's plans to expand the school, "a program that led to disappointment as grievous to her as the loss of the shop had been to Nancy."

Eleanor hinted to Franklin that the program of expansion may have been a little too ambitious, and although she was sympathetic with Marion's efforts, she did not lend the moral support that Marion had expected. According to Davis, Eleanor's basic feelings, as revealed to her husband but not to her two friends, was that the wise thing would be for her to withdraw altogether from the Todhunter School. This conclusion was supported by an event that occurred shortly afterwards. In March 1938 when a fund-raising brochure was being prepared, the promoter-editor requested Eleanor

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16. This account is taken from Davis, Invincible Summer, pp. 143-157.

to include a statement that Todhunter would continue to be a major interest even when she left the White House. To this she refused, stating that "I am terribly sorry, but as I do not intend to make the school one of my major interests, I feel it very much wiser to be absolutely honest. It will be one of my interests, but as I have no definite idea of what my other interests will be or where they will take me, I regret that I cannot change my statement." As it happened, the expansion project was set aside as much because of the recession as for other reasons, but Eleanor's response had hit home.

Davis repeated essentially the same set of facts as Lash had concerning the ill-fated talk between Eleanor and Nancy in the summer of 1938. Eleanor was always "too busy" to see Marion about this event.

Davis tells of another incident which strained matters between the friendship. In September 1938 while at a picnic in Val-Kill, attended by the President, Eleanor, Marion, Nancy, Hall Roosevelt (Eleanor's younger brother), as well as a number of close friends, Hall was drinking heavily, as he frequently did on these occasions. In the process of playing with his 12-year old son, he threw him to the ground breaking his collarbone. Hall, frantic but somewhat sobered by the event, insisted on driving the boy to a Poughkeepsie hospital. The boy, naturally frightened, insisted that Marion go along with him. On the way to the hospital the car ran into a ditch. A state trooper, who witnessed the near-accident, took over the wheel for the rest of the way. While at the hospital Marion received a call from Eleanor in which she talked to Marion "in a way [she] had never heard before," blaming her for all that had happened. According to Davis, Eleanor had told the others at the cottage that it was Marion who had driven the car into the ditch.



When Marion returned to Val-Kill that evening, President Roosevelt sent his secretary, Missy (Miss Leland), to tell Marion that he had learned the whole story from the state trooper and that it was not she who had driven the car. The President was very sympathetic.

After this incident, Eleanor wanted absolute and exclusive title to the shop in return for her share in the stone cottage and the Todhunter School fund. Davis described Eleanor's actions as "aggressive martyrdom, this killing generosity."

It must be said that while Davis shows a distinct sympathy for Marion and Nancy in this whole unfortunate episode, his account of what happened is a more balanced account than Lash's. Moreover, he provides a greater insight into the problems that led up to the breakup of a close friendship. As a result, he tends to be careful in his conclusions. Lash, on the other hand, draws conclusions too quickly largely because he has taken little time to analyze some of the hidden motives of the three women.

This writer has attempted to provide a capsulated account of Lash's and Davis's treatment of these events. He will now attempt to give his own story as he has interpreted the record.

In a letter to President Roosevelt in August 1937, more than one year after the Industries was dissolved, Nancy wrote, "Marion and I are taking over the running of the Cottage. Eleanor is doing the old shop building, new garage stable etc. . . . Life is more complicated since we gave up the Val-Kill Communistic State. Since 1932 we have been turning to the right . . . what do you think of that."<sup>17</sup> Her letter was cheerful and hinted of no drift. The

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17. Cook to F.D.R., August 6, 1937, President's Secretary's File, F.D.R. Library.

Industries had long been discontinued, Eleanor was no longer living in the stone cottage, and she was getting her future cottage in shape. In 1938, meanwhile, there was a great deal of talk about the agreement that finally evolved in November 1938. Harry Hooker, a former law partner of Franklin's, was handling legal matters for Eleanor, and he was busy drawing up the agreement. In a telegram to his client in October 1938 Hooker stated that Marion and Nancy were not making any claims for money invested in Val-Kill and did not want to accept payments (presumably the cash settlement that Eleanor wished to make for full ownership of the shop). "They have been very conciliatory and agree to practically all our suggestions."<sup>18</sup>

Eleanor showed annoyance with this and wrote to Nancy and Marion, "I thought I had made it very clear to both of you that I did not care to accept the shop building unless I made financial arrangements which would equalize whatever money you claim to have in the building." "Because you seemed averse to a cash payment," she continued, "I made the suggestion that I would turn over whatever might be my financial interest in the school fund, plus my third in the cottage building and cottage furniture in return for whatever investment in cash you have in the various buildings."<sup>19</sup>

For some unknown reason, Nancy and Marion had refused any cash payment, and Eleanor was resentful that she should be placed in a position that while she lived in the converted shop building, it would not belong to her. In her own words to Hooker on this

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18. Hooker to Roosevelt, October 27, 1938, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

19. Roosevelt to Cook & Dickerman, October 29, 1938; Roosevelt to Hooker, October 29, 1938, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

matter she said, "as long as I was living I wished to feel that the building actually belonged to me and that I was not there because of their kindness and charity."<sup>20</sup> Eleanor now proposed to remove her belongings from the old shop. "As you do not care to handle it in the way I wish," she told Nancy and Marion, "I have decided to turn over to you now, instead of at my death, my entire interest in the cottage, the shop building and the other buildings, exclusive of the stable which was built entirely with my money."<sup>21</sup> She even went one step further. "In view of what has happened I feel that I wish also to withdraw entirely from the school [Todhunter]. I will give you both with great pleasure my share of the school fund which has been held in my name and on which I have paid income tax every year." In the same letter she went on to say that,

I shall only come to Hyde Park when the President is at the big house and I will stay at the big house. . . .

This means that I will not give any Christmas party and I am sure you will not want to bother. However, if you wish to have a tree for yourselves, I am sure <sup>Blog</sup> will provide you with one--large or small as you wish.<sup>22</sup>

Her threat to remove her belongings from her cottage went no farther, for on November 9 the agreement was signed between the parties and many of the difficulties were settled. Eleanor did get most of what she had asked for, but the school fund was not a part of the settlement. In return for the exclusive right to the shop building (excluding the northeast wing, garage, and laundry), the forge (later known as the playhouse), and the land between the

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20. Roosevelt to Hooker, October 29, 1938, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

21. Roosevelt to Dickerman & Cook, October 29, 1938, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

22. Ibid.

shop and stone cottage, Eleanor was to turn over exclusive rights and use of the stone cottage, shop garage, the gardens enclosed by a brick wall, and the picket fence adjacent to the stone cottage. The pool, laundry, northeast wing of the shop, and the grounds in general were to be jointly used. The garage-stable, which Eleanor had built in 1937, was Eleanor's property and remained so. The weaving cottage (Val-Kill Tea Room), where Nellie Johannsen lived, was to be the exclusive right of Eleanor's. While each of the parties were responsible for the upkeep and repair of their own premises according to the condition of the lease, the upkeep of the property that was jointly used was to be a joint venture, except for the pool, which was to be borne solely by Eleanor.

The personal property that had been jointly purchased by the parties was to become the sole personal property of the party already using it. This meant that personal property already in the old shop building was to become Eleanor's, while that personal property in the stone cottage would become Nancy's and Marion's. Finally, the agreement mandated that Nancy and Marion were to transfer their rights, title, and interest to the machinery, tools, and equipment, then in the hands of Otto and Arnold Berge, to Eleanor.<sup>23</sup>

The differences that existed between the women did not end here. There was still a bitter taste left in both parties, and explanations and disclaimers for actions and feelings went back and forth for at least two more years.

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23. Agreement between Nancy Cook, Marion Dickerman, and Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, November 9, 1938, President's Secretary's File. Another copy of this agreement is in the Hackett Collection, F.D.R. Library. Dickerman to Hooker November 6, 1938, Marion Dickerman Collection, Park files.

In a very formal letter sent to Marion only a few days later, Eleanor reiterated her wish to withdraw from the school "for various reasons which we need not go into." The share of her fund "shall revert unconditionally to you and to Nancy."<sup>24</sup> Marion, who had made her feelings known to Franklin and to Hooker earlier, felt that by having Eleanor relinquish her interest in the school fund, she was jeopardizing the fund, which she looked upon as a trust. Eleanor disagreed, contending that Marion had paid a certain amount of the profits to each of the three proprietors and that each one had paid taxes on their tax returns. Later, with the idea of expanding, Marion had placed all the profits in the fund while each continued to pay taxes. Eleanor argued that if she were to die, her share of the fund would go to her executors. "Therefore," she said to Marion, "in refusing to clear this situation up you are jeopardizing that fund in a very real sense." "All I am proposing now," she added, "is to make entirely certain that even in case of my death, this fund will belong to you without any strings tied to it." The rest of her letter contained a great deal that reveals much of her personality. In it she said,

Had you claimed that this was not a fair way of compensating Nancy for her interest in the shop building, I could easily have understood your point, and I would be willing to meet that point with an agreement of payment to her over a period of years. If it is purely a matter of separating the two agreements I am willing to sign the agreement on Val-Kill with that clause stricken out which arranges for compensation through the school fund. I have however, as great a desire to feel that during my life I am living in a building which I own as you have to feel that this fund which you have earned shall be used for a purpose which you decide on. Therefore, I will only live in the shop building if there is a tangible settlement of cash values involved according to Nancy's accounts.

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24. Roosevelt to Dickerman, November 9, 1938, President's Secretary's File.

I have made this perfectly clear to both of you over a long period and last summer I had a talk with Nan. She may not have told you that at that time I told her that for a long period of time I had become conscious of the fact that we three viewed certain things in very different ways. She told me, for instance, that while we were working in the committee, in the school, and in the Industries together, you had both always felt that whatever was done was done for the sole purpose of building me up. My whole conception was entirely different. I went into the Industries because I felt that Nan was fulfilling something which she had long wanted to do. I would never have done it alone. I had neither the knowledge nor the background nor the interest.

I went into the school because I had an interest in education and in young people and being fond of you I was anxious to help you in what you wanted to do. It gave me an opportunity for regular work which I was anxious to have. I went into the political work because Louis was anxious to have me do something to keep up Franklin's interest in a field which he eventually hoped Franklin would return to. I had no personal ambitions of any kind and I have none today.

Nan told me that all my friends sensed a great difference in me and many of them felt a change in attitude just as you and she felt it. That is probably true and I am free to say that I have also felt a change.

I am now willing to meet your objection on the point of not including in our agreement the school fund, but in order to insure your control of this fund, I am enclosing my letter of resignation from all the interests of the school, but however, this does not meet my equally firm decision that I do not care to live in the shop building unless I pay you and Nancy for the money you have involved there, therefore, I make the proposition of a payment of a thousand dollars a year over the next ten years to be paid jointly to you and Nancy or separately if you desire.<sup>25</sup>

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25. Roosevelt to Dickerman & Cook, November 9, 1938, President's Secretary's File.

Marion's answer to Eleanor was one of extreme disappointment, for Eleanor's role in the Todhunter School had meant a lot to her. In her letter she said,

This decision has brought me only the truest sorrow for your part in our work and life here has been stimulating and inspiring to us all. I have valued your help and I feel handicapped at the thought of going on without it and you.

Since you leave me with no alternative, however, in accepting your resignation I also accept in my own name and that of Nancy Cook<sup>26</sup> your share of the funds held jointly by the three of us.

In another letter to Eleanor, written on the same day as the other, Marion felt constrained to again point out, as justification for her earlier position on this matter, that the school fund was separate and distinct from the interests in Val-Kill, the implication being that Eleanor was wrong in attempting to use the fund as a point of bargaining for the shop building. This whole point was now academic for the agreement did not make any mention of a school fund, but Marion thought it was necessary to provide a further explanation of why she had opposed such an action. In any event, she felt compelled to state to Eleanor that,

I regret that the work of eleven years has not seemed to you a matter of sufficient importance to warrant even a single conference, but since this is the case I can only accept your decision of your real wish in the matter.<sup>27</sup>

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26. Dickerman to Roosevelt, November 14, 1938, President's Secretary's File.

27. Dickerman to Roosevelt, November 14, 1938, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

Nancy, who seems to have remained quiet during much of this exchange, finally broke her silence. On the same day that Marion wrote her letter, Nancy wrote Eleanor a letter that reveals much about her and should therefore be quoted in full:

I want to send you this note & tell you how sorry I am.

I know now that I was under a tremendous emotional strain for a very long time. I would not bring myself to face the fact that your feelings were changed towards me.

As time went on I became worse than a box of dynamite for my affection had not altered. We both said harsh & unkind things and I am more sorry than I can say for anything I said. I realize now that my actions and reactions were solely a defense to cover up my real feelings.

Whatever has taken place in the past I want you to know that you are very dear to me and always will be.<sup>28</sup>

This was not the first time that Nancy had written an apology of this sort. Although the question of the school fund was purely academic by now, Marion stood firm on this question, and Eleanor remained equally adamant. Moreover, Eleanor still resented the fact that she had been placed in the position of not having to give a cash settlement in return for the cottage. In February 1939, three months after the agreement had been signed, Eleanor confided to Hooker that

I feel rather bitterly toward Marion for having put me into the position where I have given them nothing in return for what I have exacted of them. It is the first thing which has made me feel really bitterly against them, and this does because it is deliberately refusing to acknowledge that I had any personal rights in that fund

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28. Cook to Roosevelt, November 14 [1938], Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.



. . . I certainly do not want to have any more difficulty with them. However, I am afraid this will make it very difficult for me ever again to feel free at Hyde Park and if the time ever comes when I am free to leave there I will do so with rapidity.<sup>29</sup>

Her second threat to leave Val-Kill was indeed a harsh one, which, as it fortunately turned out, was never again mentioned nor carried out. Six months after the agreement was signed, the friction still remained. Not able to extract from Eleanor the real reasons for her strong position in withdrawing from the Todhunter School, Marion felt that much of the ill-feeling stemmed from the incident at Val-Kill when Hall's young son had broken his collarbone. In addressing herself to this question, Eleanor presented her side of the story. Again, because of what it reveals about her personality, it is quoted here in full:

What you did for Danny that night at Hyde Park was not what called forth my displeasure. I was displeased because you did not let me know that Hall had reached a point where this could happen. I of course, realize that probably not being familiar with gentlemen under those conditions except under different circumstances, you did not realize what was happening. It might have been possible for me to prevent Hall taking the car had I known in time. That would at least have obviated the danger that the situation in the ditch caused, or anything else which might have occurred had you got beyond the ditch.

But that of course, is not my reason for withdrawing from the school, and in fact had nothing whatsoever to do with it.

The talk I had with you last summer was a very preliminary one, but was the result of a long period in which you may not have realized that you, Nan and I were having serious difficulties. After you left, I had a

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29. Roosevelt to Hooker, February 8, 1939, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

long and very illuminating talk with Nan which made me realize that you and Nan felt that you had spent your lives building me up. As I never at anytime intended to put you in that position, and as I never had any personal ambitions, I was a little appalled to discover what was in Nan's mind, and of course must have been in yours. I know Nan well enough to know that you are a great influence and factor in her life.

In addition, on a number of occasions Nan has told me how extremely difficult my name made the school situation for you. You have told me that in spite of that, you wished me to continue my connection because we had begun together. However, in view of the fact that other factors have entered into the situation which made me feel that we no longer had the same relationship that I thought we had had in the past, there was no point in subjecting you to a situation which was detrimental. One real factor was that certain things came back to me through Franklin which made me realize many things which I had never realized before.

With a completely clear understanding, both financially and personally, I feel sure that we can have a very pleasant and agreeable relationship at Hyde Park. Any work I do in the future will of course be along entirely different lines which will not bring me into close contact with either of you in your work.

I shall always [wish] both you and Nan well in whatever you undertake, and I feel sure that we can all enjoy many things at Hyde Park but not on the same basis that we have in the past.<sup>30</sup>

Marion would not let the matter drop there; she felt compelled to answer. First, she said, she had no part in Eleanor's talk with Nancy in the summer of 1938 and felt that she should be allowed to speak for herself. She denied that she ever had made any references to "building up" Eleanor. She knew nothing of what had

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30. Roosevelt to Dickerman, May 17, 1939, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

come down through Franklin since in her talk with him she only referred to the school fund as something separate and apart from the affairs at Val-Kill, a point she had made over and over with others. "I have tried to play fair," she added, "but at times it seems hard to know what 'fair' means." She concluded her letter by saying "Unless you wish to refer to this matter again I shall consider it closed for I have found nothing in it but disillusionment and unhappiness."<sup>31</sup>

The whole matter seems to have been dropped here. Both Eleanor and Marion apparently decided to conclude their correspondance. The relationship between the residents of Val-Kill was never the same again. They continued to observe certain amenities, and Nancy and Marion were frequently invited to affairs that Eleanor and Franklin were hosts to at Val-Kill, but strictly speaking they were never again part of the "family." Eleanor always kept her distance. Meanwhile, Nancy sometimes went out of her way to possibly try to restore the old relationship that once existed.

It was also Nancy who dealt directly with Eleanor on matters in which the women were jointly involved in the upkeep and maintenance of Val-Kill. The November 9 agreement had spelled this out. Joint accounts covering the cost to each of the ladies for this maintenance were carefully kept by Nancy and equally carefully checked by Eleanor.<sup>32</sup> Eleanor, meanwhile, frequently saw fit to suggest to Nancy ways by which they could cut costs and how

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31. Dickerman to Roosevelt, [May 1939], Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

32. Estimated Budget for 1939, Joint V.K. Account; also Joint Val-Kill Disbursement for 1940, enclosure to letter of Cook to Thompson, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

employees could be used more effectively. Nancy was always cautious to see that their "business" relationship would not be misunderstood. Thus, in writing to Eleanor to explain why she took a certain action she said,

I have decided that it will be wise in the future to tell you frankly my real motives in any arrangements which you and I need to make--then there can be no opportunity for others to misinterpret these reasons.<sup>33</sup>

Upon the death of President Roosevelt, his executors, one of whom was his son James Roosevelt, assumed the position of landlord of Val-Kill. In the meantime, Elliott Roosevelt and his actress wife Faye Emerson moved into the Top Cottage. With the Big House turned over to the government as a National Historic Site, the center of gravity for the Roosevelt clan shifted to Val-Kill. Parties and gatherings at Val-Kill, which involved an ever-growing number of grandchildren, became more frequent, and although Eleanor, Nancy, and Marion enjoyed certain amenities, it was obvious that things would eventually change as petty frictions began to arise. In 1944, Nancy wrote a letter to Eleanor in which she could no longer hide her true feelings. In it she outlined some of the irritants that were plaguing her at Val-Kill:

Dear Eleanor,

Although the keeping of the lawn and the flowers in good condition, does mean much to me, we nevertheless are in complete agreement in wanting the children to have a happy summer.

There is no reason why the children should not play on the lawn when they come to swim for when the children [sic] play by themselves they rarely do appreciable damage. I do not recall any harm done by the children when they were playing with each other.

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33. Cook to Roosevelt, December 14, 1938, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

However I do not see the necessity for grown-ups to play games on the lawn since it invariably means rough playing and the throwing of things in the beds thereby breaking flowers and shrubs which I have nursed for years. It also has troubled me to have the dog dig up the flowers in the borders.

I know the pool and grounds around it are to be used in common. A common use of anything means to me, at least a 50-50 consideration by both parties.

You suggest a fence, this would not be a solution and it would do nothing to solve the problem.

When the pool was built I gave \$2318.00 towards its construction. It was then understood that I would not be able financially to assume any part of the upkeep. The fact that you have carried the maintenace [sic] of something which I have used only a dozen times in years, does not wipe out my share in its ownership.

I am returning your check for in these times when labor and supplies are so difficult to secure, Marion and I would like to take care of the grounds at the Cottage.

I hope we can find a common basis of understanding and cooperation.

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34. Cook to Roosevelt, July 4, 1944, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection. It may be of interest to note that while Nancy stated she had contributed \$2318 towards the pool, a memorandum, presumably prepared by Malvina Thompson for Eleanor, shows that the cost of building the pool was \$7,500 and of this sum Franklin contributed \$1,000. Eleanor \$5,000, and Nancy \$1,500. In addition to the \$5,000, Eleanor paid about \$800 for extras. "We have these cancelled check [sic], made out to Miss Cook and the check book stubs are marked (for the pool)." Memorandum, n.d., Eleanor Roosevelt Collection. Four years before the above incident occurred Eleanor wrote to Marion that she should watch her dog and to keep him "fairly well within bounds" since he had already bitten some of her guests and she did not want a similar occurrence. See Roosevelt to Dickerman, June 3, 1940, Marion Dickerman Collection, Park files.

It was obviously a matter of time before Nancy and Marion would leave Val-Kill. According to Marion, "When Elliott came into the place, it became more difficult." "One day Nan and I looked up and said, 'When will we go?'"<sup>35</sup> In a letter to Henry Toombs two years later, Eleanor referred to this as "I am afraid the many children we have with us in the summer were too much for their peace and quiet."<sup>36</sup>

It was not long before an agreement was drawn up (after a suprisingly brief and uncomplicated negotiation) and signed by all three parties on August 25, 1947. In consideration of the sum of \$17,500, Nancy and Marion turned over to Eleanor all their interest, including the stone cottage, at Val-Kill.<sup>37</sup>

Just before they left Val-Kill, Marion wrote a letter to Hackett thanking him for all he had done in arranging the agreement. In it she said, "We are not leaving Hyde Park without certain deep regrets for here we have found in the past much of interest and happiness but in going we believe that we are taking the wise and right course."<sup>38</sup> A few days before they left Val-Kill for good, which was probably soon after Marion had written to Hackett, Nancy wrote these few lines to Eleanor: "Dear Eleanor, I am leaving the keys in an envelope for you. . . . If you are home

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35. Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1972), p. 173.

36. Eleanor to Toombs, June 10, 1949, Henry Toombs Collection, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Georgia.

37. Agreement between Eleanor Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, and Marion Dickerman, August 25, 1947, Hackett Collection; a copy is also filed in Liber of Deeds 697, p. 66, County Clerk's Office, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

38. Dickerman to Hackett, September 21, 1947, Hackett Collection.

before we leave we will come over to see you and say good-bye. Affectionately, Nancy."<sup>39</sup>

Although they saw themselves occasionally after this, a long episode ended in the life of Eleanor in 1947. In later years Eleanor's writings gave little attention to this long association between her, Nancy, and Marion.

### Physical Changes at Val-Kill

#### Shop Building: Eleanor's Cottage (1936-1962)

Before Val-Kill Industries was dissolved in 1936, Eleanor began to make arrangements to convert the shop building into a cottage for herself. Here she was looking for the privacy she so much desired while finding a place to house her many guests. A number of manuscripts dating from early 1936 through late 1938 reveal that extensive work had been done to remodel the old shop into a cottage for herself and her guests. The person Eleanor relied upon to guide her in this extensive renovation was an old friend Henry Osthagen who was a construction engineer by profession. Under his direction, local labor was employed, which, according to Eleanor seemed to be the best way to spend some of the money she had earned over the years.<sup>40</sup> John Eylers of Poughkeepsie was the carpenter contractor, who worked directly from Osthagen's designs, and William Mathews, also of Poughkeepsie, was the mason.

The remodelling of the rambling shop building into a cottage was extensive. Most of it became Eleanor's apartment. A smaller

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39. Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 173.

40. Roosevelt, This I Remember, p. 35; Roosevelt, On My Own, p. 3.

apartment was set aside for Malvina Thompson, her long-time secretary. The remainder of the structure was left for the caretaker and guest rooms.<sup>41</sup>

In her book This I Remember, Eleanor said that "Part of the shop we made into an apartment for my secretary, Malvina Thompson . . . the rest of the building became a guest cottage, which we used when the big house was overcrowded--something that often happened during the years when my husband was president."<sup>42</sup> She was of course speaking of the original wing of the shop being converted for Tommy and her guests. Lash described Tommy's apartment as having two bedrooms and a screened porch where meals were served. A living room served as Tommy's office and a kitchen served as a bar.<sup>43</sup> Lash, who was a frequent guest at Val-Kill, described the complete structure as "a rambling, two-story stucco structure with some twenty rooms of all sizes and shapes, each with its own books and pictures that Eleanor took pleasure in selecting herself. Since the house in time accumulated wings, there were unexpected step-up and step-downs, alcoves and recesses everywhere. . . . Eleanor's bedroom overlooked the pond in which the sunrise and sunset were reflected. She slept on a sleeping porch surrounded by trees. . . ."<sup>44</sup>

In later years Eleanor described her apartment as containing "a small apartment for a couple who work for me, two living rooms,

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41. For a complete description of the alterations, refer to the Historic Structure Report.

42. Roosevelt, This I Remember, p. 35.

43. Lash, Eleanor and Franklin, p. 480.

44. Ibid., p. 479.



a dormitory for young guests, two large porches downstairs, and a sleeping porch upstairs."<sup>45</sup>

#### Stone Cottage (1947-1962)

After Nancy and Marion moved from Val-Kill, selling their interest to Eleanor in 1947, Eleanor used the stone cottage as a guest house for a few years. Little renovation was done to it in these years. In 1951 her son John Roosevelt moved into it and remained there until 1970 when Val-Kill was sold. While living in the stone cottage, John made a few changes to accommodate his family. A dormer window was placed in the attic story facing the front of the house. At the rear of the house, on the northeast corner an additional wing was constructed, which was used as a laundry. Other changes included the addition of a partition that divided the large bedroom on the second floor and enclosing the porch with stone and windows.

#### Other Structures

Several changes to the physical appearance of other structures were made from time to time between 1938 and 1970, especially during the period that John Roosevelt lived at Val-Kill. The old "forge" building at the rear of the shop was converted to a recreation room in 1941 and it was then called the playhouse.<sup>46</sup> The cost of this work amounted to \$3,000. In later years John Roosevelt converted the playhouse into an apartment which he

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45. Roosevelt, On My Own, pp. 3-4. See illustration no. 31 for a view of a section of the living room.

46. Mathews to Osthagen, June 25, 1941, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection; Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier, October 22, 1941.



Illustration No. 31

Alcove to Eleanor's living room  
ca. 1940

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

rented. In addition to several interior changes, he converted the porch on the side of the house into a room.<sup>47</sup>

John also made several changes to the garage-stable which his mother had built. A metal roof was put on in the place of the old shingle roof. The old swingout doors to the garage were replaced by overhead doors. Finally, the corral that adjoined the structure was removed.<sup>48</sup>

### Life Continues

(1945-1962)

Although Eleanor took over the shop and converted it into a cottage in 1936-1937 (legally in 1938) and she added other facilities to Val-Kill, such as the garage-stable, she continued to use Val-Kill only on weekends and during vacations. At other times it was used by her family and friends, wishing an escape from the humdrum of their own lives.

It was not until 1945, while accompanying her husband's body from Warm Springs, that she made the decision to use Val-Kill as her permanent residence. "I was grateful," she said in later years, "that Anna [her daughter] was in the house and she, with Tommy and Mrs. Helm, made all the necessary arrangements, and Mrs. Nesbitt [the housekeeper] kept our complicated household running smoothly."<sup>49</sup>

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47. Interview with John A. Roosevelt by author, October 5, 1978.

48. Ibid.

49. Roosevelt, On My Own, p. 4.

During the days following her husband's death, Eleanor was busy preparing all her household goods at the White House for shipment to Val-Kill. Among these items were large quantities of furniture, household wares, and food supplies.<sup>50</sup>

When Eleanor returned to Hyde Park in 1945 to make it her home, her son Elliott had agreed to live there. He and his actress wife, Faye Emerson, took over his father's Top Cottage, which was not far from Eleanor's cottage. According to Eleanor, his decision to live at the Top Cottage had much to do with her decision to live at Val-Kill. "If Elliott were not at Hyde Park," she once said, "I would not live there, in fact I would not want to."<sup>51</sup> At first glance, a statement of this nature would seem odd, knowing how Eleanor felt about Val-Kill, but at the time she made it, she may have felt a great need to lean upon the shoulders of her children. In any case, Eleanor was happy to see Elliott take over the many duties of a landlord--maintain the grounds and supervise employees. "I will be very glad to have you here to supervise some of the men on the place," she wrote to him. "They are getting me down and I can not keep track of what everybody ought to be doing and I know I am not doing the right thing," she added.

Malvina Thompson, who had an apartment at Val-Kill since 1936, was another important factor in Eleanor's decision to live there. Few people understood Eleanor as much as Malvina did.

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50. Inventory of Articles sent to Cottage, n.d. (Appendix 5), and Inventory of Food, etc. Sent to Cottage, n.d., Eleanor Roosevelt Collection. The first cited inventory should be excellent for identifying the furnishings of Eleanor's cottage during the post 1945 years.

51. Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1972), pp. 25, 173.

Franklin's will provided that the income from his estate, which was valued at about \$1,200,000 at his death, would go to Eleanor during her lifetime. At her death the estate was to be divided into five equal parts, one for each of the children. Each of his children was to get half of his or her fifth share as well as the income from the other half of the fifth share, which was to be held in trust during their lives and to go per stirpes to the children of each of the five.<sup>52</sup>

It would be about three years before the estate would be settled. In the meantime, Eleanor and Elliott needed to rent the land, which they had proposed to use for a farm. The executors of the estate refused to go along with this however, indicating that they were forced to sell the land and buildings, except for her cottage at Val-Kill, to the highest bidder. Reluctantly, Eleanor was compelled to purchase 825 acres of farm land, woods, and buildings of the estate from earnings of the estate which she had inherited. She feared that if she had not purchased the land, her children might not have it in the event they wanted it after her death. Eleanor felt that as long as she could earn her own living she could put all that the estate paid to her into the farm.<sup>53</sup> She purchased the 825 acres only after she was assured that Elliott and his family would settle in Val-Kill.

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52. Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 26, footnote. James Roosevelt said that although his father willed this Hyde Park mansion and some acres to the government for a National Historic Site, he left Eleanor about 1,000 acres, including her Val-Kill home. All other income from his estate went to her for the rest of her life. James Roosevelt and Bill Libby, My Parents: A Differing View (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1976), p. 290.

53. Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 25-26; Irene Rieterman Sandifer, Mrs. Roosevelt: As We Knew Her (privately printed, 1975), p. 32.

When he did arrive, they formed a partnership, calling it the Val-Kill Company, Incorporated, in order to farm the land commercially. Eleanor paid the estate \$87,000, \$50,000 of which came from her own resources and \$37,000 of which was financed through a mortgage that Elliott undertook. Elliott owned 75 percent interest and Eleanor the remainder. In the heyday of its operations there were 40 dairy cattle, 100 beef cattle, 30 brood sows, 2,500 laying turkey hens, and several hundred acres of land upon which fir and spruce trees had been planted by Franklin. The newly founded company sold Christmas trees just as Franklin had done in years past.<sup>54</sup> In 1946, the company planted 6,500 Christmas trees.<sup>55</sup>

In 1948 the newly formed company purchased another 259 acres from the executors of Franklin's estate, so that there were now more than 1,000 acres in the company.<sup>56</sup> That same year the company expanded into other areas, some remotely related to farming. It opened up the Val-Kill Inn, which at one time had been occupied by Nellie Johannsen as the Val-Kill Tea Room. The old structure was remodelled to form a hotel and restaurant utilizing products from local farms. One news article noted the event as follows:

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and her son Elliot [sic] are remodeling Val-Kill Station into an inn as part of a five-year program to develop Val-Kill Farms into a major agricultural project. Old white farmhouse will be hotel and dining room, using mostly products of local farms.<sup>57</sup>

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54. Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 172.

55. Sandifer, p. 36.

56. Liber of Deeds 694, p. 216, June 10, 1948, County Clerk's Office, Dutchess County, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

57. Alfred Steinberg, Mrs. R, The Life of Eleanor Roosevelt (New York: G.P. Putman's Sons, 1958), p. 344. The quotation appears on the reverse side of the photograph with the caption "Val-Ann's Restaurant," F.D.R. Library.

As in many of Elliott's ventures, despite his mother's moral and financial support, the Val-Kill company failed. The Christmas tree business was the only successful part of the operation, trees selling at one-dollar apiece. In 1949, there was still some enthusiasm left in Eleanor when she reported that the dairy was paying off but the chickens were not. She and Elliott now realized that they would have to have a greater mass production than they had in order to make chicken farming profitable.<sup>58</sup>

Any optimism which she may have had left for the future of the farm was soon diminished, for by 1950-51, as much for his personal problems as for his other failures, Elliott no longer had the enthusiasm for farming that he initially had demonstrated. At this time he began to sell some of the company's land. Some small parcels were purchased by Eleanor's friends, not the least of whom were Richard Harritey and Joseph Lash, but much larger parcels were purchased by commercial interests.<sup>59</sup> Among the larger purchasers was William H. Kays, Jr., head of a construction firm and a beef cattle raiser, who bought 500 acres. The land which included the Top Cottage, was to be used for residential development. A later sale to the same person transferred another 216 acres of the farm.<sup>60</sup> By this time Val-Kill had been reduced to a relatively small area, which included Eleanor's cottage and the other structures around it.

The failure of the Val-Kill Company did not dissolution Elliott for very long, for, with his mother's blessings, he soon formed the

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58. Sandifer, p. 85.

59. Ibid., p. 88.

60. New York Times, April 18, 1952; Liber of Deeds 807, p. 238, June 24, 1952.

Roosevelt Enterprises, an organization devoted to selling Eleanor's services on radio and television. Eleanor was convinced that her son "had to be established & encouraged to become secure."<sup>61</sup>

The scene at Hyde Park was now changing, and Elliott's sale of the property was hastening that change. Commercial businesses and places of entertainment were rising on what was once Franklin's estate. In the summer of 1949, a movie theater opened up on Route 9 directly across from the entrance to the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site. Next to it eventually opened a Howard Johnson Restaurant, a gift shop, and a motel. To the south, east, and north of the tract on which Eleanor lived rose several residential homes on land that Eleanor and her son had at one time purchased from Franklin's estate.

With the mansion now a government property, the attention and activities of the large Roosevelt clan shifted to Val-Kill where "Mummy" or "Grand'mere," depending on whether her children or grandchildren were addressing her, lived. In 1952, in addition to her five children, Eleanor had 18 grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, numerous cousins, and nine daughters-in-law and ex-daughters-in-law all of whom came to Val-Kill on one occasion or another, many of them staying for days. Christmas and Thanksgiving were always occasions for large gatherings with Eleanor as its matriarch. Other holidays also saw large family reunions. On the Fourth of July it was always customary for one of her sons to read the Declaration of Independence.<sup>62</sup>

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61. Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 173.

62. David A. Gurewitsch, Eleanor Roosevelt: Her Day (New York: Interchange Foundation, 1973), photograph with caption, pp. 52-53. See also photographs of Christmas and Thanksgiving at the dinner table, ibid., pp. 54-56.



Her family meant a great deal to her. No problem suffered by any of her children or grandchildren was too small for her to consider. Her children's marital difficulties hurt her deeply, and wives and former wives of her sons sought her advice constantly. The children of former wives were always welcome in her house. She was very much concerned about her sons' political careers, always advising and cautioning them along the way. No matter how busy her schedule she always found time for her family. She even included them in many of her trips abroad. Joseph Lash has provided an excellent account of the family gatherings at Val-Kill:

She usually presided over the gatherings of her family at Val-Kill with a benign, matriarchal calm, writing out the menus, making the table order, serving the food herself from a hot plate or a side table. The larger the family party--and in the Roosevelt household the line between family and friends was always blurry--the better she liked it. While children and friends milled in and out of the various rooms of the cottage, having drinks, exchanging political gossip, disputing loudly, she was always an oasis of calm. Strangers present at an argument among the Roosevelt children often thought that they were about to commit mayhem on each other. 'Plenty of variety but basically a great deal of unity' Mrs. Roosevelt would reassure her guests and herself.<sup>63</sup>

Besides her large family, Val-Kill was always opened to visitors of one kind or another--the great as well as the small, the old as well as the young, the privileged as well as the deprived, the educated as well as the less fortunate, and members of every nationality, race, creed, and political persuasion. Her orderly nature lead her to provide typewritten directions for her guests on how to reach Val-Kill, and to those visitors arriving by train she frequently met them personally at the station.<sup>64</sup>

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63. Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, p. 179.

64. Directions for Driving to Val-Kill Cottage, Hyde Park, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

When Eleanor wrote her book On My Own in 1958 she noted that "my mother-in-law once remarked that I liked to 'keep a hotel' and I probably still do when I am at Hyde Park." She described these many visitations to Val-Kill in the following manner:

There usually seem to be plenty of guests there and they may include almost anyone from the Emperor of Ethiopia to my newest great-grand-child. Sometimes, there are so many guests that they arrive by the busload--perhaps a group of college students from various foreign countries who came for a few hours to sit under the trees and talk with me on any subject they please, or perhaps a crowd of seventy-five or so employees of the United Nations who have been invited for a picnic. Each year I also have a picnic for about 150 youngsters from Wiltwyck School for delinquent boys. On that occasion I always try to enlist the help of my grandchildren, who wait on the guests and organize outdoor games. We feed the boys plenty and then they usually lie on the grass for a while and I read them a story such as Kipling's "Rikki-tikki-tavi" or "How the Elephant Got His Trunk." We always have a package of candy for each boy before they go home.

My picnic ground is a large one and in summers it is used perhaps once or twice a week by some school or social group and, if I am there, I always try to stop by to speak to them for a few moments. Otherwise, they have to take care of themselves. For that matter, my own guests at Hyde Park usually have to fend for themselves much of the time because there are certain periods every day when I have to be busy at my work. There are a pool where they can swim, a tennis court, a stream full of water lilies and a boat and plenty of room for walking over the countryside--accompanied by my Scotty if he feels in the mood. When there are small children at the cottage, my son and I often pay my older grandchildren to organize and supervise activities around the pool and on the tennis court. There are always youngsters of some age around because John has a home next door and Franklin lives only about forty-five minutes away. Elliott, as I have mentioned, also lived for awhile in the Top Cottage, which my husband had built on the hill about a mile from my cottage but he later moved to Colorado and the cottage has since been sold.

At Hyde Park, especially in the summertime, there are so many large groups of visitors that it is necessary for me to have more of a staff than when I am in New

York City. In addition to a secretary, I have a couple who live at the cottage--Mr. and Mrs. Lester Entrup, a woman who comes in daily, a man who drives my car when necessary and two men on the place. We employ temporary helpers for special occasions. Most of the time, however, we make everything as simple as possible and life at the cottage is far different from what it used to be at the big house.

I drive my own car at Hyde Park, sometimes meet guests at the railroad station five miles from my cottage and do much of my own shopping at the roadside stands. I like to shop myself because at the roadside stands I pay cash and therefore I am able to check on prices and compare them, whereas in the city, where things are usually charged, I never seem to know what I am paying for food. During the summer months, I keep the deep-freeze well stocked and always try to be prepared to feed any number up <sup>65</sup> to twenty--most of them unexpected--for luncheon.

In the years between 1945 and 1962 Val-Kill became the Mecca for leaders all over the world. True, the burial ground of President Roosevelt attracted many of them to pay their respects, but the unmistakable live attraction at Hyde Park was Eleanor. Her strong humanitarian values and her clear enunciation of these values drew leaders of all kinds to her side. In associating many of these events with Val-Kill, one writer who knew her wrote that the "cottage at Val-Kill remained the special place where people came from America and all over the world with their problems, their ideas and their dreams."<sup>66</sup>

Winston Churchill had visited Hyde Park twice during the war and once after President Roosevelt died. The King and Queen of England had also visited when the President was still alive. Exiled

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65. Roosevelt, On My Own, pp. 23-4.

66. Algernon Black, "Val-Kill was more than a home," n.d., unknown newspaper, Park files.

royalty--Queen Wilhelmina and Princess Juliana of the Netherlands as well as Crown Princess Martha of Norway--were frequent guests at Val-Kill during the war. Other distinguished guests in later years, after President Roosevelt died, were the Emperor of Ethiopia, Premier Nikita Krushchev of Russia, President Josip Tito of Yugoslavia, and Prime Minister Nehru of India.<sup>67</sup> In her column, "My Day," Eleanor describes in her own casual and simple way the day that the King and Queen of England spent at Val-Kill:

Nothing was planned for the afternoon, so we sat under the trees around the swimming pool. The President and the King went in swimming, while the Queen and Lady Nunburnholme with some other members of the household sat around under the trees with me and looked on.<sup>68</sup>

Some visits of prominent people to Val-Kill carried serious political implications. After the differences that occurred between Eleanor and Cardinal Spellman of the Catholic Archdiocese of New York over the question of federal aid to parochial and private schools, relations between the two were so strained that it was feared they might hurt the chances of former Governor Herbert Lehman in his race for the U.S. Senate. In order to soften matters and at the behest of Ed Flynn, head of the Democratic Party in New York State, Cardinal Spellman appeared personally at the door to Eleanor's cottage where both he and Eleanor worked out an agreement on public statements that both were to make.<sup>69</sup> Thus,

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67. The several photographs in the F.D.R. Library and Marion Dickerman Collection (Park files), and the illustrations and narrative accounts appearing in such books as Gurewitsch, Eleanor Roosevelt: Her Day; Roosevelt, On My Own; and Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, depict a number of these occasions at Val-Kill.

68. Eleanor Roosevelt, "My Day," ca. 1939, newspaper unknown, Marion Dickerman Collection, Park files.

69. Lash, Eleanor: The Years Alone, pp. 162-166 provides an excellent account of this incident and its outcome.

what could have had serious political repercussions, was mollified by an act of compromise at Val-Kill.

Another visit to Val-Kill that had political overtones, though not in the same degree, was that of John F. Kennedy in 1959. In seeking the Democratic presidential nomination, Kennedy sought Eleanor's support. Prior to this point, Eleanor had been somewhat skeptical of Kennedy, believing that his Catholic faith might interfere with his judgements if he became President, but after his visit, he was able to win her support.

Eleanor was always concerned about the welfare of people who had joined her in various humanitarian causes, especially if they were from other lands. She thus tried to make life a little more pleasant for the lower echelons of the United Nations Secretariat. She was instrumental in establishing a program of entertainment which included trips to Val-Kill for picnics and swimming. These groups arrived at Val-Kill by the bus-load.<sup>70</sup>

The annual picnic she sponsored for the Wiltwyck Boys was an event she took very seriously (Illustration No. 32). One observer to this affair in 1955 reported the event in some detail:

Saturday morning we swam and played tennis and then had a picnic for 150 little boys from the nearby school for children too young for reform school. Most of them are just starting and it seems such a shame. She has this picnic for them every year and everything must be just the same. They each had at least four or five hot dogs. Barbara . . . and I must have said mustard, relish or both at least 500 times. That was her job, and of course none of us had anything to eat and we were, including Mrs. Roosevelt, about ready to drop in our track before

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70. Sandifer, p. 16.



Illustration No. 32

Member of the Wiltwyck School being  
greeted by Mrs. Roosevelt, ca. 1950s

Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

the line slowed down enough for us to grab a bite for ourselves. Then she reads to them, usually, Ricki-Ticki-Tavi and then they go to the Library.

Another annual event that Eleanor sponsored from 1946 until her death was the picnic for the Encampment for Citizenship. The young membership arrived at about 10 in the morning and settled down in the picnic area. Before and after the picnic lunch, Eleanor asked individuals such questions as "Where did you come from?" "What have you gotten out of the Encampment experience?" "What do you intend to do with your life?" In turn, the campers asked her some questions: "What is it like to be the wife of the President?" "What is it like to live in the White House?" "What is the United Nations?" "Do you really think it can help the nations make peace?"<sup>72</sup>

Many of these group meetings served as workshops and others were simply retreats, an occasion to get away from the influences of the city or a controlled situation, into a peaceful uncontrolled, country environment. This was, after all, why Eleanor came to Val-Kill (Illustration Nos. 33, 34).

With her extremely busy schedule, Eleanor's guests were amazed at how well she was able to handle matters at Val-Kill without the least inconvenience to herself or to anyone. She had always been a person who was very well organized and orderly in her life in all things she did. It was no different at Val-Kill even in the midst of her guests. This orderly life was clearly reflected in the written instructions which she left to each of her employees.

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71. Ibid., p. 106.

72. Black, "Val-Kill was more than a home."



Illustration No. 33

Group meeting with Mrs. Roosevelt at Val-Kill  
ca. 1950

Courtesy of ELSA ROGO  
Franklin D. Roosevelt Library





Illustration No. 34

United Nations group meeting with Mrs. Roosevelt  
ca. 1958

Courtesy of Max Machol, United Nations  
Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

To each of them she provided instructions on their daily chores, days off, and which of her guests was to sleep in what room.<sup>73</sup>

She placed great reliance and faith upon the people who worked for her, and in return they were devoted to her. Lester and Marge Entrup, who worked as general handyman and cook respectively during the last six years of her life, were always introduced by Eleanor to her guests as her "friends", never as her "servants."<sup>74</sup>

While credit must be given to the Entrups and to other employees for the orderliness in which these affairs were run, Eleanor also took a personal interest in the menus that she served her guests. Her Day Book reveals in her own handwriting the menu for the following day and how many guests were to attend each meal. The following entries are examples:

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73. Typewritten instructions to Alice, William, Hilda, and John, ca. 1950, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection.

74. Interview with Lester and Marge Entrup by the author, June 26, 1978. In a letter written to the Entrups by Anna Roosevelt Holsted, while she was living abroad, she said, "We're so happy that Mother has you both as devoted friends to look after her. It's a comforting feeling for us while we are halfway round the world from home." Holsted to Entrup, ca. 1957, owned by Mrs. Marge Entrup, Hyde Park, N.Y. One frequent guest to Val-Kill had this compliment to give to the Entrups: "The food was excellent and well planned for all of us on this long weekend. Mr. and Mrs. Lester Entrup, a local Hyde Park couple, had come to work for Mrs. Roosevelt in the middle fifties. 'Marge' Entrup was a good cook who planned her work well which I especially observed in her preparations for the big Wiltwyck picnics. She and her husband contributed a great deal toward a smoothly running establishment to care for Mrs. Roosevelt's many guests." Sandifer, p. 122.

May 25, 1957  
6:30 [p.m.] Supper for 2  
hamburger or pork chops  
potatoes vegetables  
jello cookies  
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May 26, 1957 - Sunday  
9 [a.m.] Breakfast for 5  
Coffee tea cakes & cocoa  
rhubarb or fruit in dish for everyone  
no lunch  
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July 21, 1957 - Sunday  
9 [a.m.] breakfast (for) 10  
1 [p.m.] dinner (for) 7  
5 [p.m.] ice tea for 9 cake or cookies<sup>75</sup>  
5 [p.m.] Supper for 11 eggs and ham

Eleanor enjoyed everything about Val-Kill: her daily walks through the woods, swimming at the pool, work in the garden, and automobile rides through the countryside. These activities, together with meetings with her family, friends, and visitors in general, made her life at Val-Kill an extremely busy one. Her energies never seemed to slacken even in her old age. Her son James has said that "It is not an easy thing today [1959] to catch my fabulous mother in a state of repose, for Eleanor Roosevelt in her seventies is as active as I can remember her in her fifties, if not more so."<sup>76</sup>

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75. 1957 Anna Eleanor Roosevelt Day Book, owned by Mrs. Marge Entrup, Hyde Park, N.Y.

76. James Roosevelt and Sidney Schalett, Affectionately, F.D.R.: A Son's Story of a Lonely Man (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1959), p. 23.

Her self-discipline and ability to organize coupled with her great love of people and a compassion for their well-being enabled Eleanor to become instrumental, if not the leader, in many great causes of her times. Perhaps her single greatest achievement occurred as Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization where she was the guiding force behind the Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenants. For this and other achievements she rightfully gained the appellation as "The First Lady of the World" given her by President Truman.

While it would be most difficult to attribute Eleanor Roosevelt's success and achievements to Val-Kill, there was a connection between that place which she loved and the ideals she espoused and lived by. While she still would have been the great humanitarian she was had there been no Val-Kill, one cannot help draw the conclusion that Val-Kill, as a way of life, had a great influence upon her life. Her great strength of character, her humility, and her love of people were personal attributes that received nourishment from Val-Kill. One writer seems to have grasped this phenomenon well when she said:

To gain an understanding of the personality of Mrs. Roosevelt one must picture her here in her unpretentious informal Val Kill Cottage which she chose for herself. She liked the simplicity of life at Val Kill and loved the beauties of nature which surrounded her and seemed to have <sup>no</sup> greater joy than sharing with others her life here.

And again, the same writer said,

This nature so sensitive to people also reached out to an intense enjoyment of nature, the mountains, the valley,

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77. Sandifer, p. 22.

the beauty of the flowering loose strife bordering the stream by the cottage, the woods, the enjoyment of the dogs and the simple things of life. Her columns repeatedly had such statements as 'I reluctantly left the country to return to the city.' Yet this she must do, as we who knew her realized, because as long as there were injustices to human beings and conditions leading to threats of war she could not rest.<sup>78</sup>

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78. Ibid., p. 134.

## CHAPTER VII VAL-KILL TODAY

After Eleanor died, John Roosevelt, who had inherited her personal possessions at Val-Kill, sold them at auction along with items that had furnished her apartment in New York City. There was a total of 2,411 items that had belonged in Val-Kill.<sup>1</sup>

Two years later, John who had also inherited the Val-Kill properties, sold a small parcel of land to Charles A. Curnan, longtime caretaker of Val-Kill, who then built a house on the land.<sup>2</sup> This is the structure that stands not far from the entrance to Val-Kill. John continued to live at the stone cottage for eight more years. He converted his mother's cottage into four apartments, renting each one of them. The playhouse was also rented as a single apartment, and there seems to be some evidence that the old doll house was also lived in.

In 1970 he placed the Val-Kill property on sale at the offering price of \$200,000. A news article noted that the

tract contains a small lake and four buildings, including Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, which was converted into four apartments; her former office [playhouse?] converted into one apartment; a stone cottage in which John Roosevelt and his wife have resided; a small horse barn and stable, and a swimming pool.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Exhibition and Sale, Personal Possessions From the Estate of Eleanor Roosevelt, September 18 to October 3, 1964, Catalog proceeds for the benefit of the Eleanor Roosevelt Foundation, Hammer Galleries, N.Y., N.Y., copy owned by Mrs. Marge Entrup, Hyde Park, N.Y.

2. Liber of Deeds 1160, p. 355, November 30, 1964, County Clerk's Office, Dutchess County, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

3. Poughkeepsie Journal, August 30, 1970.

The purchasers of the property, which the news article had referred to as consisting of 194 acres, were Doctors Rosario G. Dolce and William J. Squires of Long Island. While the article stated that the property consisted of 194 acres, the deed noted only 173.97 acres. Charles Curnan also sold his parcel of land to the same buyers.<sup>4</sup> The property was purchased for speculative reasons. The new owners continued to rent the apartments as the preceding owner had done in addition to renting the stone cottage as a single apartment. In the meantime, the new owners submitted a proposal to the town of Hyde Park to build condominiums for elderly people, but the proposal was turned down.<sup>5</sup> In 1972, in another attempt, the owners tried to have the land rezoned in order to establish a nursing home and several single family units, but again, their application was denied.<sup>6</sup>

On May 26, 1977, Congress established the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site. The enabling legislation authorized an appropriation of \$575,000 for acquisition of lands and for its development.<sup>7</sup> The U.S. government paid the owners \$300,000 for 179.77 acres of land in 1978, allowing the tenants sufficient time to relocate.<sup>8</sup>

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4. Liber of Deeds 1300, p. 294, December 16, 1970; Liber of Deeds 1293, p. 289, September 1, 1970.

5. New York Times, May 16, 1970.

6. Questionnaire at hearing on the proposed Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site in Hyde Park, N.Y., April 28, 1977, Park files.

7. Public Law 95-32, 95th Congress, May 26, 1977, 91 Stat. 171.

8. Declaration of Taking, U.S.A. vs Rosario G. Dolce and William J. Squires, et al., County Clerk's Office, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### I. Manuscripts

Atlanta, Georgia. Georgia Department of Archives and History. Henry Johnston Toombs Collection. This collection consists of a large volume of architectural drawings of some of the major structures at Val-Kill. It also contains early photographs of the area and miscellaneous letters, specifications, and contracts relating to the structures.

Hyde Park, New York. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. Contains the following collections pertinent to Val-Kill: Eleanor Roosevelt Collection, Franklin D. Roosevelt Collection, President's Secretary's File, Hackett Collection, Marion Dickerman Papers, and miscellaneous collections of papers and photographs relating to the Roosevelt family and to Val-Kill. Together these collections represent a rich source of information concerning the life of Eleanor Roosevelt and her years at Val-Kill. The collections also contain much information on the structures at Val-Kill.

Hyde Park, New York. Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site. Marion Dickerman Collection. This is a very rich collection of photographs, movie films, and miscellaneous documents pertaining to life at Val-Kill. The park has been fortunate recently in acquiring these items. This acquisition by the park should provide much basic information needed to preserve and interpret Val-Kill. Most of the items pertain to years before 1947, although there are a few that go beyond this year.

\_\_\_\_\_. Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site. Historical Files. These items, most of which are duplicated from other sources, represent an initial attempt to put together a story of Val-Kill.

\_\_\_\_\_. Marge Entrup Papers. A small privately owned collection of photographs and letters acquired while Mrs. Entrup and her late husband worked for Mrs. Roosevelt.

Poughkeepsie, New York. Frank Landolfa Papers. A small privately owned collection of miscellaneous items relating to the furniture shop of Val-Kill Industries.

\_\_\_\_\_. County Clerk's Office, Dutchess County. Contains Liber of Deeds and other legal documents that provide some descriptions of land at Val-Kill.



## 2. Printed Sources

Roosevelt, Eleanor. Autobiography: This Is My Story. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937. The period covered by this source is Mrs. Roosevelt's childhood, her early years of marriage, and in general the years before Val-Kill. It provides an insight as to how her character and personality developed during these years.

\_\_\_\_\_. On My Own. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958. This book covers Mrs. Roosevelt's later years, after her husband died, her activities in the United Nations, and her use of Val-Kill as a permanent residence. It is richly illustrated.

\_\_\_\_\_. This I Remember. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949. This book covers the years of the twenties, thirties, and early forties, and is therefore an excellent source on Mrs. Roosevelt's life at Val-Kill. It is well illustrated.

Roosevelt, Elliott, ed. F.D.R.: His Personal Letters, 1905-1928. 4 vols. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1947-50. Volume II contains a few items dealing with F.D.R.'s role in Val-Kill.

Sandifer, Irene Rieterman. Mrs. Roosevelt: As We Knew Her. Privately Printed, 1975. Contains much primary source material including a description and schematic drawings of Eleanor's Cottage. It is also a good account of Mrs. Roosevelt after 1945. It contains no index or table of contents.

## 3. Secondary Works

Davis, Kenneth S. Invincible Summer: An Intimate Portrait of the Roosevelts based on the recollections of Marion Dickerman. New York: Atheneum, 1974. Although largely a secondary work, it contains much primary source material. This work is based upon Miss Dickerman's collection and is excellent because it provides a viewpoint from one of the early direct participants in Val-Kill. The book is not entirely free of errors, however.

Dows, Olin. Franklin Roosevelt at Hyde Park. New York: American Artist Group, 1949. Contains some information on F.D.R. as an architect.

Gurewitsch, David A. Eleanor Roosevelt: Her Day. This is an album of photographs of Eleanor Roosevelt in her later years taken by the author who was her personal physician and close friend. Many of the photographs are about Val-Kill.

- Hareven, Tamara K. Eleanor Roosevelt: An American Conscience. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968. Contains little on Val-Kill, but it is a good analysis of Eleanor Roosevelt.
- Hershan, Stella K. A Woman of Quality. New York: Crown Publishers, 1970. There are several anecdotes in this book from people who used to work for her at Val-Kill.
- Kearney, James R. Anna Eleanor Roosevelt: The Evolution of a Reformer. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968. A good review of Eleanor Roosevelt's social programs.
- Lash, Joseph P. Eleanor Roosevelt: A Friend's Memoir. New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1964. Eleanor is the author's heroine and she can do no harm. Nevertheless, it is an excellent biography.
- Lash, Joseph P. Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of their relationship, based on Eleanor Roosevelt's private papers. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1971. A scholarly and well documented biography of the Roosevelts. Although slanted towards Eleanor, it is perhaps the best biography of this great woman.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Eleanor: The Years Alone. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1972. This is the story of Eleanor Roosevelt in the years following her husband's death. The United Nations and other projects that interested her are thoroughly recorded in a well-written and interesting style. Contains an interesting account of life at Val-Kill.
- Roosevelt, Elliott and Brough, James. An Untold Story: The Roosevelts of Hyde Park. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1973. Certain revelations are made here about his parents for the first time, but treatment of Val-Kill is superficial.
- Roosevelt, James, with Libby, Bill. My Parents: A Differing View. Chicago: Playboy Press, 1976. The author reviews his own, his brothers', and sister's relationships with their parents. Although his treatment of Val-Kill is more serious than his brother Elliott's, it is not conclusive.
- Roosevelt, James and Shalett, Sidney. Affectionately, F.D.R.: A Son's Story of a Lonely Man. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1959. As the title suggests, this work is directed mostly at his father.
- Steinberg, Alfred. Mrs. R., The Life of Eleanor Roosevelt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1958. A good biography but little on Val-Kill.

#### 4. Periodicals

Anonymous. "A Governor's Wife and Her Workshop: Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt of New York Builds a Workshop to Glorify an Ideal, As told in a personal interview with the editor." The Home Craftsman, July-August 1932. Excellent materials on the Val-Kill Industries.

Anonymous. "The Art of Creating Heirlooms." Syracuse University Alumni News, September 1930. An excellent summary of the Val-Kill Industries and Nancy Cook's role.

Greenbie, Sidney. "Whither Eleanor Roosevelt? A Refuge from Speed and Monotony--Val-Kill." Leisure, Vol. 1. No. 6, May 1934. Treats of the basic philosophy behind the Val-Kill Industries.

Roosevelt, Eleanor. "What I hope to Leave Behind." Pictorial Review, April 1933. Mrs. Roosevelt sets down some of the philosophy which she lived by.

Watson, Lee Rae. "Revival of Hand Craft: New York Governor's Wife and Associates Reproducing Furniture of Early Periods." The Modern Home. ca. 1930. Contains some illustrations of the old shop.

Wyandt, Frieda. "A Governor's Wife at Work." Your Home, September 1929. A good summary of the Val-Kill Industries.

#### 5. Newspapers

New York Times, issues for  
May 17, 1927  
April 8, 1928  
December 2, 1928  
March 19, 1929  
October 1, 1929  
November 28, 1929  
December 3, 1929  
April 8, 1930  
April 25, 1930  
May 13, 1930  
November 16, 1930

Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier. Poughkeepsie, New York. Issues for  
April 27, 1930  
September 3, 1933  
December 24, 1933

May 20, 1934  
December 31, 1934  
April 28, 1935  
May 26, 1935  
September 1, 1935  
December 22, 1935  
June 6, 1937  
October 22, 1941

## 6. Interviews

Denver, Colorado. National Park Service, Denver Service Center. Interview with Mr. John A. Roosevelt by Louis Torres and Clyde Schroeder, October 5, 1978.

\_\_\_\_\_. Interview with Mr. Frank Landolfa by Louis Torres, June 23, 1978.

\_\_\_\_\_. Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Lester Entrup by Louis Torres, June 26, 1978.

\_\_\_\_\_. Interview with Mr. Harry Johannsen by Louis Torres, June 23, 1978.

Hyde Park, New York. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library. Interview with Mr. James Roosevelt by Dr. Thomas F. Soapes, Oral Historian of the Library, December 8, 1977.

\_\_\_\_\_. Interview with Mr. Otto Berge by Dr. Thomas F. Soapes, Oral Historian of the Library, September 19, 1977.

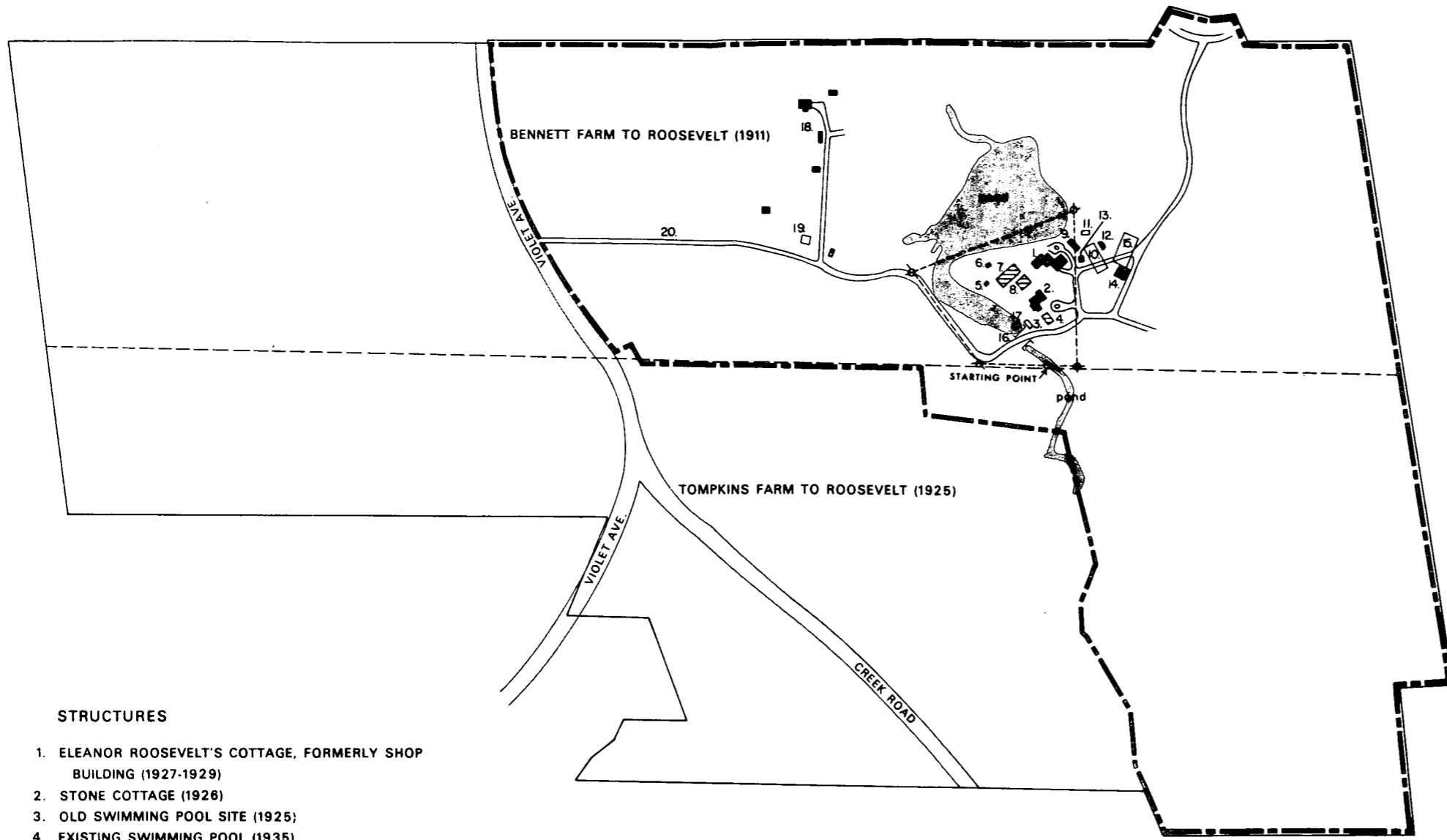
\_\_\_\_\_. Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site. Interview with Mr. Otto Berge by Leon Froats, Park Technician, March 11, 1977.

\_\_\_\_\_. Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site. Interview with Mr. Archibald "Tubby" Curnan by Leon Froats, Park Technician, April 1, 1977.

APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX 1  
 ELEANOR ROOSEVELT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
 By Louis Torres and John H. Galloway



LEGEND

- DENOTES BOUNDARY BETWEEN BENNET FARM AND TOMPKINS FARM AND LAND LEASED IN 1928
- DENOTES PARK BOUNDARY
- EXISTING STRUCTURES
- ▨ DENOTES EXISTING SWIMMING POOL, TENNIS COURT, AND GARDEN
- DENOTES STRUCTURES NO LONGER EXTANT

BASED ON A MAP ENTITLED "F.D. ROOSEVELT PROPERTY/HYDE PARK, N.Y. / PLOTTED FROM DEEDS, AND SURVEY MAPS/SCALE 1"=300'/O.A.D. LUHOSCH/ CIVIL ENGINEER/POUGHKEEPSIE," FOR N.P.S. EASTERN OFFICE, DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION, MAP NO. 3008, JULY 1962. LAND LEASED TO ELEANOR ROOSEVELT, MARION DICKERMAN, AND NANCY COOK IN 1926 AND EXTINCT STRUCTURES WERE PLOTTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS. EXTANT STRUCTURES WERE PLOTTED BASED UPON AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY.

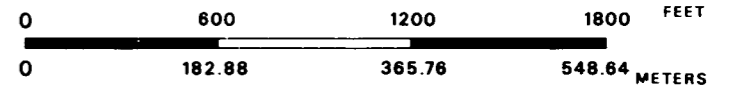
STRUCTURES

1. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S COTTAGE, FORMERLY SHOP BUILDING (1927-1929)
2. STONE COTTAGE (1928)
3. OLD SWIMMING POOL SITE (1925)
4. EXISTING SWIMMING POOL (1935)
5. OUTDOOR FIREPLACE (1933)
6. DOLL HOUSE, FORMERLY SWAN HOUSE (1935); MOVED TO EXISTING SITE (1945)
7. TENNIS COURT (1950)
8. VEGETABLE GARDEN (1960)
9. PLAYHOUSE (1928)
10. SITE OF FLOWER GARDEN (ca. 1937)
11. SITE OF GREENHOUSE (ca. 1937)
12. GARDEN SHED (ca. 1937)
13. TOOL SHED (ca. 1940)
14. GARAGE-STABLE (1937)
15. SITE OF CORRAL (ca. 1937)
16. BRIDGE AND DAM (FIRST BRIDGE BUILT BEFORE 1925 AND REBUILT SEVERAL TIMES THEREAFTER; LATEST DAM COMPLETED 1933)
17. DOCK SITE (ca. 1928)
18. CHARLES CURNAN'S HOUSE AND SHEDS (1964)
19. SITE OF CARETAKER'S HOME AND EXISTING SHED (ca. 1911)
20. MAIN ROAD (SECTION FROM VIOLET AVENUE TO BRIDGE BUILT BEFORE 1925; OTHER SECTIONS EASTWARD BUILT AFTER 1925; ROADS LEADING TO COTTAGES BUILT 1926-1930)

NORTH



SCALE 1"=600'



ON MICROFILM

HISTORICAL BASE MAP  
 ELEANOR ROOSEVELT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



149



APPENDIX 2



Taken over  
by Eleanor  
Nov. 1938

MEMORANDUM OF LEASE  
Machinery, Tools, Lumber, Samples etc .

Suggestion  
by N. C  
Nothing done about  
it

It is HEREBY COVENANTED AND AGREED by and between Eleanor Roosevelt, Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman parties of the first part and Otto Berge party of the second part.

That the parties of the first part do hereby lease to the party of the second part, property known as Machinery, Tools and Equipment, lumber and sample pieces of furniture.

Said property consists of the following:

- I....Heston & Anderson Bench Saw-  $\frac{1}{2}$  H.P. motor.
- I....Heston & Anderson Swing Cut Off Saw with  $\frac{1}{2}$  H.P. motor.
- I....Bench Combination Disk & Belt Sander with  $\frac{1}{2}$  H.P. motor.
- I....Planer, 24 inch with  $7\frac{1}{2}$  H.P. motor.
- 2....Sets of knives for above Planer.
- I....One inch Dado Head, knives and saw.
- I....Jacobs Chuck for Boring Attachment for saw table.
- I....Shaper Machine \_\_\_\_\_ H.P. motor.
- I....Saw, 4in. for above machine.
- I....Saw, 5 in. and one saw 6 in. for above machine.
- I....Groove Cutter,  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. and one  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch.  
Knives for Shaper:
  - 2.... $4\frac{1}{2}$  in.- 2; 3 in.- 2;  $2\frac{1}{2}$  in.- two, 2 in.- eight  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in.
  - 5....One in.- six, 1in.- four  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. twelve  $\frac{5}{8}$  in.-five,  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch.
- I....Mortis Machine, \_\_\_\_\_ H.P.
- I....Set each of hollow chisels,  $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $\frac{5}{16}$ -  $\frac{3}{8}$ -  $\frac{1}{2}$ -  $\frac{5}{8}$ -  $\frac{7}{16}$   
Regular Mortis Bits,  $\frac{5}{16}$  -  $\frac{3}{8}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  -  $\frac{5}{8}$  new.  
" " " , Two  $\frac{3}{16}$ - one  $\frac{5}{16}$ - one  $\frac{3}{8}$ - one  $\frac{7}{16}$   
one  $\frac{1}{2}$ - one  $\frac{7}{8}$ - one  $1\frac{1}{4}$ - one  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -, used.  
Extra Hollow chisels; three  $\frac{5}{8}$ - one  $\frac{1}{2}$ - three  $\frac{3}{8}$ .
- I....Circular saw table with 2 H.P. motor.
- I....each 12 in.rip saw-12 in. cross cut- 12 in combination saw.
- 2....Large Wooden Work Benches.
- I....Stove
- I....Hot Water Heater, pipes and Hot-Box.  
Steel Bar Clamps. four 30 in.- two 48 in.-four 72 in.-three 96 in.  
Small Clamps
- I....Wallace Glue Pot.
- 2....Shop Trucks, small.
- I....Socket for Lathe, Chisel Rest.  
Turning chisels  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.- 1 in. and gouges.
- I....Emery Wheel; one Corona Typewriter.  
Drawings, Blue Prints, Half tone plates and pictures.  
Lumber:
  - 25...Board feet oak K?D. & dressed ..... 5.00
  - 122 $\frac{1}{2}$  " " santimingo mohogany K.D. and dressed 29.50
  - 329.. " " maple " " 62.50
  - 216.. " " walnut " " 64.80Lumber taken later; Oak- maple-pine- walnut- mohogany  
Value @ .15 a B.FT..... 375.00  
Stock for 10 chests, and 300-hours of labor on them.
- 7.....Dozen Bed Bolts; Two dozen bed wrenches; 3 dozen angle irons.  
Six dozen table Hinges and small hinges.

MEMORANDUM- continued

Loan of Furniture as Samples.

- No. 24....I mohogany butterfly table/
- 15....I " oval tavern table.
- 32....I " Candle stand.
- 23....I " Book Table.
- 17....I maple Triangular table
- 61....I " Childs chair
- 62....I " Childs " arm.
- 4o....I " Bench
- 12....I mohogany large Butterfly table
- 57....I maple. Chair arm
- 2o....I " Bedside table
- 19....I walnut Round table
- 28....I " Bedside table,curved cornors.
- 56....I maple Ribbon chair
- Io5...I maple Queen Ann mirror, small

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD UNDER the following terms and conditions.

(a) That this lease shall be for the party of the second part for as long a peroid as he wishes to use said property for the making of furniture, reparis or other articles

(b) That the party of the second part agrees that the said property shall always remain in the Town of Hyde Park,Dutchess County, New York.

(c) That the party of the second part agrees not to dispose of in any manner the above said property. This does not however include the lumber, or bed bolts,irons,wrenches or hinges.

(d) That the party of the second part, agrees that he will keep said property in good repair and that replacements will be made of all parts worn by usage.

(e) That the party of the second part agrees to keep said property adequately covered by Insurance.

(f) That the party of the second part agrees that the said property shall be returned to the parties of the first part at such a future time when he no longer wishes to use said property in the Town of Hyde Park,Dutchess County, New York. The intention being that said property may be loaned to someone else when the party of the second part has no further personal use of said property.

In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seals

\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ year.

In the presence of

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX 3



MEMORANDUM OF LEASE  
Weaving Cottage and  
Handicraft Center.

*Signature  
but  
taken over  
by Eleanor  
Nov. 1938*

IT IS HEREBY COVENANTED AND AGREED by and between Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook, parties of the first part and Eleanor Roosevelt, party of the second part.

That the parties of the first part, do hereby lease their share of ownership, to the party of the second part, of the property known as the Weaving Cottage.

Said Weaving Cottage is located on the so-called Tompkins Farm on the Creek Road in the Town of Hyde Park, Dutchess County, New York. Said Cottage is located on property owned by Franklin D. Roosevelt.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD under the following terms

(a) That this lease shall be for the life of the party of the second part, her heirs and assigns.

(b) That the parties of the first part agree to transfer their investment in said Weaving Cottage, to the party of the second part, And that the parties herto agree that the cash value of the investment in said transfer is \$ 729.20. Plus certain pieces of furniture in the bedrooms of said Cottage.

(c) That the party of the second part agrees to the use of the bedrooms, by the parties of the first part, from time to time for extra guests. *reference of this instrument.*

In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seals this

\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ year

In the presence of

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

MEMORANDUM  
 Weaving Cottage and  
 Center for Handicraft  
 For, Construction, Furnishings, Equipment.

357.00  
 127  
 484.00

457  
 254  
 711.00  
 M.D.  
 M.C.

about 800  
 M.D.  
 N.C.

Receipts:

1935.....	Eleanor Roosevelt, personal.....	357.00	
	Eleanor Roosevelt (V.K. Reserve Fund..)	127.50	
	Nancy Cook, personal.....	457.00	
	Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook.....	254.20	\$ 1,195.30
	(Val-Kill reserve fund).....		

Disbursements:

1933.....	Construction Original Bldg.....	1,031.06	
	Equipment.....	108.60	
	Materials.....	55.64	1,195.30

1934

1935

Receipts:

American Friends Society..... 7,191.46  
 For: Eleanor Roosevelt

Disbursements

1934

1935.....	Construction of Bldg.....	4,505.29	
	Furnishings.....	1,331.46	
	Equipment, weaving etc.....	1,354.71	7,191.46

*from Am. Friends Socy  
 Total 7,191.46  
 Smith 1/2  
 amount 30*

Note: The following pieces of furniture in the Weaving Cottage, belong to Eleanor, Marion and Nancy.

Four beds, 2 chests, 2 bedside tables and 2 dressing tables.

Cash balance in the bank on August 31, 1938.....\$ 1,261.73

This balance has been transferred to Nellie Johansen for The Weaving Cottage.



Weaving Cottage and  
Center for Handicraft  
For, Construction, Furnishings, Equipment.

1933

Disbursements:

Apr.3.....	C.N. Arnold Co., lumber.....	54.96	
May II....	John Eylers, Orginal Bldg.....	603.60	
Jun.5.....	John Eylers.....	245.00	
Jun.29....	H.S.Robinson, electric.....	140.50	
	Alfred Bahret.....	12.00	
	W.H.Ham, equipment weaving, Loom.....	108.06	
18.....	Frank Kross, Well.....	75.00	
24	Bridgeport Housing Co., Equipment.....	55.64	\$ 1,195.30

1934

Sept 10	R.H.Macy Co, furnishings.....	74.75
	W.H.Ham, weaving equipment.....	164.24

1935

Jan.2	Mt. Craftman, chairs.....	44.00
	Luckey & Luckey, Insurance to Jan.1940...	88.00
	Refund, Nellie, stove etc.....	124.51
	Central Hudson, Ice box.....	168.38
Feb.....	John Eylers, New construction.....	1000.00
	Otto Berge, Labor furniture.....	294.12
Mar.....	Harrison Berger, electric.....	50.00
	Auto Knitting Co, equipt.....	18.00
	Mt. Craftsmen.....	7.28
	Refund, Nellie paint.....	36.00
	Harrison Berger, electric.....	86.62
	John Eylers, New construction.....	1951.00
	Arnold Berge, Labor.....	4.00
	Woolworths, china.....	31.25
	R.H.Macy Co.,.....	82.62
	Chas.P.Rogers, bedding.....	58.80
	R.H.Macy Co, .....	40.98
	C.N.Arnold Co, lumber.....	12.88
Apr.3....	Mt.Craftsmen....light.fixtures.....	24.05
	H.K.Garvan, bed spreads.....	21.68
	Luckey Platt.....	19.06
	Alling Rubber Co., Fire Ex.....	14.42
	R.H.Macy Co., linen.....	86.46
	Refund, Nelly- school Asheville.....	80.00
Apr.14	John Eylers, painting.....	92.00
	R.H.Macy Co, .....	55.54
	Chas.P.Rogers, bedding.....	84.00
	Statmoore Co, folding chairs.....	79.57
May 10	Woolworths.....	44.00
	R.H.Macy,Co, kitchen equipt.....	146.50
	DuBois Bro. wire for screens.....	21.38
	Mt.Craftsmen.....	4.00
	Lewis & Conger.....	97.05
	Kenwood Woolen Mills, blankets.....	68.05
	Shaker Travis & Quinn, gas..outfit.....	68.59
June I	Joseph Fimbel, Cess pool.....	150.00
	Plumbing.....	486.16
	Heating.....	494.34

1936

1935			
June 10	J.E. Simmons	10.71	
	Luckey Platt Co., washing machine	225.00	
	" " Ironer	175.00	
Sept. 6	Mt. Craftsmen, large loom	69.00	
Oct. 1	Refund, Nellie	11.62	
	Chas. P. Rogers, bedding	53.90	
	Arnold Berge, spools	25.50	
	Karl Johanssen, spinning wheel	24.30	
1937	Otto Berge, labor...looms	4.00	
	Luckey Platt Co.	45.00	
1938	Karl Johanssen...winding machine	20.50	
	Emmons Loom Co., beaters etc.	12.17	
	U.S. Bobbin Co.	9.42	
	Singer Sewing Machine, motor	5.00	\$ 7,191.46

To Sept. 1, 1938

APPENDIX 4



MEMORANDUM  
The Forge Lease

*a suggestion*

IT IS HEREBY CONVENANTED AND AGREED by and between Eleanor Roosevelt, Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook party of the first part and Arnold Berge, party of the second part.

The parties of the first part do hereby lease unto the party of the second part the following property for use as industrial or manufacturing purposes.

Said property contains the so-called Forge Building, a one story wooden structure. Said building is located at the back of the Val\*Kill Shop building near the garden. Said Forge Building is located on property leased to the parties of the first part by Franklin D. Roosevelt on January 26, 1926.

Said Forge Building contains machinery, equipment and tools. for metal crafts.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD under the following terms and conditions:

- (a) That said lease shall be to the party of the second part for such a period of time as he wishes to use said property as a work shop for the making of pewter or other articles.
- (b) That the party of the second part agrees to pay to Franklin D. Roosevelt, the taxes on said property, both real and personal, Town, County and State, and all assessments which may be levied or assessed against the above property. The amount of taxes to be paid shall be agreed upon by the party of the second part and Franklin D. Roosevelt. The intention being that the party of the second part agree to pay as rent a sum equal to the taxes.
- (c) That the party of the second part agrees to keep the property adequately covered by Insurance.
- (d) That the party of the second part agrees to keep said building in repair, also all machinery, equipment and tools.
- (e) That the party of the second part agrees that he will not allow any machinery, tools or equipment to be taken out of the Forge Building by any one for any purpose. And that the party of the second part will be responsible for the loss of said machinery, tools or equipment if removed from said property.
- (f) That the party of the second part agrees that the investment made in the said Building now on the property was \$ 2,046.70. And also agrees that the investment made in the machinery, tools and equipment was \$ 3,205.15.
- (g) That the party of the second part agrees that the amount of cash in the bank turned over to him at the beginning of the year 1938 was \$ 1,502.90. This amount being the bank balance on December 31, 1937, plus sales in 1937 but not collected until 1938.
- (h) That the party of the second part agrees, that the total cash value of materials and all extra supplies was \$ 1,236.93 which he received from the parties of the first part on December 31, 1937.
- (i) That the party of the second part agrees that the cost value of finished stock received on Dec. 31, 1937, from the parties of the first part was \$ 1,504.26.

Continued- lease

(j) That the party of the second part agrees, to maintain either in <sup>cash</sup> materials or finished goods the approximate value, each year hereafter, of cash received, materials and extra supplies and the cost value of finished goods, received by him from the parties of the first part on Dec. 31, 1937. The intention being that these assets be kept each year as near as possible to the assets which he received on December 31, 1937. The further intention being that if the party of the second part should wish to terminate his lease, there would be sufficient assets in the business for someone else to take over the operation of the Forge. The total of said assets are \$ 4,244.09.

(k) That the party of the second part agrees that the parties hereto shall have the right to terminate this lease, on giving one year's notice.

In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seals this

\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ year.

In the presence of

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

MEMORANDUM  
The Forge Inventory  
Dec. 31, 1937

*Value*  
Inventory December 31, 1937 (Jan. 1, 1938 -) *To Annual*

Bank balance.....	\$ 973.47	
1937 Sales, collected in 1938.....	529.43	\$ 1,502.90
Materials, pewter etc.....	630.81	
Supplies and materials extra.....	214.68	
Uncompleted goods.....	229.92	
Castings.....	106.35	
Blades..etc.....	55.17	\$ 1,236.93
<hr/>		
Completed Goods, stock.....	1,504.26	1,504.26
<hr/>		
Total inventory value.....	4,244.09	

In witness whereof we have  
hereunto set our hands and  
seals this

\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ year.

In the presence of

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

MEMORANDUM - THE FORGE  
For: Construction, Machinery, Equipment and Tools

Receipts:

1935.....	The American Friends, for Eleanor Roosevelt....	\$ 3,205.15
	( Machinery tools & equipment)	
1936.....	Val-Kill Shop, (Refund from Central Hudson)....	885.00
	Val-Kill Shop (Sale of Truck).....	500.00
	Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman.....	663.70
		<hr/>
		\$ 5,251.85

Disbursements:

1935.....	Machinery, tools & Equipment.....	\$ 3,205.15
1936.....	Construction, new Forge Bldg.....	2,046.70
		<hr/>
		\$ 5,251.85

Note: See books for detail of disbursements.  
And Inventory of Tools, machinery and Equipment.



APPENDIX 5:  
INVENTORY OF ARTICLES SENT TO COTTAGE



MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES FROM MRS. ROOSEVELT'S SITTING ROOM & THIRD FLOOR  
TO BE SENT TO COTTAGE:

- 501 - 1 Sewing Table
- 502 - 1 Magazine table
- 503 - 1 Magazine table
- 504 - 1 Chair
- 505 - 3 Foot Stools
- 506 - 1 Bench
- 507 - 1 High Chair
- 508 - 1 Bicycle
- 509 - 1 Bicycle
- 510 - 1 Bicycle
- 511 - 1 Wooden Wagon
- 512 - 1 Scooter
- 515 - 1 Sled
- 514 - 1 Sled
- 516 - 1 Round Table
- 516 - What-not table
- 517 - 1 Wooden framed mirror
- 518 - 5 Cushions
- 521 - 1 Cushion Seat
- 522 - 1 Radio
- 523 - 2 Wooden framed mirrors
- 524 - Red Portable Phonograph
- 525 - Red Portable Phonograph

PAGE 1

EBL. # C-29

CONTENTS OF THIS BARREL TAKEN FROM SILVER VAULT TO BE SENT TO THE COTTAGE

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1 Tea Set  
15 Beer steins  
1 Large beer stein  
3 Blue dishes  
2 Odd cups  
4 Odd saucers  
1 Odd bowl

PAGE 1

BOX # C-520

CONTENTS OF THIS BOX TAKEN FROM MRS. ROOSEVELT'S STUDY TO BE SENT TO  
THE COTTAGE

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3 Pieces of Ivory  
1 Pincelle score board  
1 Pair glass paper weights  
1 Wooden desk set  
1 Pair wooden bookends  
1 Aluminum ash tray  
1 Wood cutting of President  
1 Tobacco jar

Page 1

#521 --o-- COTTAGE --o--

BOX #521

CONTENTS OF THIS BOX TAKEN FROM THIRD FLOOR TO BE SENT TO THE COTTAGE.

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- 6 - Beer Mugs
- 1 - Hand painted vase.
- 1 - China pitcher.
- 1 - Orange vase.
- 1 - Silver ink well.
- 1 - Decanter and glasses.
- 1 - Glass vase.

PAGE 1

REL. # C-526

ARTICLES LISTED BELOW TO BE SENT TO THE COTTAGE

1 Yellow bowl  
1 Bronze statue  
1 Leather cigarette box  
1 China cup and saucer  
1 Magnifying glass  
5 Small books  
1 Pin cushion  
1 Glass tray  
2 China ash trays  
2 Ships on blue glass  
2 Blue glass ducks  
1 Wooden Indian  
1 Small china statue  
1 Metal match container  
1 Wooden statue  
1 China dish  
8 Phonograph records  
2 Scottie plaques  
1 Room thermometer  
1 Hyman book  
1 Picture wallet  
1 Small Bible  
1 Small candle holder  
1 Blue dish  
1 Printator set  
2 Wooden bookends  
1 Wooden bowl  
1 Metal stamp container  
1 Metal match box  
1 Inaugural medal  
1 Metal tray  
1 Small gold picture  
1 China angel  
1 Wooden statue  
2 Marble jars  
1 China cigarette box  
1 Small picture folder  
1 Block of wood set with pearl  
1 Small book  
1 Small barometer  
1 Pair wooden bookends  
2 Bronze statues  
1 China bowl  
1 Clay statue  
1 Wooden elephant

PAGE 1

BOX # C-527

MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES TO BE SENT TO COTTAGE

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- 1 China donkey
- 8 Small pictures
- 1 China dish
- 2 Metal trays
- 1 China vase and stand
- 3 Hand painted jars
- 1 Small angel candle holder
- 1 Pewter desk lamp
- 1 Silver loving bowl
- 1 Silver cookie bowl
- 1 Small silver loving cup
- 1 Waste basket
- 1 Marble paper weight
- 2 Hand-painted round trays
- 1 Book of water coloring
- 1 Book of Marion Anderson records
- 1 Piece ivory
- 1 Bolo knife
- 1 Carved wooden tray
- 4 Small cushions



PAGE 1

EHL. # C-528

ARTICLES LISTED BELOW TO BE SENT TO COTTAGE

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1 Tiger rug  
1 Lion rug  
1 Pair brass bookends

PAGE 1

# C-529

TO BE SENT TO COTTAGE

1 Baby crib

PAGE 1

BOX # C-530

CONTENTS OF THIS BOX TO BE SENT TO COTTAGE FOR JOHN ROOSEVELT

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1 Box of books

PAGE 1

BOX # C-531

CONTENTS OF THIS BOX TO BE SENT TO COTTAGE FOR JOHN ROOSEVELT

---

1 Box of books

PAGE 1

BOX # C-532

CONTENTS OF THIS BOX MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES TO BE SENT TO THE COTTAGE

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- 3 Silver picture frames
- 1 Leather brief case
- 1 Glass vase
- 1 Hand-painted dish
- 11 Blue dinner plates
- 1 Reed luncheon set
- 1 Box miscellaneous desk equipment
- 1 Box correspondence
- 1 Pocketbook
- 1 File box
- 1 Encased picture of President
- 1 Photo album
- 1 Large fountain pen
- 1 Travel book
- 1 Small box miscellaneous
- 6 Small pictures
- 2 Desk baskets
- 1 Box with picture
- 1 Box with miscellaneous papers
- 1 Photo in box
- 1 Small box papers
- 1 Desk blotter
- 11 Photographs
- 1 Folder of pictures
- 1 Small ledger
- 2 Prints
- 1 Picture of Hudson

PAGE 1

ARTICLES LISTED BELOW TO BE SENT TO THE COTTAGE

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- # C-533 - 2 Ship models
- # C-534 - 1 Bundle of 5 pictures
- # C-535 - 1 Box containing 18 pictures
- # C-536 - 1 Bundle containing 5 pictures
- # C-537 - 1 Picture, The Yacht Jeannette
- # C-539 - 1 Small statue
- # C-540 - Mrs. Roosevelt's bed
- # C-541 - 2 Chairs
- # C-542 - 1 Picture
- # C-543 - 9 Boxes books
- # C-544 - 1 Office chair
- # C-545 - 1 Brief case
- # C-546 - 3 Metal file cases
- # C-547 - 1 Box miscellaneous clothes
- # C-548 - 1 Box of books
- # C-549 - 1 Fish bowl

PAGE 1

BOX # C-538

CONTENTS OF THIS BOX TO BE SENT TO THE COTTAGE

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- 1 Small cardboard desk file
- 1 Small radio
- 1 Small wooden book holder
- 1 Metal statue
- 1 Foot rest
- 1 Round table top





As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities to protect and conserve our land and water, energy and minerals, fish and wildlife, parks and recreation areas, and to ensure the wise use of all these resources. The department also has major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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