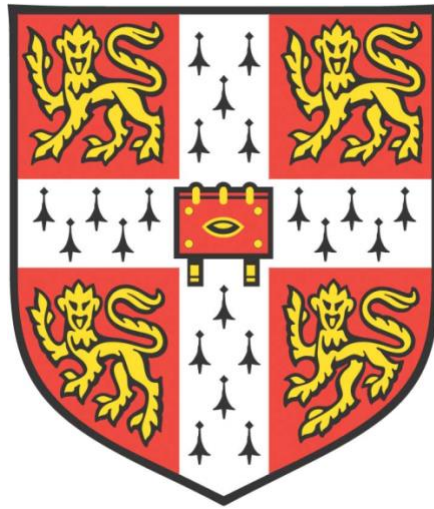


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Hyde Park and Chartwell in History and Heritage



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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

November 2020

Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any work that has already been submitted before for any degree or other qualification except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit of 80,000 words for the History Degree Committee.

Clemency Hinton, November 2020

Abstract

This dissertation examines Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill's lives and legacies through the lens of their homes. This dissertation argues that homes are fertile sites for contending with the character of political leaders as physical expressions of identity.

In Part One the author focuses on the interwar years and looks at how Hyde Park and Chartwell were created and dominated by these men. Beginning with major periods of home renovation, Chapter One demonstrates that Roosevelt and Churchill were personally invested in the construction of their houses as an articulation of their class status and political ambition. Built into the bricks and mortar of the home were the gendered power dynamics that existed between husband and wife and mother and son. Chapter Two considers times of personal crisis and argues that both men returned home to regain confidence in their masculine potential. Roosevelt and Churchill overcame their insecurities and found fruitful outlets in their gardens as a means of controlling the natural world itself. Chapter Three broadens the perspective of the dissertation to consider the network of associates who – through a mixture of pleasure and duty – populated and maintained Hyde Park and Chartwell. Through Roosevelt and Churchill's magnetism, many individuals were brought into the orbit of the home, enabling it to fulfil their purposes for work, politicking and entertainment.

In Part Two the author re-examines the houses in their function as contemporary heritage sites. By scrutinising the actions of the National Park Service and the National Trust, house museums are contemplated as unique vehicles for historic storytelling. Chapter Four uncovers the pressures from management, surviving family and the impassioned public that have coloured the transformation of Hyde Park and Chartwell. The organisational style of each administering body shaped their priorities in remaking the home as shrines. Chapter Five undertakes a survey of the interpretive approach at each home to identify differences in national cultural style. Over the past fifty years, pragmatic concerns have oftentimes tainted the 'authenticity' of these sites as site managers continue to work demonstrate the ongoing relevance of Roosevelt and Churchill in the twenty-first century.

Acknowledgements

It is bittersweet to come to the end of an invigorating three year PhD program, and four years of life in Cambridge. I have many to thank for a defining and very happy period. I have been privileged to undertake extensive archival and field-work research in various locations across the U.K. and the U.S. This has all been possible due to the generosity of Cambridge Trust and Newnham College who have funded my PhD. I am also grateful to have benefitted from the Cambridge History Faculty Fieldwork fund.

In 2018, these funds enabled me to undertake a month of research at the Franklin Roosevelt Home and Library in Hyde Park, New York, where my project first came to life. The FDR Library and the National Historic Site Archive were invaluable in my research. Paul Sparrow (NARA), David Woolner (Roosevelt Institute), Anne Jordan (NPS), Fran Macsali (NPS) and Scott Rector (NPS) were very generous with their time in allowing me to interview them about the operation of the site. I also gained valuable insight from an online discussion with John Sears, for which I am appreciative.

I am also grateful for the week spent at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland. Thanks also to Deborah Gardner from the Roosevelt House (Hunter College) in New York City who kindly opened the home to me for a private tour during a period of construction.

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Various chapters of this dissertation have been presented at conferences and are all the better for the helpful feedback I received. I would like to thank the Historians of Twentieth-Century America facilitators, Roosevelt Institute of American Studies seminar

participants, Heritage Dot conference attenders and others who have taken the time to critique my work.

Especially, I am obliged to acknowledge the kind and thoughtful contributions made by the Cambridge American History Workshop members who read and commented on many of my chapters. As colleagues and friends, the American History community has both refined my thinking and spurred me on – all whilst sharing a pint.

Of course, this project could not have gotten off the ground without the oversight and encouragement of my supervisor, Professor Gary Gerstle. I am grateful for Gary's big picture perspective that has helped me to write with clarity and produce a cohesive dissertation on an achievable timeline. Gary's edits and suggestions have improved my work immensely.

Finally, my most heartfelt thanks go to my husband. In his quizzical mind and diligent work ethic I found much inspiration – and just the right amount of distraction, when needed. Contrary to popular wisdom, combining a PhD with wedding planning proved to be a success. Meanwhile, as I wrote about Roosevelt and Churchill's homes, my greatest joy was always the home we built together, here in Cambridge.

Soli Deo Gloria

Hyde Park and Chartwell in History and Heritage

Introduction	1
Comparative historiography of Roosevelt and Churchill	4
Comparative historiography of house museums	14
Chapter outline	19
A note on sources	21

PART I – Hyde Park and Chartwell in History

Chapter One: Constructing the Home	23
Country Homes in Britain and America	24
Churchill and Chartwell	28
Roosevelt and Springwood	34
Roosevelt and Val Kill	41
Intimate conflict	44
Gendered gentility	48
A portrait of creative control	51
 Chapter Two: Tending the Home	 54
Crises of emasculation	54
A natural solution	62
Roosevelt's healing	67
Churchill's healing	78
The significance of the setbacks	87
 Chapter Three: Populating the Home	 91
Privileged lifestyles	92
Domestic labour	94
Secretarial labour	99
Intimacy, proximity and companionship	108
Closest allies	113
Home entertaining	119

Community men	123
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PART II – Hyde Park and Chartwell in Heritage

Chapter Four: The Contested Home	129
Patriotic preservation in Britain and America	130
Enshrining Hyde Park and Chartwell	134
Administering a national shrine	137
The family shrine	145
The public shrine	152
Opening celebrations	160
 Chapter Five: The Curated Home	 167
The priority of preservation in Britain and America	168
Opportunities for reconstruction	174
Interpretation infrastructure	177
Interpretation emphases	183
The experience economy	193
 Conclusion: Home at Last	 201
Nineteenth and twentieth century homes	201
Comparative challenges	204
Dissertation summary	205
 Bibliography	 208

Introduction:
Hyde Park and Chartwell in History and Heritage

‘This house seems too queer without you and there is no doubt in my mind but houses reflect the central spirit and are just empty shells without them!’

– Eleanor Roosevelt, October 11, 1926¹

‘In short, houses frame the lives of most people and can therefore be seen as fundamental psychological, experiential, and material structures in daily life, for the whole of life.’

– Linda Young, 2018²

Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill are not commonly thought of as homebodies. Their lives and careers frequently took them to the farthest reaches of the world. And yet, both men spoke openly and often of their affection for their homes. ‘A day away from Chartwell is a day wasted,’ Churchill was heard to remark, while Roosevelt reflected, ‘All that is within me cries out to go back to my home on the Hudson River.’³ Throughout their careers, these houses and their grounds proved to be sites of inspiration and creativity, sometimes providing much-needed rest, and other times enabling a flurry of productivity that spurred them forwards. Never was this truer than during the interwar period, when both Roosevelt and Churchill gathered strength from their homes to overcome personal demons and bolster their political support before re-entering public life.

Both Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill concerned themselves with the preservation of their homes for future generations, and made such arrangements while they were still alive. In 1943, Roosevelt donated his Hyde Park estate to the federal government, and upon his death in 1945 the site was fully transferred to the National Park Service. Then in 1946, Churchill faced a similar opportunity, as he considered selling Chartwell due to the large financial demands it imposed. Fortunately, arrangements were made by Lord Camrose and other Churchill supporters to raise funds to buy the property, and it was duly handed over to the National Trust in 1965 on the occasion of Churchill’s death. Both the National Park

¹ Joseph P Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of Their Relationship, Based on Eleanor Roosevelt’s Private Papers* (New York: Norton & Co., 1971), 305.

² Linda Young, “Preserving Public History,” in *A Companion to Public History* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2018), 321, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118508930.ch23>.

³ Stephen Mansfield and George Grant, *Never Give in: The Extraordinary Character of Winston Churchill* (Godalming: Highland Books, 1995), 159; Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 74.

Service and the National Trust have continued to administer these homes as house museums, designating them heritage sites available for public viewing. The affection that Roosevelt and Churchill felt for their homes has since been echoed in the experience of hundreds of thousands of visitors who have stepped through the doors over the past half-century.

Observers have acknowledged the fondness with which Roosevelt and Churchill regarded their country homes. John Sears has written that, ‘perhaps no other American president, not even Washington or Jefferson, has been more rooted in a particular place than Franklin Roosevelt or drawn more of his substance as a leader from the land on which he was born and raised.’⁴ Eleanor Roosevelt affirmed this legacy, ‘The Hudson River Valley was in my husband’s blood,’ she wrote for National Park Service in 1949, ‘The river in all of its aspects and the countryside as a whole were familiar and deeply rooted in my husband’s consciousness.’⁵ While Churchill did not benefit from growing up at Chartwell (having purchased it when he was forty-eight), he was captivated by the land and the home he built there. Churchill especially loved the Kent hills and the home’s picturesque setting. Robin Fedden describes Chartwell as Churchill’s oasis, especially during his years in the political desert, writing that ‘No other place had meant as much to him.’⁶

This dissertation explores the way in which a focus on the home can enrich and challenge the stories we tell about Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. The interwar period is of particular interest as a time when both Roosevelt and Churchill invested heavily in constructing and enjoying their houses. Both also withdrew from public life for long stretches, having been struck with personal and political wounds which threatened to derail their careers and wellbeing. For Roosevelt the problem was painful and all-encompassing; in August 1921 he contracted polio and experienced paralysis from the waist down. For Churchill, the hardships were political; between 1929 and 1939 he was out of office and fighting a lonely battle for political relevance.⁷ Historians have struggled to contend with

⁴ John F. Sears, “FDR & the Land,” in “Historic Resource Study for the Roosevelt Estate” (Draft report prepared for the National Park Service, July 2004), 3.

⁵ Eleanor Roosevelt, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Hyde Park. Personal Recollections of Eleanor Roosevelt*. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. National Parks Service, 1949), 2.

⁶ Robin Fedden, *Churchill and Chartwell* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1977), 6.

⁷ Martin Gilbert, *Winston Churchill - the Wilderness Years: A Lone Voice Against Hitler in the Prelude to War* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2011), 7.

these years, framing them as an interlude in otherwise highly successful careers. This dissertation demonstrates in its first half that during this period, Hyde Park and Chartwell were not just private homes but instruments of each man's public life.

The second part of this dissertation charts the transition of these homes from private places where actual historical figures lived to public heritage sites where the lives of these two men were remembered, celebrated, and interpreted. Today, visitors remark on the powerful historical insight that comes from visiting Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill's homes. One visitor wrote in 2017 that 'viewing the tree-lined path, where [Roosevelt] practiced to walk using his upper body strength, makes him, his determination and strength of character come alive in my mind.' Another wrote in response to his visit to Churchill's home, 'I could feel it and imagine him sitting right there.'⁸ Visitors who physically entered these sites had an opportunity to immerse themselves in these men's lives. They often felt directly linked to Roosevelt and Churchill. But, of course, formidable teams of experts working for the National Park Service and the National Trust stood between them and the men they had come to celebrate. How did these heritage institutions shape the experience of being in these great men's company? What portion of the actual lives of these men did these places capture?

For my research, I treat each home as an amalgamation of the tended natural surroundings, the material built environment and the network of people and relationships within. Every aspect of the house is considered as a potential vehicle of self-expression, where the two men in question could construct and affirm narratives of personal identity. Keith Jacobs and Jeff Malpas have written about the home as expressing the modern self:

One of the reasons home looms so large in collective and individual imaginaries is that home is a primary site for identity formation, and connected directly to this, is the character of home as itself a mode of externalisation of the self. The ways we build, decorate, and arrange our homes, and the objects we place within and around them, all figure as elements in the constitution of the modern self – and not only the modern self alone. The home, no matter what form it takes (and the forms vary enormously), has always been the site for such self-formation and articulation – what we call the “home” is

⁸ Elsa C., “Highly Interesting and Verdant Country Side,” Review of *Franklin Delano Roosevelt Home* (TripAdvisor, 13 August 2017), accessible from https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g60801-d106611-Reviews-or60-Franklin_Delano_Roosevelt_Home-Hyde_Park_New_York.html and J3dnight, “For me, An honor to see Chartwell,” Review of *Chartwell* (TripAdvisor, 17 August 2012), accessible from https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g580429-d547580-Reviews-Chartwell-Westerham_Sevenoaks_District_Kent_England.html.

simply the most salient and significant externalisation of the self in its materialised articulation⁹

As an articulation of identity, the houses of Roosevelt and Churchill afford privileged access into the minds and lives of these great leaders. In the making of a home an individual is able to curate his or her environment as an extension of himself or herself. By examining how Roosevelt and Churchill constructed and tended their home, and the people and objects they populated them with, we will come to understand a great deal more about these historical figures and their families.

Then, by considering how each home was remade into a heritage site, we explore how the original fashioning of self has become something else: collective memory-making of historical figures. House Museums demand collaboration and compromise between various stakeholders. This study frames these sites as both sacred shrines and commercial endeavours. Analysing how private homes became popular museums requires us to reveal the high degree of curating required to produce an ‘authentic’ heritage home.

Comparative historiography of Roosevelt and Churchill

The core of this dissertation is a comparative study. Breaching the borders of the United States and the United Kingdom, positioning Franklin Roosevelt alongside Winston Churchill, and the National Park Service beside the National Trust, this work aims to refine our understanding of each national leader, the nation he led, and the heritage body charged with preserving memories of him. By identifying the two men’s similarities and differences, each comes into sharper focus. The comparison allows us to highlight the peculiarities of cultural norms, class expectations, heritage traditions and preservation practices in different national contexts.

In many ways, Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill are naturally comparable. Together they form the subject of numerous academic projects.¹⁰ Both stand as symbolic

⁹ Keith Jacobs and Jeff Malpas, “Material Objects, Identity and the Home: Towards a Relational Housing Research Agenda,” *Housing, Theory and Society* 30, no. 3 (September 2013): 285, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14036096.2013.767281>.

¹⁰ Examples of works that study Roosevelt and Churchill in tandem include Joseph P. Lash, *Roosevelt and Churchill, 1939-1941: The Partnership That Saved the West* (New York: Norton, 1976); David Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt, and the International History of the 1940s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Warren F. Kimball, *Forged in War: Roosevelt, Churchill, And The Second World War* (London: HarperCollins, 2011); David Stafford, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Men of Secrets* (London: Thistle Publishing, 2013); Jonathan Fenby, *Alliance: The Inside Story of How Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill Won One War and Began Another* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015); Lewis E. Lehrman, *Churchill, Roosevelt & Company: Studies in Character and Statecraft* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017).

national leaders, war heroes, charismatic and enduring personalities in public consciousness. Yet this dissertation will deepen and enrich our understanding of not only their shared characteristics, but crucially, what set these men apart. From their inner lives, to their treatment of others and their world philosophy, Roosevelt and Churchill were very different men. Historians have traditionally identified their traits and their flaws in order to examine how these characteristics played out on the highest stages of national life. This dissertation shows how such characteristics asserted themselves at home.

Political biographies have offered the best opportunity for scholars to undertake in-depth analysis of the home and personal lives of politicians.¹¹ Modern academic scholars, however, regard this time-worn form of history writing with mixed feelings.¹² In the nineteenth century – the golden age of biography – political biographies were formulaic volumes recounting the achievements of heroic men in the public arena. These were especially popular with the general public in Victorian Britain as a way of venerating and admiring the ‘great lives’ who had gone before.¹³ At this time, biographies developed a habit for either veering into hero-worship or, worse, producing dry genealogy – and much of this reputation for biographies remains. The fervour for biographical research was epitomised in the Dictionary of National Biography (established in 1882), which set down the lives of noteworthy inhabitants for posterity.¹⁴ Within these biographical accounts came the thirst for information about family-life – marriages, births and deaths – all hinting at the domestic realities that the individuals in question inhabited. Over the last century, the years since Roosevelt and Churchill’s time in leadership, public interest in the private lives of politicians has ballooned, becoming an ‘increasingly ubiquitous feature of the mediated public sphere.’¹⁵

Political biography, as a genre, has long been under threat by tides of revisionist historiography. The influence of social sciences and their accompanying historical traditions, seen in the Annales school and Marxist history, has encouraged fundamental scepticism

¹¹ See Nigel Hamilton, *Biography: A Brief History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

¹² For a discussion of the merits and flaws see Patrick O’Brien, “Is Political Biography a Good Thing?,” *Contemporary British History* 10, no. 4 (December 1996): 60–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619469608581413>; Pauline Croft, “Political Biography: A Defence (1),” *Contemporary British History* 10, no. 4 (December 1, 1996): 67–74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619469608581414>.

¹³ Stephen E. Koss, “British Political Biography as History,” *Political Science Quarterly* 88, no. 4 (1973): 714, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2148166>.

¹⁴ Leslie Stephen, *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1900); Lucy Riall, “The Shallow End of History? The Substance and Future of Political Biography,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 3 (2010): 378.

¹⁵ James Stanyer, *Intimate Politics: Publicity, Privacy and the Personal Lives of Politicians in Media Saturated Democracies* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 6.

about the credibility of individual action in a world shaped much more by structures than individual agency.¹⁶ More recent post-modern and post-structural thought contradicts the foundational tenet of biography itself, namely that individual lives have coherence and meaning. Writing in 1996, Patrick O'Brien argued that the twin temptations of an historian to treat their subject as either 'extraordinary and omnipotent' or predictably representative of an entire people group, rendered true biography a near impossibility.¹⁷

Yet historians remain prolifically invested in the form of biography because it affirms the inseparable connection between the public and private worlds of an individual. Lucy Riall and others have argued convincingly for the ongoing relevance and usefulness of political biography.¹⁸ Critics have done more to refine rather than eliminate the practice of biography, she argues. Many recent works demonstrate the flexibility of the biographical form, as some authors use a fragmentary style, others upend authenticity by focusing on the 'performance' of the self, still others have found ways to write biographies of commoners who left few meaningful records behind.¹⁹ Scholarly biographies, in rigorous displays of the historical method, have oftentimes unearthed new information about the individuals in question, as well as pioneering new interpretations of the past. Works by Natalie Zemon Davis, for example, showcase a micro-historical level of detail to archival material, as well as the art of 'imaginative speculation to piece together the gaps,' both necessary to tell the history of such forgotten sixteenth-century individuals as French peasant Martin Guerre and North-African Muslim Leo Africanus.²⁰ The art of a well-written biography, striving for 'exactitude without forfeiting readability,' remains a noble task.²¹

Political biographies of Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill provide crucial material for the dissertation that follows. Martin Gilbert's definitive eight volume biography of Winston Churchill (the first two volumes co-authored by his son, Randolph) still shapes contemporary Churchill studies.²² Gilbert's prodigious biography was published between

¹⁶ R. A. W. Rhodes and Paul 't Hart, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Leadership* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 314.

¹⁷ O'Brien, "Is Political Biography a Good Thing?," 61.

¹⁸ Riall, "The Shallow End of History?"

¹⁹ Riall, 380.

²⁰ Riall, 385; Natalie Zemon Davis, Martin Guerre, and Arnault Du Tilh, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds* (London: Faber & Faber, 2008).

²¹ Koss, "British Political Biography as History," 724.

²² Randolph S. Churchill and Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Youth, 1874-1900* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1966); Randolph S. Churchill and Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Young Statesman*,

1966 and 1988, comprised of over eight million words, and including accompanying ‘companions’ for each volume containing relevant primary source documents. Labelled as the *official* biography, Gilbert’s work nonetheless avoids over-editorialising, instead erring on the side of detailed chronology in a day-by-day account of Churchill’s life. ‘I’m quite content to be a narrative chronicler,’ he once remarked, ‘a slave of the facts.’²³ This style has cemented Gilbert’s work as a cornerstone and reference point for Churchill historians looking to establish exactly what happened when. Furthermore, during his lifetime Gilbert developed relationships with many of the people who had surrounded Churchill, recovering inciteful anecdotes and memories from every surviving associate that he could track down.²⁴ These sources, combined with his early access to government documents in the private Churchill collection, has established the legacy of Gilbert’s biography as the classic account, often impervious to ongoing revisionism.

Since Gilbert, historians have busied themselves introducing complexity into Churchill’s life. Recent biographies have emphasised Churchill’s foibles and failures, from his financial struggles to his disastrous military decisions.²⁵ Others focus on Churchill’s ulterior identities, not viewing him as a statesman only, but also as a literary figure and a painter.²⁶ Still others hone in on his passions – for dinner-table diplomacy on the one hand and for parliamentary democracy on the other.²⁷ There are biographies, too, about those who

1901–1914 (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1966); Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: The Challenge of War, 1914–1916* (London: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 1973); Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: The Stricken World, 1916–1922* (London: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 1975); Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Prophet of Truth, 1922–1939* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1977); Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: The Finest Hour 1939–1941* (London: Heinemann, 1983); Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Road to Victory, 1941–1945* (London: Heinemann, 1986); Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Never Despair, 1945–1965* (Boston Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1988).

²³ ‘The Official Biography of Winston Churchill,’ *International Churchill Society*, accessed May 5, 2020 from <https://winstonchurchill.org/the-life-of-churchill/life/the-official-churchill-biography/> .

²⁴ Richard Gott, ‘Sir Martin Gilbert Obituary: Eminent historian who wrote the definitive biography of Winston Churchill,’ *The Guardian*, February 4, 2015, accessed May 5, 2020 from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/04/sir-martin-gilbert> .

²⁵ David Lough, *No More Champagne: Churchill and His Money* (London: Head of Zeus, 2015); Christopher M. Bell, *Churchill and the Dardanelles: Myth, Memory, and Reputation*, 2017.

²⁶ Jonathan Rose, *The Literary Churchill: Author, Reader, Actor* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2014); David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War*. (New York: Random House, Inc., 2005); Peter Clarke, *Mr Churchill’s Profession: Statesman, Orator, Writer* (London: A&C Black, 2013); Mary Soames, *Winston Churchill: His Life as a Painter : A Memoir by His Daughter* (London: Collins, 1990); David Coombs, Minnie Churchill, and Winston S Churchill, *Sir Winston Churchill’s Life through His Paintings* (London: Chaucer Press, 2003).

²⁷ Cita Stelzer, *Dinner with Churchill: Policy-Making at the Dinner Table* (London: Short Books, 2011); Martin Gilbert, *The Will of the People: Churchill and Parliamentary Democracy* (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 2010).

surrounded him; Clementine Churchill and his mother, Jenny Randolph,²⁸ though these rarely remove the limelight from the formidable Winston for long.²⁹

It is less simple to point to the definitive Roosevelt biography.³⁰ Multi-volume accounts have been published by Arthur Schlesinger, Kenneth S. Davis and James Macgregor Burns.³¹ Geoffrey Ward's two volume biography of Roosevelt's pre-presidential career is most relevant for this dissertation as it focuses principally on the interwar period itself.³² Biographies about Eleanor Roosevelt have proliferated as well.³³ Their marriage has been a source of prodigious scholarship, while both trade and academic publishing houses have explored both Eleanor and Franklin's extramarital affairs.³⁴ Recent scholarship has focused

²⁸ Sonia Purnell, *First Lady: The Life and Wars of Clementine Churchill* (London: Aurum Press Limited, 2015); Mary Soames, *Clementine Churchill* (London: Cassell, 1979); Anita Leslie, *Lady Randolph Churchill: The Story of Jennie Jerome* (New York: Scribner, 1969); Ralph G. Martin, *The Life Of Lady Randolph Churchill* (London: Cassell, 1969).

²⁹ Other notable biographies include Roy Jenkins, *Churchill* (London: Macmillan, 2001); John Keegan, *Winston Churchill* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2002); Geoffrey Best, *Churchill: A Study in Greatness* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life* (New York: Rosetta Books, 2014); Boris Johnson, *The Churchill Factor: How One Man Made History* (Hachette UK, 2014); Andrew Roberts, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny* (London; New York; Toronto etc.: Penguin Books, 2018).

³⁰ Notable biographies include Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Rendezvous with Destiny* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990); Roy Jenkins and Richard E Neustadt, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (London: MacMillan, 2004); Jeffrey W. Coker, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Biography* (Westport (Conn.); London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005); Roger Daniels, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: Road to the New Deal, 1882-1939*, Franklin D. Roosevelt 1 (Urbana Chicago Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015); Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Political Life* (London: Allen Lane, 2017).

³¹ Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2003); Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *The Coming of the New Deal, 1933-1935* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2003); Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *The Politics of Upheaval: 1935-1936, the Age of Roosevelt, Volume III* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2003); Kenneth S. Davis, *FDR: Volumes I-IV* (New York: Random House, 1985); James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox: 1882-1940* (Open Road Media, 2012); James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom: 1940-1945* (Open Road Media, 2012).

³² Geoffrey C. Ward, *Before The Trumpet: Young Franklin Roosevelt, 1882-1905* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986); Geoffrey C. Ward, *A First Class Temperament: The Emergence of Franklin Roosevelt* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989).

³³ Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt. Vol. 1, 1884-1933* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993); Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: The Defining Years. Vol. 2, 1933-1938* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000); Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: The War Years and after. Vol. 3, 1939-1962* (New York: Viking Press, 2016); Ruby A Black, *Eleanor Roosevelt* (New York: Cuell, Sloan and Pearce, 1940); Tamara K Hareven, *Eleanor Roosevelt: An American Conscience* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968); Brigid O'Farrell, *She Was One of Us: Eleanor Roosevelt and the American Worker* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012); Norman W. Provizer, "Eleanor Roosevelt Biographies," in *A Companion to Franklin D. Roosevelt*, by William D. Pederson (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

³⁴ Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*; Joseph E Persico, *Franklin and Lucy: President Roosevelt, Mrs. Rutherford, and the Other Remarkable Women in His Life* (New York: Random House, 2008); Hazel Rowley, *Franklin and Eleanor: An Extraordinary Marriage* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2011); Resa Willis, *FDR and Lucy: Lovers and Friends* (London: Routledge, 2012); Geoffrey C. Ward, *Closest Companion: The Unknown Story of the Intimate Friendship Between Franklin Roosevelt and Margaret Suckley* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012); Susan Quinn, *Eleanor and Hick: The Love Affair That Shaped a First Lady* (New

on the social conditions and experiences that led to Roosevelt's passing of the New Deal, with some illuminating work focusing particularly on the paradox of a wealthy man putting himself at the head of a movement for poor Americans.³⁵ Unlike the pedantic Churchill who dictated and filed all his thoughts and schemes, Roosevelt's paper trail is less full and opaque on his plans and strategies.³⁶ And while Winston Churchill wrote his own memoirs and histories, Franklin Roosevelt never attempted to narrate his own life.³⁷

Biographers of Roosevelt and Churchill have illuminated some fascinating differences between the mentalities of these men. By considering their life in full, rather than focusing on their years in office alone, it is possible to create a comprehensive understanding of the man, his life and times. Their efforts have shown that Roosevelt and Churchill, though living in a similar era, had vastly different world-views. It would not be remiss to say that each was gazing into a different century. As Isaiah Berlin wrote 'For all his sense of history.... Mr Roosevelt was a typical child of the twentieth century and of the New World; while Mr Churchill, for all his love of the present hour... Remains a European of the nineteenth century.'³⁸ Though he had grown up to be comfortable amongst the patrician class, Robert Dallek argues in his recent biography of Roosevelt that he 'quietly questioned the accepted standards by which the worlds of economics and politics and international relations currently operated,' later deciding that 'everything he learned about economics at Harvard was wrong.'³⁹ As an 'establishment rebel,' Roosevelt was flexible, progressive and experimental in his thinking.

Winston Churchill, though born only eight years before Franklin Roosevelt, showcased a Victorian mindset. Biographers have been able to demonstrate that throughout his life he believed in the march of British progress, the inalienable possession of its empire, and the essential goodness of technology and science. Much of this has been explored in Richard Toye discussion of Churchill and Empire.⁴⁰ Toye demonstrates that Churchill

York: Penguin, 2016); Kathryn Smith, *The Gatekeeper: Missy LeHand, FDR, and the Untold Story of the Partnership That Defined a Presidency* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017).

³⁵ Daniels, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: Road to the New Deal, 1882-1939*; H. W. Brands, *Traitor to His Class: The Privileged Life and Radical Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2008).

³⁶ Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War*, 165.

³⁷ The closest he came was in 1934, when FDR published *On Our Way* (New York: The John Day Company) as a compiled collection of documents from his first year in office.

³⁸ Quoted by Lehrman, *Churchill, Roosevelt & Company*, 31.

³⁹ Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Political Life*, 51.

⁴⁰ Richard Toye, *Churchill's Empire: The World That Made Him and the World He Made* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2011).

inherited both the ‘enlightened’ spirit of the age and the tendency to be ‘reactionary’ rather than proactive. Delighted, though he was, with learning about the atomic bomb and other developments, Churchill struggled to imagine a world order other than the nineteenth century one in which he had grown up. John Charmley’s political biography argues that Churchill had an inability to adapt his ‘caste of mind’ and seemingly lamented the loss of the Victorian world in his own reflections entitled *My Early Life*.⁴¹

The tools provided by the field of psychology have generated a complementary strand of biography, known as psychobiography.⁴² As popularised by Sigmund Freud in the early decades of the twentieth century, these accounts usually search for the psychogenesis of an individual’s character from their life experiences, especially as a child.⁴³ This approach has generated deep examinations of the private details of an individual’s domestic circumstances and upbringing. Trying to psychologise political leaders has not always been successful, especially since most of this work must be done from a distance far greater than what the best practices of psychology customarily demand. For example, personality studies may attempt to categorise behaviour based on pure anecdotal evidence. Nevertheless, political psychology has emerged as a fully-fledged field of enquiry, seeking a deeper understanding of not just the behaviour of individual leaders but of the general public. Since its establishment in 1979, *Political Psychology* has taken up questions about the politics of fear, populism, xenophobia, and the deeper forces animating political conservatism.⁴⁴

Psychobiographical studies of Roosevelt and Churchill abound. Many examine these men for lessons about character and leadership qualities.⁴⁵ Others speculate about the effects of each man’s privileged but isolated childhood on their psychological conditioning.⁴⁶ A medical approach to Franklin Roosevelt’s struggle with polio has inspired multiple works

⁴¹ See ‘Chapter Two: A Victorian State of Mind’ in John Charmley, *Churchill: The End of Glory: A Political Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 2014).

⁴² Jerrold M. Post, “Psychobiography,” *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, September 4, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199760107.013.0015>.

⁴³ Post, 1.

⁴⁴ William F. Stone and Paul E. Schaffner, *The Psychology of Politics* (Berlin: Springer Science & Business Media, 2012).

⁴⁵ Andrew Roberts, *Leadership in War: Essential Lessons from Those Who Made History* (London: Penguin Publishing Group, 2019); Allen Packwood, *How Churchill Waged War: The Most Challenging Decisions of the Second World War* (London: Grub Street Publishers, 2018); Eric Larrabee, *Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants, and Their War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

⁴⁶ Michael Shelden, *Young Titan: The Making of Winston Churchill* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013); Ward, *Before the Trumpet*.

discussing his physical, sexual, and mental health.⁴⁷ Both Roosevelt and Churchill remained in positions of political power as they aged, prompting some scholars to wonder whether incipient mental decline negatively affected their decision-making abilities.⁴⁸ A further point of contention has been Churchill's so-called 'Black Dog' or struggle with depression.⁴⁹ These psychological and medical debates have moved attention from the public realm into private spaces, such as their homes, where vulnerability, injury and recovery are made visible.

Psychobiography has done some valuable work towards uncovering the vastly different inner lives of Roosevelt and Churchill. Though it may be futile to identify childhood events or formative experiences in connection with specific psychological traits, it is clear that over time each man developed contrasting ways of managing their internal thoughts and feelings. For the opaque and impossible-to-read president, 'secrets were a part of FDR's way of life.'⁵⁰ In fact, he even hid his blossoming courtship with Eleanor from his own mother until he had already proposed. Most famously, Franklin Roosevelt described himself as a 'juggler' who would 'never let my right hand know what my left hand does.' 'I may be entirely inconsistent,' he remarked, and 'I am perfectly willing to mislead and tell untruths if it will help win the war.'⁵¹ By Roosevelt's own admission, his long-term strategy in politics, argues Warren Kimball, was to be 'disingenuous, deceptive, and devious.'⁵² By keeping

⁴⁷ James Tobin, *The Man He Became: How FDR Defied Polio to Win the Presidency* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013); Richard Emery Verville and John F. Ditunno, "Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Polio, and the Warm Springs Experiment: Its Impact on Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.," *PM & R: The Journal of Injury, Function, and Rehabilitation* 5, no. 1 (2013): 3–8, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmrj.2012.11.007>; Daniel J. Wilson, "A Crippling Fear: Experiencing Polio in the Era of FDR," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 72, no. 3 (September 1, 1998): 464–95, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bhm.1998.0163>; Robert P. Watson, "Physical and Psychological Health," in *A Companion to Franklin D. Roosevelt*. (Hoboken: Wiley, 2011), <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4042004>.

⁴⁸ Herman E. Bateman, "Observations on President Roosevelt's Health during World War II," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43, no. 1 (1956): 82–102, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1895284>; Robert H. Ferrell, *The Dying President: Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1944-1945* (Columbia, Miss.: University of Missouri Press, 1998); Barron H. Lerner, "Crafting Medical History: Revisiting the 'Definitive' Account of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Terminal Illness," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 81, no. 2 (2007): 386–406; Charles Moran, *Winston Churchill: The Struggle for Survival 1940-1965* (London: Constable, 1966); Charles Moore, "A Gallant Defence of Churchill's Health Habits," October 20, 2013, sec. History, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-two/10392624/A-gallant-defence-of-Churchills-health-habits.html>.

⁴⁹ W. Attenborough, *Churchill and the 'Black Dog' of Depression: Reassessing the Biographical Evidence of Psychological Disorder* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014); Anthony M Daniels and J Allister Vale, "Did Sir Winston Churchill Suffer from the 'Black Dog'?", *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 111, no. 11 (November 1, 2018): 394–406, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0141076818808428>.

⁵⁰ Lehrman, *Churchill, Roosevelt & Company*, 32.

⁵¹ Quoted in Warren F. Kimball, *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 7.

⁵² Kimball, 7.

political opponents ‘in the dark,’ Robert Dallek has argued, Franklin Roosevelt was able to ‘advance controversial policies,’ because ‘ignorance of his aims gave [his associates] limited time and opportunity to defeat them.’⁵³ Scholars have discussed the manifold outworking of this secretive mode throughout Roosevelt’s career. When it came to major policy decisions or national security, Roosevelt did not like to leave a paper trail for future historians, and instead preferred to ‘muddle, or even eliminate,’ the evidence.⁵⁴ His disability, too, was something Roosevelt sought to camouflage and keep distant from public consciousness.⁵⁵ Upon his death in 1945, it became clear that Franklin Roosevelt had not even informed Truman, his vice president, about the development of the atomic bomb, nor of his intentions for the peace that would follow the end of the Second World War.⁵⁶

Churchill was no man of secrets. Instead, his preferred mode was blunt honesty and transparency. Historians have described him as ‘an open book’⁵⁷ According to Lewis Lehrman, ‘Churchill’s true feelings tended to show through; he rarely bothered to hide them.’⁵⁸ Though capable of keeping matters confidential, Churchill was generally trusting of others, especially his friends. He happily discussed his plans and strategies openly with his associates.⁵⁹ What’s more, he recorded his decisions dutifully for future historians and wrote his own histories during his lifetime.⁶⁰ Certainly, Churchill was capable of spinning the truth and omitting information to advance his agendas. He coined the phrase ‘terminological inexactitude’ in parliament as a euphemism for this sort of behaviour, and most famously, hid the true extent of his 1953 stroke from the public eye. Though historians have identified several occasions of barefaced lying, it was not generally within Churchill’s predisposition.⁶¹ Churchill lacked the subtlety required to manipulate others in this manner. He preferred to

⁵³ Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Political Life*, 35.

⁵⁴ Maurizio Ferrera et al., *American-British-Canadian Intelligence Relations, 1939-2000* (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2014), 37.

⁵⁵ Hugh Gregory Gallagher, *FDR’s Splendid Deception: The Moving Story of Roosevelt’s Massive Disability and the Intense Efforts to Conceal It from the Public* (Arlington, Virginia: Vandamere Press, 1999).

⁵⁶ Louis William Liebovich, “Failed White House Press Relations in the Early Months of the Truman Administration,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1989): 583.

⁵⁷ Richard M. Langworth, *Winston Churchill, Myth and Reality: What He Actually Did and Said* (Jefferson, South Carolina: McFarland, 2017), 78.

⁵⁸ Lehrman, *Churchill, Roosevelt & Company*, 31.

⁵⁹ Lehrman, 32.

⁶⁰ For an examination of Churchill’s self-conscious documentation of his career, see Reynolds, *In Command of History*.

⁶¹ Other occasions of deception include falsities published in Churchill’s memoirs, as explored by Reynolds, *In Command of History*. For example, p. 169-74 (negotiations in 1940), 327-8 (Katyn) and 341-7 (Dieppe).

win others over to his side with clever repartee, verbose arguments and witty remarks that had the effect of wearing his opponents down. This straightforwardness, which sometimes shaded into bullying, carried over into wartime behaviour. As Lehrman has argued, ‘the prime minister’s policies, his resolve, and that of his government, were clear and compelling.’⁶²

The latest approaches to politician’s home lives utilise the turn towards emotional history.⁶³ ‘For much of the last century political studies eschewed consideration of the emotions,’ remarked Paul Hoggett and Simon Thompson in 2012. ‘It was assumed that political subjects were essentially rational actors busily maximising their strategic interests.’⁶⁴ By renewing academic interest in unmeasurable (and often invisible) factors, historians have been able to recognise that ‘structures of feeling’ shape political systems and that politicians’ ‘emotional habitus’ may determine their behavioural response to given circumstances.⁶⁵ Beyond the psychobiographical portrait of their childhood, this emotional currency is able to shed light on what inward conditions may be limiting or pre-determining a leader’s response to political problems and opportunities.⁶⁶

Two of the most compelling historians applying emotional analysis to national leaders are Martin Francis and Frank Costigliola. Francis’s exploration of the ‘emotional economy’ of prime ministers in the middle of the twentieth century reveals how an individual’s expressive style can have political importance.⁶⁷ Self-restraint, rather than emotional freedom, he argues, was the hegemonic style of masculine leadership in Britain during this period. This norm had significant consequences for the way Churchill was perceived in the public arena. Costigliola, focusing on the United States, has also considered how temperament and emotion has coloured political history.⁶⁸ His work on emotional networks of co-dependence highlights the way that ‘private’ matters like personal ties and friendships

⁶² Lehrman, *Churchill, Roosevelt & Company*, 28.

⁶³ See G. E. Marcus, “Emotions in Politics,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 3, no. 1 (2000): 221–50, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.3.1.221>; Paul Hoggett and Simon Thompson, *Politics and the Emotions: The Affective Turn in Contemporary Political Studies* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2012); Mabel Berezin, “Secure States: Towards a Political Sociology of Emotion,” *The Sociological Review* 50, no. 2 (October 1, 2002): 33–52, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2002.tb03590.x>.

⁶⁴ Hoggett and Thompson, *Politics and the Emotions*, 1.

⁶⁵ Hoggett and Thompson, 2.

⁶⁶ Marcus, “Emotions in Politics.”

⁶⁷ Martin Francis, “Tears, Tantrums, and Bared Teeth: The Emotional Economy of Three Conservative Prime Ministers, 1951–1963,” *Journal of British Studies* 41, no. 3 (2002): 354–87, <https://doi.org/10.1086/341153>.

⁶⁸ Frank Costigliola, *Roosevelt’s Lost Alliances: How Personal Politics Helped Start the Cold War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012).

can shape a country's foreign policy.⁶⁹ Costigliola's portrait of Franklin Roosevelt's circle, and his dependence upon them, reframes traditional discussion of the man's dominant leadership style. By working through the national and international consequences of what has previously been considered an element of the self – emotions – off limits to historians, Francis and Costigliola advocate for an opening up of political history to embrace intimate spaces and happenings.

Emotional history is particularly helpful in contending with how political figures felt and behaved towards the people who surrounded them. When it came to relating to others and winning approval, Roosevelt and Churchill appealed to very different emotional lexicons. Roosevelt cloaked himself in the disarming aura of approachability and charm. He exuded a calm and cheerful demeanour. He favoured a 'breezy superficiality' and liked to address acquaintances on a first-name basis after only just meeting them.⁷⁰ Roosevelt made many people feel as though he was on their side. As Robert Dallek has argued, Roosevelt was 'well versed in hiding his views from people he wished not to offend, especially his mother.'⁷¹ Frank Costigliola has characterised him as an actor, able to project a dazzling charisma and practically 'twinkle' – determined as he was to win others over to his view.⁷²

Churchill, though frequently charming in his own idiosyncratic way, rarely was motivated in his behaviour by a desire to win approval. In fact, 'conversations with Churchill were often found to be rather one-sided affairs,' writes Richard Toye, 'with the other party being treated to rehearsals of phrases that later turned up in speech. People found the experience fascinating, but disconcerting.'⁷³ This disregard for making a good impression applied broadly to the political context of Churchill's work in the 1940s. Churchill oversaw a large coalition government throughout the war in which public opinion was less pressing and parliamentary revolt seemed unlikely.⁷⁴ With the security of his position, Churchill also readily rebuked and rebuffed people whom he judged to be acting with 'slovenliness and ineptitude.'⁷⁵ This behaviour put him at odds with others throughout his career; in his declining years, such actions were put down, in the words of Geoffrey Best, to the 'foible of

⁶⁹ Frank Costigliola, "Broken Circle: The Isolation of Franklin D. Roosevelt in World War II," *Diplomatic History* 32, no. 5 (October 8, 2008): 677–718, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2008.00725.x>.

⁷⁰ Lehrman, *Churchill, Roosevelt & Company*, 28.

⁷¹ Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Political Life*, 41.

⁷² Costigliola, *Roosevelt's Lost Alliances*, 43.

⁷³ Richard Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill: Rivals for Greatness* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2012), 25.

⁷⁴ Lehrman, *Churchill, Roosevelt & Company*, 30.

⁷⁵ Best, *Churchill*, 26.

an eccentric grand old man.’⁷⁶ Over time, Churchill became renowned for his self-absorption, or as Leo McKinsty has described it, his ‘egotism’ which resulted in ‘a ruthless focus on his own work and its demands.’⁷⁷

These observations about Roosevelt and Churchill, established by historians of the field, are revealed and explored in deeper ways throughout this dissertation. Behind the walls at Hyde Park and Chartwell, each man’s world-view, inner life, and external temperament was starkly exposed. Delving into personal life and character at home requires looking outside of the domain of traditional political history and instead borrowing from the realms of biography, psychobiography and emotional history. Such forms must be treated with a degree of caution, yet they may offer new perspectives on these much-written-about men. Armed with these tools, this dissertation will explore the private spaces of Hyde Park and Chartwell in order to ask questions of public significance.

Comparative historiography of house museums

The second subject of comparison in this dissertation is two house museums. Though both were national heritage monuments to deceased leaders, a closer study (or, if possible, a personal visit) reveals that Hyde Park and Chartwell were, and still are, very different sorts of museums. There are many contingencies which shape the character of a modern house museum, and much of this is played out along national cultural lines. Museology provides elucidating research about how and why house museums use different strategies to connect audiences with the past. Despite their local flavour, house museums commonly contribute to collective narratives about national identity. Current scholarship suggests that coming to terms with house museums will not only clarify the collective stories that bind nations together, but also offer enduring opportunities to present the past in fresh ways for each new generation.

The earliest form of relevant literature came in the genre of guidebooks written for those looking to set up house museums on their own. These guides began to flourish in America during the 1980s, with the professionalisation of the heritage industry, and continue to be published today.⁷⁸ Non-profit owners of historic sites, usually operating out of a passion

⁷⁶ Best, 26.

⁷⁷ Leo McKinsty, *Attlee and Churchill: Allies in War, Adversaries in Peace* (London: Atlantic Books, 2019), 326.

⁷⁸ Sherry Butcher-Youngmans, *Historic House Museums: A Practical Handbook for Their Care, Preservation, and Management* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Donna Ann Harris, *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America’s Historic Houses* (New York: AltaMira Press,

for local heritage, formed the intended audience for these books, which focused on preventive conservation and management. Sherry Butcher-Youngmans addresses her manual to the ‘poorer cousins’ who sit in the shadow of famous sites like Mount Vernon and Colonial Williamsburg, offering ‘practical, inexpensive, and easy-to-accomplish solutions to increase the professionalism of these [poorer] museums.’⁷⁹ Practical concerns dominate as chapters address maximising volunteer potential, harnessing the governing board, protecting the enterprise from financial hardship and advice on conserving artefacts. Manuals like this also highlight the range of house museums, encompassing the full spectrum from federally managed sites to those which are locally administered by volunteer enthusiasts or collectors.

Sources of funding and management style can make a considerable difference in the way house museums are run. Hyde Park has been run by the National Park Service, a government agency, and Chartwell by the National Trust, a private charitable institution. As we shall see, each had a distinct bureaucratic style; the two differed as well in their ability and desire to resist external pressures coming from surviving family members and from impassioned members of the public.

The question of about how to best *interpret* material within a house museum turns out not to be an easy one to answer. Indeed, evaluative academic scholarship on house museums is still a developing field.⁸⁰ Jessica Foy Donnelly has argued that presenting a slice of domestic history – or a lovely heritage home – is not enough if it cannot be interpreted for its implications to broader historical movements or its significance in the contemporary world.⁸¹ Patrick Butler has outlined the traditional ‘interpretative emphasis’ of house museums as being the ‘residential structure itself and the lives of individuals related to the structure.’⁸² As in the rest of the museum world, recent trends have emphasized the need to move beyond idealised, apolitical and static presentations to create exhibits that are dynamic and thought-

2007); Jane Merritt and Julie A. Reilly, *Preventive Conservation for Historic House Museums* (New York: Rowman Altamira, 2010); Rebekah Beaulieu, *Financial Fundamentals for Historic House Museums* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017); Kenneth C. Turino and Max van Balgooy, *Reimagining Historic House Museums: New Approaches and Proven Solutions* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

⁷⁹ Butcher-Youngmans, *Historic House Museums*, 8.

⁸⁰ For a selection of heritage research on house museums, see the *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Volume 17, Issue 2, 2011: Christina J. Hodge and Christa M. Beranek, “Dwelling: Transforming Narratives at Historic House Museums,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 17, no. 2 (March 2011): 97–101, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2011.541063>.

⁸¹ Jessica Foy Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (New York: Rowman Altamira, 2002), 40–41.

⁸² Patrick H. Butler, “Past, Present and Future: The Place of the House Museum in the Museum Community,” in *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, ed. Jessica Foy Donnelly (New York: Rowman Altamira, 2002), 18.

provoking.⁸³ House museums that succeed often make the case that they are symbolic of something greater. Some houses embody a prototype of a certain decorative style and architecture (for example, arts and crafts or plantation-style homes) or as representative of a category of people that lived within (for example, the homes of famous writers or, in the case of this project, politicians). The means of delivering this interpretation to audiences stems from the twin assets of house museums: abundant material culture on the one hand and the capacity to immerse the visitor in a total experience on the other.

Material culture is recognised as a central tenet to the house museum. Homes are rich in their materiality, encompassing not just the historical artefacts inside but the very structure itself.⁸⁴ Placing personal objects in their domestic context brings them to life in a way that can be difficult to achieve behind glass cases in museums. As Nuala Hancock writes, ‘The house museum offers a peculiarly direct encounter with the materiality of another’s life.’⁸⁵ Curators of these homes have the opportunity not only to present a plethora of objects but to connect these materials to relevant questions about consumption patterns, production methods, gender construction and cultural ties.⁸⁶ Recent scholarship stresses the affective power of objects.⁸⁷ As productive forces in their own right, historical artefacts may register distinct responses in the body, from excitement to anger or disgust.⁸⁸ A belief in the embodied experience of sensory exposure to objects has shaped interpretive decisions at house museums.⁸⁹ Sandra Dudley argues for inviting visitors to explore both the ‘potentialities and actualities’ of historic objects, by which she means, what we *know*

⁸³ Kim Christensen, “Ideas versus Things: The Balancing Act of Interpreting Historic House Museums,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 17, no. 2 (March 1, 2011): 154, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2011.541068>.

⁸⁴ Magaly Cabral, “Exhibiting and Communicating History and Society in Historic House Museums,” *Museum International* 53, no. 2 (April 2001): 41–46, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0033.00311>. For a discussion of the material-cultural turn see Dan Hicks, “The Material-Cultural Turn: Event and Effect,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, ed. Mary C. Beaudry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 25–98; Leora Auslander et al., “AHR Conversation: Historians and the Study of Material Culture,” *American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1355–1404.

⁸⁵ Nuala Hancock, “Virginia Woolf’s Glasses: Material Encounters in the Literary/Artistic House Museum,” in *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations*, ed. Sandra H. Dudley (London: Routledge, 2010), 114.

⁸⁶ Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, 87.

⁸⁷ Jacobs and Malpas, “Material Objects, Identity and the Home.” Kate Gregory and Andrea Witcomb, “Beyond Nostalgia : The Role of Affect in Generating Historical Understanding at Heritage Sites,” *Museum Revolutions : How Museums Change and Are Changed*, January 1, 2007, 263–75; Sandra H. Dudley, *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations* (London: Routledge, 2010).

⁸⁸ Gregory and Witcomb, “Beyond Nostalgia,” 264.

⁸⁹ Sandra H. Dudley, “The Power of Things,” in *A Companion to Public History* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2018), 187–99, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118508930.ch13>.

happened to/around the object, and what we *speculate* could have happened. This will, she argues, invoke a deeper appreciation of its ‘thingness’ or otherness, causing visitors to stop, feel and imagine, ultimately creating lasting memories at the house museum in question.⁹⁰

House museums are enveloping in their immersiveness, bringing visitors under one roof and between four walls. This allows the public to inhabit a historic site, rather than merely observe it. Nuala Hancock writes that the pedagogical lessons of house museums occur ‘through the power of evocation,’ by which she means ‘the frisson of entering the interior spaces of another, the jolting strangeness of encountering the material past in the present, the emotionality of memory, the tension between the longevity of material things and the transience of human life.’⁹¹ This experience is unlike the learning that occurs through explanatory texts.

Managing the way that visitors come in contact with this material culture, and indeed, how they come inside the home itself, has long preoccupied staff at Hyde Park and Chartwell. Historically, the Park Service and the Trust have explored very different avenues towards visitor interpretation of the site. At Hyde Park, active interpretation was the standard approach and visitors were led through the home by signage and with the help of a guided tours. This created a highly mediated and heavily curated experience. Conversely at Chartwell, staff relied heavily upon the evocative materials and building at their disposal. They believed that the spirit of the home would ‘speak’ to audiences without the active intervention of signage or docents.

Evocative historical places are a popular subject of enquiry in the field of memory studies.⁹² Scholars in this subdiscipline regard museums as influential physical places in which collective stories are transmitted across society. Susan Crane argues that we should consider museums like external memory banks that visitors enter in order to access a repository of collective social memories.⁹³ Such a phenomenon is heightened at richly imbued heritage sites. David Glassberg has described such a repository as a kind of ‘place-

⁹⁰ Dudley, 197.

⁹¹ Nuala Hancock, *Charleston and Monk’s House: The Intimate House Museums of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell: The Intimate House Museums of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 5.

⁹² For an explanation of the spatial-historical turn, see Philip J. Ethington, “Placing the Past: ‘Groundwork’ for a Spatial Theory of History,” *Rethinking History* 11, no. 4 (December 1, 2007): 465–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642520701645487>.

⁹³ Susan A. Crane, “The Conundrum of Ephemerality: Time, Memory and Museums,” in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 100.

consciousness.⁹⁴ He argues that individuals form their identity and understand their role in society through attachment to personal storied places. In Glassberg's view, someone's 'sense of history' is inseparable from his or her knowledge of the events and changes that have occurred in a specific locale. This history can be gathered from their own past experiences, or through stories that they read or learn.⁹⁵ Visitors to a house museum come away with new stories about spaces, often finding their own 'place' or significance in that historic narrative.

With these powerful tools, scholars have explored the potential for house museums to act as vehicles within social history that both reflect and challenge the national consciousness. Interpretation at house museums easily errs on the side of laudatory patriotism or of simplistic depictions of national character. In America, the most popular form of house museum remains the plantation home. Researchers have noted the ease with which curators allow the geography, society and practices of the antebellum south to be folded into a quintessential sense of American identity. Until very recently, many plantation houses presented a squeaky-clean history that excluded slavery narratives whilst privileging romanticized, white domestic concerns.⁹⁶ In Britain, historians have focused on the abundance of house museums that celebrate writers and literary figures, from Shakespeare and Wordsworth to the Bronte sisters, Keats and Coleridge.⁹⁷ At these house museums, the narrative is also politicised. By evoking English literature as a matter of public virtue and national pride, the writer's home is depicted as the centre of Englishness. All successful house museums rely upon 'interweaving the particular and the general' by telling the stories of their individual owners within the broader social and economic realm they inhabited.⁹⁸ This carries a significant risk of generalizing about national character and experience or biasing the narration towards certain segments of society.

The history of managing Hyde Park and Chartwell is a history of the journey towards inserting social consciousness into each house museum. Over time, the interpretive staff at each home has navigated away from presenting the home simply as a shrine for the deceased

⁹⁴ David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

⁹⁵ Glassberg, 18.

⁹⁶ For example, see Perry Carter, David L. Butler, and Derek H. Alderman, "The House That Story Built: The Place of Slavery in Plantation Museum Narratives," *The Professional Geographer* 66, no. 4 (October 2, 2014): 547–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2014.921016>.

⁹⁷ See Linda Young, "Literature, Museums, and National Identity; or, Why Are There So Many Writers' House Museums in Britain?," *Museum History Journal* 8, no. 2 (July 1, 2015): 229–46, <https://doi.org/10.1179/1936981615Z.000000000052>.

⁹⁸ Hodge and Beranek, "Dwelling," 98.

and towards a site that raised bigger and often challenging questions for the general public. The opportunities for nuanced analysis of house museums as vessels of national storytelling has been demonstrated by Linda Young. Her comparative history of house museums in the US and the UK provides an important starting point. Young argues that the power of house museums is in their ability to frame national ideals in local, digestible and tangible ways:

A visit to a house museum produces knowledge grounded in the common experience of *home*, which contributes to collective identity and affirms national or local characteristics. Thus house museums make the abstractions of nation personal, material, visible, and visitable in the familiar form of a home.⁹⁹

Examining house museums on both sides of the Atlantic allows us to consider the different types of national narratives being presented, exposing the cultural assumptions guiding historical interpretation in Britain and America. Houses are a provocative form of memorializing in which domestic, personal and intimate stories must be reconciled with grand national myths. Following in Young's path, this dissertation seeks to place two houses under the microscope, appreciating their uniquely compelling form and uncovering how British and American practices, myths and values have been, and still are, at work in the heritage industry.

Chapter outline

This dissertation is framed in two parts: Hyde Park and Chartwell in history (Chapters One, Two and Three), and Hyde Park and Chartwell in heritage (Chapters Four and Five). Each chapter is comparative, bringing both homes into discussion with each other by considering their shared functions. This approach foregrounds similarities by choosing a connecting way that the home was used or experienced. In Part One, the functions of the home for Roosevelt and Churchill can broadly be described as providing the construction of gentility (Chapter One), the preservation of self-esteem (Chapter Two) and the maintenance of productivity (Chapter Three). In Part Two, the major role of the home shifts in its configuration as it becomes a heritage site. Here, the dominant function of the home is twofold: commemorating national figures (Chapter Four) and interpreting their relevance for the public (Chapter Five). Thematic chapters provide the analytical framework, around which the narrative of events has been inserted. Finally, each chapter also begins with a broad survey of how pertinent

⁹⁹ Linda Young, *Historic House Museums in the United States and the United Kingdom: A History* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 2.

elements of culture (landed class divisions, masculine ideals, the preservation movement etc) were developing in parallel or complementary ways on each side of the Atlantic. This context serves to heighten our understanding of the significance of Roosevelt, Churchill and their homes in the country.

Chapter One begins with the building and remodelling that occurred in the early period at Hyde Park and Chartwell. The focus of this chapter is 1915-1916 at Hyde Park and 1922-1925 at Chartwell. While the Roosevelts and the Churchills imagined, planned and executed home improvements, their visions hint at broader dreams for self-improvement and status. This chapter probes intimate power dynamics between husband and wife, mother and son, to demonstrate that the country home became a contested space in the formation of identity.

Chapter Two moves outdoors in order to consider the grounds at Hyde Park and Chartwell. This chapter contends with dark periods of loss, humiliation and emasculation in the lives of Roosevelt and Churchill. In particular, it addresses the period 1921-1928 for Franklin Roosevelt (corresponding to his ‘recovery’ from polio) and 1929-1939 for Winston Churchill (often described as his ‘wilderness years’). It becomes evident that by seeking to control the natural world, whether by shaping and landscaping it to their aesthetic desires or farming and cultivating it for profit, Churchill and Roosevelt found enduring comfort.

Chapter Three considers the network of friends, staff and associates that comprised the home. In exploring the complex mixture of duty and pleasure that bound these individuals to Roosevelt and Churchill’s service, this chapter frames the home as a magnet of considerable force. Seeking both emotional intimacy and productive proximity, Roosevelt and Churchill were able to maximise the home as a site of politicking and entertainment in the interwar period.

Chapter Four begins at the moment of each man’s death, when each home was turned over to be administered as a heritage site. Looking at the decisions made by the National Park service in 1945-1946 and the National Trust in 1965-1966 demonstrates the complexity of turning a house into a museum. In this chapter we see the way that competing desires of stakeholders, and the contrasting nature of charitable and government administrations have shaped Hyde Park and Chartwell into very different house shrines.

Chapter Five examines the ongoing work of interpretation at Hyde Park and Chartwell. Moving through half a century of museum development, this chapter explores how educational methods such as guided tours, interactive elements and textual interpretation have altered the visitor experience at these sites. By inquiring into the philosophy of house

preservation as practiced by the National Park Service and the National Trust, deeper challenges about ensuring the ongoing relevance of Roosevelt and Churchill to a modern audience are uncovered.

A note on sources

This research has been undertaken primarily through the Franklin Roosevelt Presidential Library, the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives, the Churchill Archives Centre, and the National Trust Archives. Published memoirs and oral histories form a significant source base, especially for Chapter Three which seeks to convey a social history of those who dwelt in Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill's orbit. I have also conducted interviews with current and past staff members of the National Park Service and National Trust to supplement Part Two of this dissertation. Finally, significant time spent visiting, touring and dwelling at Hyde Park and Chartwell has illuminated the experiential aspect of these sites and demonstrated the compelling power of homes as objects of historical analysis.

PART I
Hyde Park and Chartwell in History

Chapter One:
Constructing the Home

Chartwell and Springwood in their current state can each be traced to a defining episode of remodelling. In making and remaking their homes, Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt and their families were cementing their future ambitions – whether for familial harmony, social standing, or financial gain – into brick and mortar. During the process of renovating, the domestic ideals of the household could be imagined and projected onto the blank canvas of a country home. As this occurred, conflicting personal and political aspirations by members of the household caused the home to become a space for intimate and gendered power relations.

The Roosevelt ‘Big House’, Springwood, was altered and expanded by Sara and her son Franklin between the summers of 1915 and 1916. A decade later, a second major project was underway on the same estate, as FDR oversaw the construction of the ‘Val Kill’ cottage for Eleanor Roosevelt and her friends. Meanwhile, Winston and Clementine Churchill also undertook major renovations on their new home, Chartwell, with ongoing work between 1922 and 1925. Using archival correspondence between all the key actors, it is possible to reconstruct the process of remaking a home from designing to budgeting and implementing various home improvements. Each renovation decision was strongly informed by personal and national ideals of the country estate. This chapter will examine the hopeful plans and conflict-ridden realities of home construction.

The building efforts at Chartwell and Springwood did not occur within a vacuum, but were markers of change in significant periods of each man’s life and career. In 1915, Franklin Roosevelt was busy climbing to the heights of his political profession. He had recently relocated from the Senate to be appointed Assistant Secretary to the Navy, a post which had previously been held by his eminent fifth cousin, Theodore Roosevelt. Like Teddy before him, Franklin Roosevelt was moving through the twentieth century with visions of national prominence in his sights.¹ Winston Churchill had emerged from the First World War with varied political success. After ordering a disastrous Dardanelles campaign, he took the position of Minister of Munitions and War and Air Secretary, then became Colonial Minister

¹ For detail on Franklin D. Roosevelt’s early life see Ward, *Before the Trumpet*; Ward, *A First Class Temperament*.

in 1921. Despite his oftentimes controversial views, Churchill's own confidence in his strategies and politics was unwavering.²

However, both men and their families were on the cusp of major personal and political setbacks. For Clementine and Winston, the purchase of Chartwell occurred within months of the infant death of Marigold, their fourth child. The 1920s would go on to become an especially turbulent period for Winston's career as David Lloyd's coalition fell in 1922, and by 1929 a despondent Churchill found himself 'without an office, without a seat, without a party, and without an appendix.'³ Likewise, within six years of Springwood's renovation, Franklin Roosevelt would be struck paralysed by polio, forced to take home rest and reconsider his next steps. Chapter Two will consider the use of Hyde Park and Chartwell as sites of rejuvenation and productivity in times of personal and political barrenness.

A hopeful and energetic spirit suffused both Springwood and Chartwell during these years, even as inevitable conflicts and compromises between mother and son, husband and wife, and architect and client arose. As lofty ideals were replaced with pragmatic decision-making, this chapter explore the place of a country home in the consciousness of the Churchills and the Roosevelts; two families for whom a house in the country represented a stake in their identity, past and future.

Country homes in Britain and America

The culture of country homes in Britain and America developed in complex and complementary ways. Land access and land ownership has signalled virtuous citizenship in each nation. Nevertheless, the peculiarities of class, ethnicity and culture has created two different heritages of rural living.

British polite society had a long history of dwellings in the countryside. Owing to ancient ingrained traditions around landholding and peerage, there emerged by the sixteenth century a small stratum of British society that drew its privilege from its landed estates and family succession. Within a few hundred years this had developed into a leisure class of aristocratic gentry, who carved out the city as a place of business in contrast to their bucolic rural country homes. Thus by the late nineteenth century, most of the countryside had been partitioned into a segregated arena for the enjoyment of landed estate owners. In 1880, depending on how you calculate it, between 7,000 and 11,000 landowners held onto 66-80%

² See Bell, *Churchill and the Dardanelles*.

³ Winston Churchill, 'Election Memories,' *Strand Magazine*, 1931.

of the British Isles.⁴ Extravagant country houses, what Peter Mandler has called ‘islands of aristocratic heritage,’ embodied the ideals of the British gentry.⁵ As one commentator put it, the countryside became filled with ‘great avenues leading to residences which lack no comfort, broad parks, stretches of private land, sparsely cultivated, but convenient for hunting, shooting, and a kind of stately splendour.’⁶

This concentration of land and power in the hands of the elite took a gradual downturn through the next century. By the end of the First World War, the permanent country home in Britain was being supplanted by something new – the pleasant weekend retreat.⁷ Scholars have pointed to increasing tax rates and the decline of the domestic service industry to explain why the upkeep of a country home became a financial liability in twentieth century Britain.⁸ Following the First World War, it was no longer an assumed prerequisite for British politicians to own country estates. In 1922 Andrew Bonar Law became the first prime minister to ascend to the position without the validation of landed estate or high aristocratic pedigree.⁹

However, far from signalling the death of the country home, the changing economic climate opened new opportunities for the nouveau riche. Aside from the rising middle classes, many of these homeowners were in fact emigrant Americans. John Keegan has described the unlikely alliances that formed between rich Americans born of the Gilded Age and the sinking class of British gentry. In the new economy, wealthy American beauties were sought as wives to ‘rescue once great [British] families from the consequences of extravagance’ while these women’s newfound aristocratic titles became ‘ornaments to vulgar fortune’ for families across the Atlantic.¹⁰ As Sven Beckert has described, British families traded their ‘social honor in return for financial support.’¹¹

⁴ David Cannadine argues for that it was most likely the greater sum, held by the fewer. David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, New edition (London; New York; Toronto etc.: Penguin, 2005), 9.

⁵ For a sense of how the landed gentry were perceived by outsiders, see Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997).

⁶ C. F. G. Masterman, *The Condition of England* (London: Faber & Faber, 1909), 201–2.

⁷ Oliver Garnett, *Chartwell* (Swindon: National Trust, 2010), 11.

⁸ See Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*; J. V. Beckett, “Review: Country House Life,” *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 1 (2002): 235–44.

⁹ Adrian Tinniswood, *The Long Weekend: Life in the English Country House, 1918-1939* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 343.

¹⁰ Keegan, *Winston Churchill*, 18.

¹¹ Sven Beckert, “Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850–1896,” in *Class: The Anthology*, by Stanley Aronowitz and Michael J. Roberts (Hoboken, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2017), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/usyd/detail.action?docID=4901713>.

Contested boundaries of high society in the interwar period, argues Adrian Tinniswood, ‘introduced new aesthetics, new social structures, new meanings to an old tradition’ of country homes in Britain.¹² Tinniswood further suggests that longing for a stately home in this period stemmed from a sense of nostalgia and a desire for stability after the carnage of the Great War.¹³ Into this context, Churchill’s relationship with ‘Chartwell Manor,’ as he called it, came naturally. Churchill himself was born from an new prototypical Anglo-American alliance. His mother, Jennie Jerome was an American socialite (daughter of esteemed New York financier and horse racer) who had moved to Britain to marry his father, Lord Randolph Churchill.¹⁴ Their partnership was transitory. Randolph’s indulgent lifestyle could not be maintained, even with Jennie’s fortune, and he later succumbed to ill-health.¹⁵ Jennie, likewise, was oftentimes distracted from their marriage by other suitors, and spent long periods apart from her husband.¹⁶ In this family, Winston Churchill from infancy found himself caught between old and new notions of wealth and privilege in Britain. Though he was born into the inner circle of Victorian society, to Keegan has observed, he remained an outsider.¹⁷ His purchase of Chartwell for 5,000 pounds in 1922 can be understood as an effort to move closer to the inner circle that he regarded as his rightful heritage.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, revolutionary America’s egalitarian foundations created a different paradigm for citizens’ relationship to the natural world. Civic Republicanism, as promoted by the writings of Thomas Jefferson in the eighteenth century, encouraged westward-looking Americans to view the environment as a resource to be tamed and utilised.¹⁸ By bringing the natural world under human control through farming and cultivation, it was thought, Americans could lay claim their essential citizenship. Nevertheless, by the nineteenth century, class divides had begun to etch themselves onto North American geography, as in Britain. Over the years, a gentry class with aristocratic pretensions had become concentrated in the eastern seaboard cities of Boston and New York,

¹² Tinniswood, *The Long Weekend*, ix.

¹³ Tinniswood, 12.

¹⁴ Herbert Nicholas, “Winston Churchill,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., January 2019), <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Winston-Churchill>.

¹⁵ The nature of his debilitation has been speculated to be either syphilis or brain tumour. See Gilbert, *Churchill and America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 11.

¹⁶ For more on Lady Randolph Churchill (Jennie Jerome) see Anne Sebba, *Jennie Churchill: Winston’s American Mother* (London: John Murray, 2007); Leslie, *Lady Randolph Churchill*.

¹⁷ Keegan, *Winston Churchill*, 16.

¹⁸ J. Michael Martinez, “Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian Views of Nature in the Early American Republic,” *Politics & Policy* 33, no. 3 (2005): 522–52, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-1346.2005.tb00806.x>.

especially those families who could trace their heritage back to early Dutch or English settlers.¹⁹ Many of these old settler families, who in New York became known as ‘Knickerbockers,’ constituted the upper echelons of society.²⁰ With homes along the Hudson River and valuable real-estate in New York City, their households reflected a rooted history in the heritage and land of what once had been New Holland. Mirroring British Country estates, these family estates placed swathes of the countryside in the possession of a small and very wealthy elite.

It was not until the late nineteenth century, after the Civil War, that something resembling a true American bourgeoisie emerged. Sven Beckert has explored the creation of an elite class that did not derive their status from ‘the accidents of birth and heritage’ but by their ownership of capital.²¹ Comprised of businessmen, bankers, merchants and traders, this group ‘gained the upper hand over an older feudal, social elite.’²² The pinnacle, and lasting cultural icon of this class, were the extravagantly wealthy industry tycoons or ‘Robber Barons’. This ‘restless, brassy, chest-thumping, sometimes vulgarly rich society’, writes Wayne Craven, challenged the ingrained status of the older Boston and New York families.²³

During the Gilded Age, the Hudson Valley emerged as a favourite retreat for the newly wealthy captains of industry. John D. Rockefeller, J.P Morgan and Jay Gould were among those who built lavish upstate estates. With transport improving, these homes were now in commuting distance from New York City. At this time as well, it had become feasible for wealthy Americans to take vacations across the Atlantic and witness first-hand the forward fashions and grand architecture of aristocratic Europeans.²⁴ Returning to the Hudson, many styled for themselves castles and mansions that evoked the luxury of the French Riviera, the German Rhine or wherever else their Grand Tours had taken them. By the turn of the twentieth century, elaborate estates that mimicked European aristocracy lined the Hudson river all the way from New Jersey to Albany.²⁵

¹⁹ Mary Lou Lustig, *Privilege and Prerogative: New York's Provincial Elite, 1710-1776* (Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ Press, 1995).

²⁰ Wayne Craven, *Gilded Mansions: Grand Architecture and High Society*, 1st ed (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2009), 13.

²¹ Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896* (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4.

²² Beckert, 4.

²³ Craven, *Gilded Mansions*, 8.

²⁴ Alan Trachtenberg and Eric Foner, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

²⁵ Frances F. Dunwell, *The Hudson: America's River* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

From the 1880s to the 1920s, generations of American nobility continued to inherit or purchase these Hudson River estates, remaking them according to the finest taste of each decade. The old Knickerbocker families found themselves side-by-side with new wealth. The revered Roosevelt family counted themselves among the original colonial social elite – descending from Claes Maartenszen van Rosenvelt, a businessman who emigrated to New York from Amsterdam in the 1630s. Franklin Roosevelt was born and raised in an eighteenth century Italianate farmhouse. But now, down the road stood an ornate ‘Beaux-Arts’ style home, built by the railroad and shipping tycoon, Cornelius Vanderbilt.

Like Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt was living in a period when country homes had become contested sites, sought by a new class for their own. Tracing their heritage, as each did, to the original bourgeoisie landowners, these men undertook construction, at least partly, in order to ensure their claim to a place in the country and so also, on the pages of history itself.

Churchill and Chartwell

Clementine and Winston Churchill began searching for their ‘a little country basket’ during the Great War.²⁶ It was not to be their first property. Churchill had been born in 1874 at Blenheim Palace, where he spent his early years. This privilege was due to his descent from John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough, for whom the palace was commissioned. When he married Clementine Hozier in 1908, the newlyweds lived briefly together in Winston’s bachelor pad, 12 Bolton Street, London, before taking on a nine-year lease of their first marital home, 33 Eccleston Square. Nevertheless, the pull for a rural property, outside of the bustle of London life, was strong.

Winston and Clementine’s first foray into country houses was the purchase of Lullenden, a 67-acre mixed farm in Sussex, bought in 1916 and owned by the Churchills for about three years.²⁷ Stefan Buczacki has described Lullenden as a ‘a decrepit medieval farmhouse with no modern amenities.’²⁸ Nevertheless, Winston Churchill was undeterred and embarked on a series of outlandish renovation schemes, such as hiring three German prisoners of war to develop the land, and later accepting agricultural assistance from

²⁶ Garnett, *Chartwell*, 11.

²⁷ For a summary of the Lullenden years see Stefan Buczacki, *Churchill and Chartwell: The Untold Story of Churchill’s Houses and Gardens* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2007), 67–80.

²⁸ Buczacki, 66.

members of the British Armed Forces who were unfit to serve overseas.²⁹ By September 1919, however, it was clear that the Churchills lacked the means and resources to operate the farm (with ongoing staffing shortages) so a decision was made to sell the house and estate.³⁰ But the Churchills' appetite for a country home had not been quenched, and their search continued.

Both Winston and Clementine held to the pre-war view that a country home should, ideally, be their primary household, rather than a weekend escape. This notion became harder to maintain in the coming years as Winston's political career and obligations in London thrived. They also agreed that it was favourable to buy a family home that could be left to their descendants; 'a place that the children will always remember and which will go down to them afterwards.'³¹ But in the details of how this could be realized, Winston and Clementine held different opinions.

For Clementine, the experience at Lullenden was a learning curve that weighed heavily upon her in the years that followed. Writing to Winston in July 1921, she urged him against buying another large rural estate. 'Personally, farming frightens me after our experiment at Lullenden' she wrote, 'Don't let's be incommoded by agricultural operations.'³² The next day, after viewing Peelings (a 40-acre estate on the Sussex coast) Clementine reiterated that they must not entangle themselves in farming operations 'which we do not understand and have not the time to learn, and to practise when learnt.'³³ In Clementine's mind, the country house ought to be a place of peace, relaxation and escape. Staying with friends at Menabilly, an historic and overgrown Cornish estate, Clementine reflected on its enchanting character. 'These few days I have spent here make me realise how heavenly and peaceful it would be to have a house in the country,' she declared, 'It is very restful here.'³⁴ At the heart of Clementine's search for a country home was an internal contradiction, between her desire for a site marked by symbols of leisure (speaking often of having a tennis court, a kitchen garden, and entertaining spaces) and her distaste for the stress of working to maintain such a home. In candid self-reflection, she wrote to Winston using the metaphor of a dozing cat to capture the kind of rural life she sought.

²⁹ Buczacki, 66.

³⁰ Garnett, *Chartwell*, 11.

³¹ CSC to WSC, 10 July 1921. CHAR 1/139/58-60, Churchill Archives.

³² CSC to WSC, 10 July 1921. CHAR 1/139/58-60, Churchill Archives.

³³ CSC to WSC, 11 July 1921. CHAR 1/139/62-64, Churchill Archives.

³⁴ CSC to WSC, 10 July 1921. CHAR 1/139/58-60, Churchill Archives.

I long for a Country home but I would like it to be a rest and joy Bunny, not a fresh pre-occupation. I do think that if we really lived in the country it would be the greatest fun and also a life occupation to own and develop so varied a project. I should simply love it, but it would need real hard work and concentration and just how I am for relaxation – I want to lie in the sun and blink and wake up now and then to eat a mouse caught by someone else and drink a little cream and doze off again.³⁵

Winston had a different sort of country home in mind than his wife. For Winston, a country home represented the ideal venture in which he could explore his interests in architecture, aesthetics, and agriculture, amongst other pursuits. Unfazed by the mistakes made at Lullenden, Churchill continued to hold ambitious desires for a country estate, and ‘never succumbed to Clementine’s chocolate box fantasies’.³⁶ It was with this mind-set that he first viewed Chartwell in 1921, and was captivated, above all, by its *potential*. Robin Fedden has described the home in this period as an ‘ungainly Victorian mansion, ponderous with bays and oriel, its façade shrouded in ivy and its approach heavy with laurel, rhododendron and conifer.’³⁷ But what Chartwell as a building lacked it possessed in its setting—perched on a hillside near Westerham, offering sweeping views of the Weald of Kent. It was the view that Churchill coveted. He was not alone. On first viewing it in 1921, Clementine was equally enamoured by the ‘heavenly tree-crowned hill’.³⁸ However, unlike his wife who quickly realised the magnitude of the task of house reconstruction, Winston was unafraid of investing monetarily, as well as personally and emotionally, in improving the house and gardens. ‘I am very glad indeed to have become possessor of “Chartwell”,’ he wrote in September 1922, ‘I have been searching for two years for a home in the country which fulfils all my particular requirements, and I have no hesitation in saying that the site is for its size the most beautiful and charming I have ever seen.’³⁹

Even before it was purchased, Clementine and Winston Churchill harboured different hopes for Chartwell. The immaculate leisure-bound retreat that Clementine imagined purchasing was vastly incompatible with the laborious home-improvement project that Winston aimed to undertake. It was the momentous challenge itself that excited Winston

³⁵ CSC to WSC, 11 July 1921. CHAR 1/139/62-64, Churchill Archives.

³⁶ Buczacki, *Churchill and Chartwell*, 66.

³⁷ Fedden, *Churchill and Chartwell*, 8.

³⁸ CSC to WSC, 1 July 1921. CHAR 1/139/85-92, Churchill Archives.

³⁹ CSC to AJ Campbell-Colquhoun, 25 September 1922. CHAR 1/159/28-31, Churchill Archives.

Churchill, the very same thing about Chartwell that proved to wear at the patience and composure of his wife.

The property upon which Chartwell stands can be traced back to William-at-Well, who bought the land in 1362. The name of the house, as William's surname suggests, arises from an ancient and natural well in the land, springing fresh water from the chalky and rough ground. The property exchanged hands many times over the centuries; maps show an array of built structures in different periods, and suggest the site may have held a 'Foundling House' for abandoned children in the eighteenth century.⁴⁰ The lineage most associated with Chartwell is the Colquhoun family, beginning with John Campbell Colquhoun in 1848, whom Buzacki claims is 'the man who made the greatest mark on the property before Churchill himself'.⁴¹ Colquhoun was succeeded by his sons, and they continued to work on landscaping and extensions, until by 1881 the estate was large enough to house up to twenty servants and maids.⁴²

In September 1922, Winston Churchill purchased Chartwell estate. Within weeks, he had appointed a suitable architect, Philip Tilden, to begin working on the vast improvements that would be made. Tilden had previously worked with some of Churchill's associates and was likely recommended to him by Lady Leslie, Winston's Aunt.⁴³ Tilden had also recently installed a grand neo-classical swimming pool at Philip Sassoon's property on the Kentish coast, where Churchill often visited.⁴⁴ Though well-qualified, Tilden's strong opinions and slow-paced style, were a poor match for Churchill's vision and pace.

Churchill wanted his home to be modern whilst exposing the original beams and preserving the oldest walls in the house.⁴⁵ Of primary concern was increasing the light, which he intended to do by installing new windows and enlarging existing ones. Churchill, with his painter's eye, had a keen regard for Chartwell's positioning and aspect, having proclaimed 'light is life' in a house.⁴⁶ Fittingly, the first disagreement between Tilden and Churchill revolved around the windows themselves. Early plans from Tilden seemed to indicate that the windows would have heavy, thick mullions and transoms (that is, the vertical and horizontal

⁴⁰ Buzacki, *Churchill and Chartwell*, 107.

⁴¹ Buzacki, 110.

⁴² Buzacki, 113.

⁴³ Garnett, *Chartwell*, 14.

⁴⁴ Garnett, 14.

⁴⁵ CSC to AJ Campbell-Colquhoun, 25 September 1922. CHAR 1/159/28-31, Churchill Archives.

⁴⁶ WSC to CSC, 6 February 1921. CSCT 2/14/6-7, Churchill Archives.

bars between panes of window glass). Tilden believed that wide brick mullions were the best option, and told the Churchills so on multiple occasions. Tilden argued that removing them would be ‘necessitating very much expense, and at the same time not adding to the beauty of the exterior’.⁴⁷ Churchill, however, longed for oak framed windows throughout, which he believed to be superior. A compromise was reached, resulting in varying sorts of windows on different sides of the house, and thicker mullions on the lower floor windows.

As the building works progressed through 1923 and 1924, the relationship between Churchill and Tilden began to break down. Differences of opinion spiralled into accusations on both sides, especially as building costs escalated beyond what had been projected. To make matters worse, unexpected problems seemed to haunt the build: a bidet cracked from side to side in 1924; the electricity failed in 1925; a chandelier smashed to the floor in 1926; and dry rot spread throughout the house.⁴⁸ Tilden primarily worked through the contractors, Brown & Sons, against whom Churchill mounted various complaints of over-expenditure. In 1924 – perhaps in a desperate attempt to keep finances in check – Churchill hired John Leaning & Sons, chartered surveyors who reported on the activities and expenses of the contractors. Stephen Buczacki’s close study of the interactions between Churchill, Tilden, contractors and surveyors concludes that Churchill maintained an underlying belief that the problems at Chartwell were ultimately Tilden’s responsibility.⁴⁹ Towards the end of the build, Churchill hired lawyers to mount a case against Tilden. But then a mutually acceptable settlement was reached.

Clementine also intervened periodically with her own specifications for renovations. Early correspondence indicates that it was her idea to add a second wing to the house, an addition that became Chartwell’s biggest architectural success.⁵⁰ She even wrote directly to Tilden on some matters which she held strong opinions about, such as the style of the maid’s sewing room, the location of the pantry and the height of the kitchen ceilings.⁵¹ Tilden remembered Clementine’s close involvement in the decorations and colour scheme at Chartwell.⁵² Her vision tended to be broader than her husband’s, who found himself caught

⁴⁷ Philip Tilden to WSC, 12 October 1922. CHAR 1/159/52-54, Churchill Archives.

⁴⁸ Buczacki, *Churchill and Chartwell*, 136–44.

⁴⁹ Buczacki, 147.

⁵⁰ See Clementine’s letter to Winston after first viewing the property. CSC to WSC, 1 July 1921. CHAR 1/139/85-92, Churchill Archives.

⁵¹ Buczacki, *Churchill and Chartwell*, 128.

⁵² Buczacki, 153.

up in the details. Contrastingly, Clementine observed the need to undertake the renovations strategically and systematically. Clementine decried any piecemeal approach to renovations. 'I say make the full plans now,' she wrote in July 1921, and 'Carry them out in sections so that no money is wasted pulling down what we have just paid to put up.'⁵³ Clementine's big-picture vision can be seen in the rough sketches of Chartwell that she inserted into early correspondence with her husband.

Although Clementine shared Winston's hopes of a beautiful country home, her enthusiasm receded in the face of monetary concerns. Their daughter, Mary Soames, would later write that 'Unpaid bills were a nightmare anxiety to [Clementine]... And constant financial troubles had a wearing effect on her health and spirits.'⁵⁴ A letter from Winston to his wife in September 1923 suggests that Chartwell expenses had been a mounting concern and ongoing matter of discussion. 'My beloved, I do beg you not to worry about money,' he began, before outlining how Chartwell would prove a worthy investment in their portfolio. 'We must endeavour to live there for many years & hand it on to Randolph afterwards... [my inheritance] is invested in Chartwell instead of in shares. You must think of it in this light.'⁵⁵

Winston Churchill was industrious and prolific in every endeavour, and he seemed to believe his estate ought to be, too. The dream of running a small farm had not been dimmed by his misadventures at Lullendon or by his already busy schedule. Whether producing fruit or dairy, Churchill sought any opportunity to make Chartwell productive, and 'as far as possible economically self contained.'⁵⁶ By April 1924, Winston's menagerie was in full swing and he boasted that 'the pigs, ponies, and cows are doing well... twenty-four new chickens have been hatched, and more are expected shortly.'⁵⁷ In his discussions on the matter, Winston cited the financial benefits. 'A row of fruit trees along that wall might easily grow ten to twelve pounds worth of fruit a year,' he wrote to Clementine, 'Which would pay the interest on the money spent in building the wall.'⁵⁸ Churchill found great satisfaction in winning small profits wherever he could, and farming at Chartwell was a constant contemplation.

⁵³ CSC to WSC, 1 July 1921. CHAR 1/139/85-92, Churchill Archives.

⁵⁴ Soames, *Clementine Churchill*, 61.

⁵⁵ WSC to CSC, 2 September 1923, quoted in Winston Churchill, Clementine Churchill Spencer-Churchill, and Mary Soames, *Speaking for Themselves: The Personal Letters of Winston and Clementine Churchill* (London: Black Swan, 1999), 273.

⁵⁶ Churchill, Spencer-Churchill, and Soames, 273.

⁵⁷ WSC to CSC, 20 April 1924. CSCT 2/17, Churchill Archives.

⁵⁸ WSC to CSC, 20 April 1924. CSCT 2/17, Churchill Archives.

The final result at Chartwell was a home that seemed to cater, at least partially, to both Clementine and Winston's passions. It had an orchard, farmland and a kitchen garden, where Winston could grow and cultivate to his wishes. But beyond the utilitarian, there was also a tennis court and a pool, for Clementine's relaxation. What's more, it was now large enough to become a hub for entertaining and hospitality. 'One of the delicious things about having a country home,' she wrote in 1921, 'Will be to be able to have Jack and Goonie and their children [to stay].'⁵⁹ Early in the search Clementine estimated she would need a minimum of twelve bed-rooms to accommodate the family, plus a few more in order to 'put up 2 or 3 guests at least, with 1 or 2 visiting servants.'⁶⁰ The end of 1924 afforded a chance for the hospitality Clementine craved, with more than fifteen guests staying at Chartwell over Christmas and New Year.⁶¹

Roosevelt and Springwood

Franklin Roosevelt inherited his home on the Hudson, but at the age of thirty-three spearheaded a major renovation of the site. At the time of his birth, the Roosevelt Estate already held a rich history. Lying in Dutchess County, in the town of Hyde Park, it sat on land that had previously belonged to the Wappinger Indians and was settled by the Dutch in the seventeenth century. The house that came to be known as 'Springwood' was built circa 1780 by Widow Everson. In 1867 it was purchased by Franklin D. Roosevelt's father, James Roosevelt, when his family's previous home, a mile down the road, burned down in a fire.⁶² When James Roosevelt moved into Springwood, he was accompanied by his first wife Rebecca Howland Roosevelt and his first son, James Roosevelt Roosevelt (later known by the family as 'Rosy'). After Rebecca's death, James married Sara Delano and, in 1882, in an upstairs bedroom, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was born. James Roosevelt continued to purchase and develop much of the surrounding land, and by the time of his death in 1900, he had gathered an estate of 624 acres.⁶³

Franklin Roosevelt called the Hyde Park estate home throughout his life. The Roosevelts travelled frequently and owned other properties in New York City and on

⁵⁹ Major John "Jack" Strange Spencer-Churchill was Winston's younger brother, Lady Gwendoline "Goonie" Theresa Mary Bertie his wife. CSC to WSC, 1 July 1921. CHAR 1/139/85-92, Churchill Archives.

⁶⁰ CSC to WSC, 1 July 1921. CHAR 1/139/85-92, Churchill Archives.

⁶¹ Fedden, *Churchill and Chartwell*, 137.

⁶² John F. Sears, *FDR and the Land: Roosevelt Estate Historic Resource Study* (Boston, M.A.: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, 2011), 7.

⁶³ John F. Sears, 8.

Campobello Island (New Brunswick, Maine), but Springwood was their favourite residence.⁶⁴ Franklin's early life was spent learning to sail on the Hudson River, exploring the grounds on horseback and enjoying fresh fruit and vegetables from the gardens. He remained at home, under the tutelage of a nanny, until reluctantly beginning secondary school at Groton, the premier boarding school of the Northeast elite, at the age of fourteen. Through his Harvard years, time in the state senate and as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin Roosevelt unfailingly returned to Hyde Park each summer with his wife and children, revelling in his time in the Hudson Valley and with his mother.

By 1914, the existing structure at Springwood was deemed insufficient. Franklin Roosevelt's penchant for collecting – his treasured books, prints, taxidermies and ship models, many acquired during his childhood– in combination with the space needs of his own five children had created a cramped home environment.⁶⁵ It was decided that an expansion of some sort would be necessary. Increased living space was one requirement, but mother and son held different dreams about what could, and should, also be achieved in the construction at Springwood.

The impetus for a new look at Springwood can be traced to Franklin's own developing architectural tastes, though his mother still owned the property and technically oversaw the renovation. It was Franklin's European travels as a young man, especially to Britain, which exposed him to the sorts of houses which he came to admire. Jovial schemes to emulate these designs at Hyde Park can be located as early as 1903. When he was only twenty-one, he began 'taking notes and measurements' of the English houses he saw on summer vacation. By the time of his 1905 honeymoon, these notions had solidified as he discussed options for the 'Hyde Park Addition,' hoping it might include 'Not only a new house but a new farm, cattle, trees, etc.'⁶⁶ Franklin was already dreaming of grand renovations, even informing his mother during this period that the interior décor of an Italian palace could be purchased for \$60,000.⁶⁷

Sara, however, was less eager to import a European palace and more intent on preserving the simple dignity of Springwood's existing house. 'I'm old-fashioned, and the

⁶⁴ Kristin Baker, "Cultural Landscape Report for the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site" (Syracuse, New York, State University of New York, 1999).

⁶⁵ Elliot Roosevelt, *An Untold Story: The Roosevelts of Hyde Park* (New York, NY: Putnam, 1973), 100.

⁶⁶ Peggy A. Albee, *Historic Structure Report, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Architectural Data Section* (Lowell, Massachusetts: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1996), 63.

⁶⁷ William B. Rhoads, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and Dutch Colonial Architecture," *New York History* 59, no. 4 (1978): 430–31.

rooms are old-fashioned,' she reported to the architect, 'And we want to keep things as they are.'⁶⁸ The construction superintendent, John Pennington, remembered that in 1915 the existing Springwood residence was viewed sentimentally by Mrs Roosevelt. Reflecting on the build thirty years later, he declared that the owner would not have approved any design 'if the house had to be taken down.'⁶⁹ The sentimental value of the 'old-fashioned' home probably arose from its connection to her late husband, James Roosevelt. Having died fifteen years previously, James Roosevelt purchased Springwood in 1867 and kept the Italianate interiors, which had been fashionable in the late eighteenth century. To maintain the traditional 'feel' of the interiors, the primary changes that Franklin Roosevelt and his mother agreed on at Springwood were external additions, in the form of two new wings fitted, like puzzle pieces, to the edge of the home.⁷⁰ Architect Henry Toombes (whom Franklin would go on to consult for his own cottage) later complained that too little imagination had gone into the 1915 alterations. 'All they would do is... make a couple of columns and a new front,' he described, 'And the inside just rambles around.'⁷¹

Sara and Franklin's undertaking was just one of a series of renovations occurring up and down the Hudson Valley during the new century's early years. The nearby Vanderbilt home had been constructed in the final decade of the nineteenth century by the prominent firm, McKim, Mead & White. The same firm altered the Bellefield mansion next door to the Roosevelts between 1909 and 1911. Elliot Roosevelt, Franklin and Eleanor's middle son, recalls visiting the Vanderbilt place with his grandmother, who 'gloried' in socialising with the top rung of Hudson Valley society in this fifty-four room mansion.⁷² The expansion of Springwood may be explained in part by the pressure Sara felt to match not the physical grandeur of those elite mansions but the amplitude of their staffs. Eleanor Roosevelt later described how her mother-in-law wanted to pattern her domestic life 'after the way of life in big houses in Great Britain or the Continent.'⁷³ This required a large staff, as Eleanor recalled: a 'cook, kitchen maid, personal maid, house maid, waitress or butler, as the case might be, a

⁶⁸ Roosevelt, *An Untold Story*, 100.

⁶⁹ John Pennington, "An Essay on the Additions and Alteration to the residence of the Late Sarah(sp) Delano Roosevelt Hyde Park, N. Y. 1915-1916," Undated. "Special Articles, 1948-1949", Box 2622, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, National Archives II, 4.

⁷⁰ George Palmer interview with William Plog, November 7, 1947. Box 1, Small Collections: Oral Histories, FDR Library.

⁷¹ Rexford Tugwell interview with Henry Toombs, Undated. Box 1, Small Collections: Oral Histories, FDR Library.

⁷² Roosevelt, *An Untold Story*, 117.

⁷³ Eleanor Roosevelt, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Hyde Park*, 15.

houseman, a laundress who came by the day from her own cottage on the place, a coachman, and a chauffeur. When we arrived with five small children there often were a tutor, or governess, a nurse, and a nursemaid'.⁷⁴ Many of these servants needed to be lodged at Springwood, and the 1915 renovations included 'an entirely new servants wing' attached to the Northern end of the house, which added a further eight single rooms to the estate.⁷⁵ A separate coach house, stables and laundress cottage in the grounds of Springwood now rounded out the staff accommodation.⁷⁶

The planned renovations at Springwood were designed to suit the aspirations of both Franklin Roosevelt and his mother. Prompted by the immediate need for more space, both saw opportunities to remake the home according to their craving for status. Franklin was more interested than his mother in installing emblems of European sophistication and class, such as fronted colonnades, as well as building an impressive reception space, where political meetings could be held. Sara's priority was increasing capacity for domestic staff and bedrooms for hosting in order to demonstrate her ability to meet the capacity of her neighbours and bourgeoisie peers. On the surface, the Springwood renovation was undertaken to increase the space in the household, but more crucially, it served to increase the Roosevelt family's prestige.

In 1915, Sara Roosevelt hired Hoppin & Koen, a New York City architectural firm, to renovate the estate.⁷⁷ Francis Hoppin was a partner at the firm and a distant cousin of Sara's. In discussion with Franklin, Sara assured her son that Hoppin was 'full of taste' and would 'do anything for me with pleasure and enthusiasm'.⁷⁸ Despite Franklin and Sara's assertiveness, Hoppin and Koen worked hard to control decisions at key points of construction. Hoppin, in particular, pushed for the crucial use of cream stucco for the main body of the house. A letter from June 1915 pleads with the Roosevelts to adopt a 'light colored stucco' over their original darker preference. 'Any experiments in browns and grays... Would be, in my estimation hazardous, and unsatisfactory,' he wrote, calling such a

⁷⁴ Eleanor Roosevelt, 15.

⁷⁵ Roosevelt, *An Untold Story*, 100.

⁷⁶ Roosevelt, 100.

⁷⁷ "Springwood Guest Book," Box 56, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

⁷⁸ Sara Roosevelt to Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Tuesday" (Undated). "Sara Delano Roosevelt to Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1914," Box 8, Roosevelt Family Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.

colour-combination with the stone wings ‘bizarre’.⁷⁹ Though frequently having to bow to the Roosevelt’s specific desire, in this matter at least, Hoppin had his way.

From early in the design process, Franklin Roosevelt’s overriding passion was to ensure that local stone could be incorporated as part of the new addition. The primary inspiration seems to have been a structure on an adjoining estate – the Newbold cottage – which was laid from rough fieldstone.⁸⁰ Planning drawings from April 1915 indicate that ‘Random Coursed Rubble Stone Work’ had long been the intended material for the exterior wings.⁸¹ The fieldstone in question was hauled from the surrounding farmland and gathered from walls throughout the property.⁸² John Pennington, the construction superintendent, recalls storing large amounts of stone there on-site, ‘in order to select Quoins and arch stones and to get an idea of the average run of sizes.’⁸³ Only the entrance steps and window sills were made from a different, blue, stone.⁸⁴ The use of fieldstone was an outworking of FDR’s growing interest in Dutch heritage and local tradition, a curiosity that would only increase with his later architectural endeavours.

Franklin Roosevelt’s other major hobby-horse was the proper construction of a new library. Comprising the entire first story of the Southern Wing, the library was to be a large, imposing room into which you stepped down to from the hallway. There were plans to fill it with shelves and cabinets for all of FDR’s treasured possessions. Sara knew not to intervene in Franklin’s library schemes. This section of the project was worked out jointly between FDR and the architects. Hoppin worked hard on creating an appropriate design, ‘which I am going to submit to your Son tomorrow morning, to get his views on the subject, as he requested.’⁸⁵ Dialogue between Hoppin and Franklin on the design specifications was ongoing throughout 1915 and 1916.

⁷⁹ Frank Hoppin to Sara Roosevelt, June 23rd, 1915. “Correspondence 1880-1905,” Box 52, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

⁸⁰ Rhoads, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and Dutch Colonial Architecture,” 433.

⁸¹ Albee, *Historic Structure Report, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Architectural Data Section*, 65.

⁸² Rhoads, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and Dutch Colonial Architecture,” 433.

⁸³ John Pennington, “An Essay on the Additions and Alterations,” Undated. “Special Articles, 1948-1949,” Box 2622, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, National Archives II, 10.

⁸⁴ Albee, *Historic Structure Report, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Architectural Data Section*, 66.

⁸⁵ Frank Hoppin to Sara Roosevelt, June 23, 1915. “Correspondence 1880-1905,” Box 52, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

It is clear that this room had been designated Franklin's territory.⁸⁶ Franklin was constantly pushing for more storage space for his 'books, books, books!' as Sara observed.⁸⁷ He greeted with enthusiasm the October 1915 news that more shelving space had been created, adding room above the bookcases to store vases and other collections.⁸⁸ In September, Franklin wrote asking his mother to refrain from signing any contract on the Library build until he had looked over the details, 'As I have several "thoughts" and there is much to be decided about shelves, etc.'⁸⁹ Upon meeting with the architects the following month, she had indeed decided on 'everything except the library.'⁹⁰ These decisions were left to Franklin.

Thus of all the rooms at Springwood, it was the Library that most clearly articulated Franklin Roosevelt's highly particular design taste and attention to detail. The room was outfitted with custom-made, bespoke wooden features. John Pennington, the construction superintendent, later recalled FDR's interest even in the minutiae:

The Library Living Room, and the Master Dressing room on the 2nd floor, were specially designed to meet the Late president's own specified requirements. The cases, trays, shelves, cupboards, cornices etc of the Library Living Room were all Cabinet manufactured. It was during the installation of this work that he took considerable personal interest in it. Up to this time I had not much personal contact with him, from this time on I met him regularly at weekends, so we could go over the work together.⁹¹

The archives demonstrate that here, as on other occasions, Franklin's involvement in the project became quite finicky. He regularly disagreed with the builders' decisions. For example, he raised complaints about how they had constructed the floors and also the appropriate organization of an outdoor plumbing system. On both counts, after a series of

⁸⁶ Anecdotes suggest the next door 'snuggery' was where Sara Roosevelt preferred to sit.

⁸⁷ Sara Roosevelt to FDR, September 25. "Sara Delano Roosevelt to Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1915-1916," Box 8, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

⁸⁸ Albee, *Historic Structure Report, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Architectural Data Section*, 69.

⁸⁹ *FDR to Sara Roosevelt, September 2, 1915, Quoted in Franklin D Roosevelt and Elliott Roosevelt, F.D.R.: His Personal Letters* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1947), 294.

⁹⁰ Sara Roosevelt to FDR, October 7. "Sara Delano Roosevelt to Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1915-1916," Box 8, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

⁹¹ John Pennington, "An Essay on the Additions and Alterations," Undated. "Special Articles, 1948-1949", Box 2622, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, National Archives II, 12

appeasing letters from the contractor, Franklin's fears seemed to have abated and work went ahead.⁹²

Sara's ambitions for the renovations always turned toward the practical. One idea she floated early on was the possibility of using the house as a winter escape. With the planned expansion, the home's heating and plumbing could be reconfigured to allow certain sections of the house to be cut off from the mains. Sara wrote to Franklin in 1915 abuzz with the prospect of picnicking at the home in the colder months, 'which would be more cozy and far less expensive' than their summer escapades.⁹³ Although this arrangement never took hold, it demonstrates Sara's desire for comfort and practicality over built extravagance, a notion which she repeatedly emphasised in the construction of their new home.

Sara Roosevelt's modest construction aims were motivated in part by her prudent approach to finances. Throughout the renovation, she sought – and occasionally was granted – concessions in costs and overheads. Her original preference was for the use of brick over fieldstone as the more 'affordable' option.⁹⁴ She also insisted on frugal furnishings. When building had commenced, she urged Franklin to view a second-hand Georgian mantel that a friend was disposing of, in case it would suit their new additions.⁹⁵ When the woodwork to an addition was being installed, she convinced the construction superintendent to re-use the old doors as materials for additional kitchen storage cabinets.⁹⁶ She liked that contractor Elliot C. Brown's skill in masonry, piping and other trades meant that he could do much of the renovation work with his own crew, rather than hiring expensive sub-contractors.⁹⁷ Sara bankrolled the entire operation, which may explain why she watched expenses like a hawk. Her accounts show invoices of \$40,077.67 to her contractors, Elliot C. Brown Company, and \$3,775.10 to the architects, Hoppin and Koen.⁹⁸

⁹² Albee, *Historic Structure Report, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Architectural Data Section*, 68.

⁹³ Sara Roosevelt to FDR, September 25. "Sara Delano Roosevelt to Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1915-1916," Box 8, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

⁹⁴ Sara Roosevelt to Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Tuesday" (Undated). "Sara Delano Roosevelt to Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1914," Box 8, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

⁹⁵ Sara Roosevelt to FDR, Sunday Morning. "Sara Delano Roosevelt to Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1915-1916," Box 8, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

⁹⁶ John Pennington, "An Essay on the Additions and Alterations," Undated. "Special Articles, 1948-1949," Box 2622, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, National Archives II, 14.

⁹⁷ Sara Roosevelt to FDR, June 29, 1915. "Sara Delano Roosevelt to Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1915-1916," Box 8, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

⁹⁸ Albee, *Historic Structure Report, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Architectural Data Section*, 72.

On May 20, 1916, in the presence of Franklin and Francis Hoppin, Sara Roosevelt laid the cornerstone of the Library to mark the completion of the renovation.⁹⁹ That summer, the guestbook records at least eleven overnight visitors at Springwood.¹⁰⁰ Much to the satisfaction of Sara and Franklin, the renovated home drew acclaim. ‘Everyone is enthusiastic over the library and thinks it is so homelike and not like a new room!’ wrote Sara in July, later affirming ‘It is so lovely here and comfortable. We are lucky to have such a home to come to.’¹⁰¹ Springwood in 1916 was a house that looked back, grounded in its Dutch colonial heritage and Sara Roosevelt’s Knickerbocker identity, and forward, to the aspirational heights of Franklin Roosevelt’s blossoming career. With its new grand entrance, and Romanesque colonnades, it had become an ideal setting for the political speeches and community gatherings that the Roosevelts would go on to host in the next three decades.

Roosevelt and Val Kill

Eight years after the Springwood renovations were completed, another major construction commenced, this time beside the eastern Fall Kill boundary of the Roosevelt estate. Franklin Roosevelt’s decision to build a new Cottage, ‘Val Kill’, appears to have been motivated by a number of factors. By 1924, Eleanor Roosevelt’s strained relationship with her mother-in-law, Sara, seems to have reached a breaking point. Their cohabitation in the Big House, with Franklin often away, only increased the tensions. According to historian Joseph Lash, Eleanor’s growing involvement in Franklin’s political career had also brought a new circle of primarily female friends and advisors into her life. Eleanor’s homosocial world of progressive women was not easily welcomed in the straight-backed society of Springwood at Hyde Park. Eleanor desired ‘a place that she could share with her friends without having to negotiate with Sara whether it was all right for them to come.’¹⁰²

According to Marion Dickerman, one of Eleanor’s new friends, the idea for the cottage originated when FDR heard the women lamenting their last visit for the season, before Sara closed the Big House for the winter in 1924. Franklin ‘thought for a moment and

⁹⁹ “SDR 1916 Diary Transcript,” Box 58, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

¹⁰⁰ “Springwood Guest Book,” Box 56, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

¹⁰¹ Sara Roosevelt to FDR, July 6, 1916 and Sara Roosevelt to FDR, September 25. “Sara Delano Roosevelt to Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1915-1916,” Box 8, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

¹⁰² Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin*, 304.

then suggested that we build a cottage for ourselves' which could be used year-round.¹⁰³ The earliest record of schemes at Val Kill dates to a letter from August 1924. Here, Franklin Roosevelt discloses his plans to Elliot Brown, the contractor he had previously hired to help with the Springwood renovation and a close friend from Harvard days. 'My missus and some of her female political friends want to build a shack on a stream' wrote Roosevelt, 'and want, instead of a beautiful marble bath, to have the stream dug out so as to form an old fashioned swimmin' hole.'¹⁰⁴

Two ulterior motives may have swung Roosevelt towards the decision to build Val Kill for his wife. First, the swimming pool in question was a crucial addition. In the intervening years since the Springwood alteration, Roosevelt's life had been turned upside down by the onset of Infantile Paralysis, or polio, which he had been diagnosed with in August 1921. As Chapter Two will explore, Franklin Roosevelt strongly believed in vigorous stretches and sun exposure as the means for recovery. In fact, he had begun to invest in a polio rehabilitation center at Warm Springs, Georgia, where he believed the warm water possessed healing properties. Joseph Lash argues it may have been the prospect of an exercise pool which motivated his partnership with the women at Val Kill in the first place.¹⁰⁵

The second benefit of construction at Val Kill was the opportunity for Franklin to explore and enact his latest interest in Dutch Colonial Architecture. Following the devastation of polio and accompanying lower-body paralysis, Roosevelt had much more time to dedicate to his intellectual and historical pursuits. The Hudson Valley still retained a few old stone houses from the colonial era which interested Roosevelt intensely, especially as they deepened his connection to his own aristocratic Dutch heritage. Writing in 1939, FDR recalled 'As I grew older, I came to know something of the history of these river towns of Dutchess County, and to develop a great liking for the stone architecture which was indigenous to the Hudson Valley.'¹⁰⁶ By 1923 he was sitting on the board for the local Holland Society and in 1924 collaborated with another member, Helen Wilkinson Reynolds, in writing a book about historic homes in Dutchess County.¹⁰⁷ FDR even convinced the

¹⁰³ Marion Dickerman, "The Val Kill Industries," Undated. "Val Kill Founding and Dissolution," Box 6, Marion Dickerman Papers, FDR Library.

¹⁰⁴ FDR to Elliot C. Brown, August 5, 1924. "Hyde Park Matters General," Box 21, FDR: Family, Business & Personal, FDR Library.

¹⁰⁵ Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin*, 304.

¹⁰⁶ FDR to Postmaster General, November 18, 1935. Box 1230, President's Personal Files, FDR Library.

¹⁰⁷ This book was later republished by Dover Publications, see Helen Wilkinson Reynolds and Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley Before 1776* (Dover Publications, January 1965).

Holland Society to sponsor the publication of two such books, purposed to preserve images of the old houses in New York State before they deteriorated or were destroyed.¹⁰⁸ At Val Kill, Roosevelt believed he could recreate a perfect Dutch Colonial specimen.

During the Val Kill build, FDR took the reins and asserted complete creative control. First, he took on the job of project manager, awarding himself the work on the basis of a bid of \$12,000.¹⁰⁹ Then he hired workmen whom he knew and trusted, ‘Van Aken is considered first class for stone work, Ayler is considered ditto for carpentry. F. C. Doherty who is the plumber works for Vassar College and, as his father and grandfather were the gardeners for my uncle, and great-grandfather, he will take a personal interest.’¹¹⁰ Once work was underway, Franklin encouraged Eleanor and her future cohabitants Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook to leave him be, ‘If you three will go away, Henry [Toombs] and I will build the cottage,’ he apparently told the women, as they left for their holiday home in Campobello.¹¹¹

Val Kill quickly became FDR’s beloved project. Roosevelt had an eye for detail, a passion for historical integrity and a forceful manner in his dealings with his architect, Henry Toombs, and his contractors. His confidence had only steadily multiplied since the construction at Springwood. Roosevelt’s total commitment to the Dutch style came to a head in the middle of the build, over the positioning of a window. Toombs had planned a large round window to illuminate the living room, a style which FDR insisted was completely inconsistent with a ‘simple Dutch colonial house’.¹¹² Eleanor and her friends liked the design and sided with Toombs, who was ordered by FDR to go to the library and see if he could find a single image of a house from the colonial era with such round-headed windows. According to Nancy Dickerman, Roosevelt even threatened he would never visit again if such a window was installed. ‘Needless to say,’ writes Dickerman, ‘it was immediately changed and the chimney with a big fireplace took its place.’¹¹³

Once completed in 1926, Val Kill satisfied its purpose as a place of seclusion for Eleanor Roosevelt and her friends. Writing in April 1926, Eleanor described a quiet evening

¹⁰⁸ Rhoads, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and Dutch Colonial Architecture,” 434.

¹⁰⁹ Rhoads, 438.

¹¹⁰ FDR to Dickerman, Cook and Roosevelt, July 19, 1925. “Financial Matters: Val Kill: 1924-1926,” Box 60, FDR: Family, Business And Personal, FDR Library.

¹¹¹ Marion Dickerman, “The Val Kill Industries,” Undated. “Val Kill Founding and Dissolution,” Box 6, Marion Dickerman Papers, FDR Library.

¹¹² Rexford Tugwell interview with Henry Toombs, Undated. “Interview with Henry Toombs and Tap Bennet,” Box 1, Small Collections: Oral Histories, FDR Library.

¹¹³ Marion Dickerman, “The Val Kill Industries,” Undated. “Val Kill Founding and Dissolution,” Box 6, Marion Dickerman Papers, FDR Library.

writing with Nancy Cook in the cottage – ‘the peace of it is divine’ she declared.¹¹⁴ In time, the cottage became the centre of ‘Val-Kill Industries,’ a small business established by the women in 1927 to turn out reproductions of early American pieces of furniture. The ‘Furniture Factory’ began as an adjoining workshop room on the side of the house, before a new external building was erected. This experiment was aligned with the New Deal, aiming to provide carpentry employment opportunities for local young men. Contemporary critics congratulated Roosevelt on his successful attempt at a Dutch neocolonial architecture, described by William B. Cecil Rhoads as a ‘close adaptation of old Dutch houses in the vicinity.’¹¹⁵ For ten years, as Nancy Cook once described it, Val Kill operated as a ‘nice “old ladies home.”’ But in 1936, Val Kill Industries shut down, Marion Dickerman moved out, and the nearby furniture factory was transformed into an independent house for Eleanor Roosevelt, who finally had a home of her very own.

Intimate conflict

The renovation projects at Chartwell and Hyde Park uncovered the intimate power relations that were pre-existing within both family units. The remaking of Chartwell was an important episode in the married life of Winston and Clementine. Chartwell became, and remained, the defining family home for the Churchills until Winston’s death in January 1965. Nevertheless, the 1920s period of renovations was marked by tension and frustration. Some scholars have described this as a turning point in Winston and Clementine’s relationship, cementing the turbulence of their marriage and ensuring Clementine’s ongoing anxious constitution. Writing years later, their youngest daughter, Mary Soames, revealed ‘My mother told me that, in all fifty-seven years of marriage, this was the only time she felt my father had acted with lack of candour towards her.’¹¹⁶

According to John Pearson, the purchase of Chartwell ‘Conclusively changed the setup of the family and altered much within the Churchill’s marriage.’

Had Clementine had the sort of house she wanted, the story might have turned out differently. It would have been emphatically her house as well as his, and at this crucial period in her life, the planning and creation of the sort of country home she

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Marion Dickerman, “The Val Kill Industries,” Undated. “Val Kill Founding and Dissolution,” Box 6, Marion Dickerman Papers, FDR Library.

¹¹⁵ Rhoads, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and Dutch Colonial Architecture,” 438.

¹¹⁶ Churchill, Spencer-Churchill, and Soames, *Speaking for Themselves*, 262.

had hope for could have been a bond between them. Instead... the whole family was now involved in the exhausting and extravagant grand enterprise of Churchill's of which she alone so strongly disapproved.¹¹⁷

But it was not to Chartwell itself that Clementine so strongly objected to. Some elements, such as the rose garden, actually brought Clementine much joy. Indeed, in the years after her husband's death, Clementine took a cheerful and active role in preparing the house for the National Trust and overseeing their administration of it. Rather, the problem with Chartwell was the financial risk that it entailed. Clementine was naturally averse to gambling, waste or extravagance, and in purchasing Chartwell, Winston had brought financial risk into their family home.

The archives demonstrate that Clementine exerted a constant pressure on Winston to abide by sensible financial constraints. From the beginning of their marriage, Clementine sought to curb Winston's bachelor lifestyle. In their first family house, Clementine introduced new frugal measures, such as setting a twelve-shilling budget per week. However, their daughter, Mary Soames, remembered that she was unable to persuade him to give up wearing finely woven silk underclothes, presumably a remnant of his mother's expensive taste.¹¹⁸ As Jon Meacham has speculated, Clementine's difficult and chaotic upbringing (in contrast to the lavish one that her husband enjoyed) may have caused her obsession with at least, in Jon Meacham's words, 'the appearance of order' in her own home.¹¹⁹ Clementine yearned for a home environment of comfort and retreat, not experimentation or risk.

The Churchill's relationship was one of equal expression. '[Clementine Churchill] was never for one minute afraid of her formidable husband,' wrote Winston Churchill's private secretary, John Colville, 'When she thought he was doing wrong or making a mistake, she said so forthrightly.'¹²⁰ But in the matter of Chartwell, Winston's self-assuredness caused him to ignore the concerns his wife was raising. As his daughter later described, '[Winston] never doubted that he could bring [Clementine] to share his enthusiasm for the place which had so captivated him, and which he was sure would make a perfect home for them all.'¹²¹ Thus when Clementine expressed her worries, Winston chided her for her uncertain attitude. In one letter he warned her, 'If you set yourself against Chartwell, or lose heart, or bite your

¹¹⁷ John Pearson, *The Private Lives of Winston Churchill* (London: Bloomsbury Reader, 2011), 194.

¹¹⁸ Soames, *Clementine Churchill*, 51.

¹¹⁹ Jon Meacham, *Franklin And Winston: A Portrait Of A Friendship* (London: Granta Books, 2016), 18.

¹²⁰ John Rupert Colville, *Winston Churchill and His Inner Circle* (New York: Wyndham Books, 1981), 158.

¹²¹ Soames, *Clementine Churchill*, 219.

bread & butter & your pig’ – “pig” was Clementine’s pet name for Winston – ‘Then it only means further instability, recasting of plans & further expense & worry.’¹²² In this way, Churchill’s admonitions left little room for Clementine to push for her concerns.

The annals of history proved both husband and wife correct in their assessment of Chartwell. Clementine correctly anticipated that Chartwell would become a bottomless money-pit. In the ‘30s and ‘40s, unending construction problems and Winston’s uncertain income caused the Churchills to consider leasing Chartwell on three separate occasions. The monetary investment in a country home seemed to have all but failed for the Churchills. But in 1946, Winston’s sunny outlook won the day when the National Trust acquired the estate and assured the Churchill’s financial stability and a Chartwell legacy for years to come.

Likewise, the 1915 renovation project at Hyde Park’s Springwood hints at the Roosevelt’s complex and fractured familial dynamics. Conspicuously missing from the archives is any evidence of Eleanor Roosevelt’s thoughts and feelings on the matter. We know that at first, in the initial months, Eleanor had not been told of the plans brewing between her husband and mother-in-law; ‘I want to surprise her if I do it,’ wrote Sara Roosevelt.¹²³ The earliest archival evidence of Eleanor mentioning the house renovation dates from May 1916 – the final month of its construction.¹²⁴

Historians have written widely about the dynamic between Roosevelt wife and mother-in-law. Eleanor’s and Sara’s relationship had always been fraught with complications. Although she relied on her mother-in-law during the early years of her marriage, as Eleanor grew in confidence as a mother and wife, she became less dependent and their relationship deteriorated. Biographer Joseph Lash describes their disagreements as stemming from undercurrents of family differences, as they fought over household questions, big and small: how should the children be raised, with whom should Franklin associate, and which colour should the chintz covers be?¹²⁵

Thus when it came to planned renovations at Springwood, Eleanor remained a bystander in what was essentially a joint project between mother and son. After the renovations, Eleanor’s bedroom was the smallest upstairs room, squeezed in between the

¹²² ‘Pig’ was Clementine’s affectionate nickname for Winston. WSC to CSC, 2 September 1923, quoted in Churchill, Spencer-Churchill, and Soames, *Speaking for Themselves*.

¹²³ Sara Roosevelt to FDR, “Tuesday” (Undated). “Sara Delano Roosevelt to Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1914,” Box 8, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

¹²⁴ Albee, *Historic Structure Report, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Architectural Data Section*, 71.

¹²⁵ Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin*, 293–304.

elaborate larger ensuite bedrooms of her husband and her mother-in-law. Springwood never belonged to Eleanor, but within the decade Franklin found an opportunity to provide a new home for his wife and flex his architectural muscles at the same time.

The later construction at Val Kill indicates that Franklin Roosevelt treated his wife, Eleanor, and her friends, Cook and Dickerman, not just with generosity but with condescension. In a letter between the women and FDR, Roosevelt (presumably in jest) asked them to refer to him as ‘father’.¹²⁶ Speaking to his carpenter, Elliot Brown, Roosevelt’s paternalism can be heard in his description of the women swimming in their rustic pool. ‘Apparently the girls think that this will get them more closely back to nature’ wrote FDR, ‘I foresee that I shall have to put substantial board fence around the swimmin’ hole to keep interested neighbors from seeing how close they get back to nature when they take their morning plunge!’¹²⁷

However FDR’s paternalism did not extend to the finances; Eleanor and her friends were expected to pay rent via a life-long lease. In this regard, Val Kill was an investment for Franklin but a financial strain for the women. From the beginning, Roosevelt suggested that a perimeter of land be marked out for Eleanor Roosevelt, Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook. So on January 26, 1926 a contract of this nature was drawn up. It was signed by all four of them, in the presence of Louis Howe.¹²⁸ Although he previously paid for general improvements of the farmland, once the Val Kill property had been marked out, FDR insisted ‘You 3 can jolly well foot the bills!’¹²⁹ After FDR had set up their arrangements and ensured the house was built according to his specific desires, he stepped back from life at Val Kill.

The Springwood renovation, in contrast, shows that relations between mother and son were more equitable. Until her death in 1941, Sara Roosevelt remained the matriarch at Springwood. Throughout his discussions with contractors, Franklin D. Roosevelt would continue to refer to the home as *his mother’s* house. Nevertheless, correspondence examined in this chapter indicates that Sara readily succumbed to the opinions of her beloved Franklin, and the renovation itself was likely pioneered by him.

¹²⁶ FDR to Dickerman, Cook and Roosevelt, July 19, 1925. “Financial Matters: Val Kill: 1924-1926,” Box 60, FDR: Family, Business And Personal, FDR Library.

¹²⁷ FDR to Elliot C. Brown, August 5, 1924. “Hyde Park Matters General,” Box 21, FDR: Family, Business & Personal, FDR Library.

¹²⁸ Memorandum of Lease, January 26, 1926. “Financial Matters: Val Kill: 1924-1926,” Box 60, FDR: Family, Business and Personal, FDR Library.

¹²⁹ FDR to Dickerman, Cook and Roosevelt, July 19, 1925. “Financial Matters: Val Kill: 1924-1926,” Box 60, FDR: Family, Business And Personal, FDR Library.

Franklin's urge and insistence to be involved in the renovation overextended his resources. In 1915, Europe was in the throes of war and Franklin Roosevelt was United States Assistant Secretary of the Navy, based in Washington DC. Nevertheless, he insisted on being consulted for major and minor planning decisions at Springwood. Sara Roosevelt's earliest correspondence suggests that it was in fact Franklin who sketched the first house plans from which Hoppin and Koen developed their official drawings.¹³⁰ In 1915 it was he who took responsibility for writing to various contractors and companies, securing their services for the work that was to be undertaken.¹³¹ A letter from April 1915 suggests that FDR's insistent monitoring, combined with his distracting work schedule may have begun to grate on his mother. 'I leave New York on Friday next, and I think the builder wants me to tell him definitely,' wrote Sara about the new floors, 'Are you coming on? ... Please Answer.'¹³² That October, Sara organized a conference with the architects and contractor, hoping to settle a number of matters. Despite sitting and waiting for him, neither Franklin, nor his mail-posted plans, ever arrived.¹³³

It is difficult to credit one mind with the Springwood renovation. Together the Italianate interior first installed by James Roosevelt, Franklin's stonework and library, Sara's servant quarters and Francis Hoppin's stucco exterior, expressed an array of architectural visions. Once the tools had been put down, the home remained firmly in the custody of the Springwood matriarch, Sara Roosevelt. As Eleanor Roosevelt reflected after Sara's death in 1941, 'My mother-in-law lived for so many years in this house, that she really seemed a part of it. Her personality seems to go right on living here.'¹³⁴ However, Sara Roosevelt's affections were centred on her only son, and her strong will was unwaveringly geared for his success. Sara was a 'formidable' woman, according to one biographer, and Franklin was 'the focus of all her considerable energies, to the exclusion of everything and everyone else.'¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Sara Roosevelt to FDR, "Tuesday" (Undated). "Sara Delano Roosevelt to Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1914," Box 8, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

¹³¹ Albee, *Historic Structure Report, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Architectural Data Section*, 64.

¹³² Emphasis in original. Sara Roosevelt to FDR, April 30, 1915. "Sara Delano Roosevelt to Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1915-1916," Box 8, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

¹³³ Sara Roosevelt to FDR, October 7. "Sara Delano Roosevelt to Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1915-1916," Box 8, Roosevelt Family Papers, FDR Library.

¹³⁴ Eleanor Roosevelt "My Day, December 22, 1943," *The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Digital Edition* (2017), accessed March 12, 2020, <https://erpapers.columbian.gwu.edu/my-day>.

¹³⁵ Harold I. Gullan, *Faith of Our Mothers: The Stories of Presidential Mothers from Mary Washington to Barbara Bush* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 191.

Though Springwood's renovation may have been approved by Sara Roosevelt, it was always steered towards the magnification of her beloved Franklin.

Gendered gentility

The tensions that were laid bare at Hyde Park and Chartwell were not singular to the Roosevelt and Churchill families. Visions of an idyllic home in the country, and all that entailed, was a product of the culture and class to which these individuals belonged. Thorstein Veblen articulated the lifestyle markers of the leisure classes in his sharp critique published in 1899.¹³⁶ Veblen pointed to both 'conspicuous leisure' (non-productive expenditure of time and effort) and 'conspicuous consumption' (wasteful use of goods) as behaviours practiced by gentility as a means of evidencing their wealth and increasing their reputability.¹³⁷ These behaviours crystallised in the lifestyle of bourgeoisie women, Veblen asserted.¹³⁸ As Sven Beckert has likewise argued, it was wives and mothers who were largely responsible for forging polite society and who took it upon themselves to police it.¹³⁹ Household interiors, decorations and facilities, writes Kristin Hoganson, were widely regarded as expressions of the nature of the women who lived there.¹⁴⁰ Thus many of the priorities of Clementine Churchill, Sara Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt during construction can be seen as reflective of their need to maintain an expression of their genteel identity. They became 'judges of their own and others' status,' and were individually invested in the performance of conspicuous leisure and conspicuous consumption within the home.¹⁴¹

Clementine Churchill was strongly allied to the pursuit of leisure. In 1916 she wrote to Winston urging him to join her in occasional relaxation. 'In future however full of work and ideas you are,' she asked him to promise to 'keep out of every day an hour & every week a day & every year 6 weeks for the small things of life. Things like painting, playing grizzly

¹³⁶ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/usyd/detail.action?docID=1889384>.

¹³⁷ Veblen, 85.

¹³⁸ For an exploration of Veblen's applicability to female consumption, see Nils Gilman, "Thorstein Veblen's Neglected Feminism," *Journal of Economic Issues* 33, no. 3 (September 1, 1999): 689–711, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00213624.1999.11506193>.

¹³⁹ Beckert, "Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850–1896," 401.

¹⁴⁰ Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill, UNITED STATES: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 14, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/usyd/detail.action?docID=880201>.

¹⁴¹ Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 220.

bear, sitting on the grass with me & generally leisure with a big L.’¹⁴² Nevertheless, leisure at Chartwell was not just a matter of fun for Clementine; it also served as ‘evidence of a pecuniary ability to afford a life of idleness.’¹⁴³ Although this pecuniary standing was hard-won by Winston (and oftentimes, only through loans or luck or both) it was important to portray to outsiders an image of effortless prosperity.¹⁴⁴ At Chartwell, leisure symbols abounded – from pools to croquet lawns and rose gardens. In later years, the dining room was turned into a home theatre. Indeed, it was this requirement to display evidence of what Veblen called the ‘non-productive consumption of time’ that caused so much anxiety to Clementine. During construction, her mind flitted between hopes of opulence and concerns about the labour and maintenance such a scale would require. On the question of adding another sitting-room, Clementine declined, on the basis that it would require ‘more furniture, more fires, more flowers & more house-maiding.’¹⁴⁵ Trying to maintain appearances of care-free extravagance whilst struggling to manage the costs and demands of a large household was almost overwhelming.

Sara Roosevelt’s consumption patterns can be read as expressions of her ‘old blood’ identity. Her status was tied to her presentation of Springwood, especially compared to other nearby estates. Though consumption was her currency, she cringed at the excessive displays and exuberance of the Gilded Age. Instead, her ‘old wealth’ breeding favoured subtle refinement and disdained modern conveniences. Lucy Lethbridge has explored the way that traditionalists, like Sara Roosevelt, retained long corridors, open fires, and chamber pots, despite the arrival of electricity and gas.¹⁴⁶ Their belief that human domestic labour was ‘morally superior’ to any machine allowed them to claim virtue, especially over the modern middle classes. This lifestyle encouraged conspicuous consumption of another sort, the kind that required high levels of investment in domestic servants to do all the necessary labour. As Chapter Three will discuss, Sara Roosevelt enjoyed the benefits of a minimum of fourteen domestic servants at Springwood, a force that made possible entertainment on a lavish scale. Sara Roosevelt also ensured European ornaments of certain provenances could be gazed upon by her guests. Hoganson has argued that women like Sara cultivated a cultural worldliness in order to convey both their ‘economic standing through exhibiting imported objects’ and to

¹⁴² Churchill, Spencer-Churchill, and Soames, *Speaking for Themselves*, 177.

¹⁴³ Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 48.

¹⁴⁴ For a thorough account of Churchill’s strained finances, see Lough, *No More Champagne*.

¹⁴⁵ Soames, *Clementine Churchill*, 222.

¹⁴⁶ Lucy Lethbridge, “Served and Servant Spaces,” *The Architectural Review* 234, no. 1397 (July 2013): 24–25.

display ‘geographically expansive outlook that demonstrated a familiarity with the wider world.’¹⁴⁷ In the Springwood reception hall alone, visitors could see (and still do) a large Italian sideboard, an eighteenth century Dutch grandfather clock and a collection of rare British naval prints.¹⁴⁸

Sara’s daughter-in-law, Eleanor Roosevelt, famously favoured a very different domestic lifestyle. Eleanor and Franklin’s eldest grandson, Curtis Roosevelt, contrasted his memories of Sara’s ‘Anglophilic’ Big House with its host of servants and maids, with the more casual style of picnicking and barbecues that Eleanor enjoyed.¹⁴⁹ As Chapter Three examines, when Eleanor Roosevelt attained her own domestic space at Val Kill she chose to outfit it in another manner altogether. Lacking a ‘backstairs’ segregation, and other architectural markers of the bourgeoisie (such as a parlour room) the cottage at Val Kill reflected the opening up of the home in a new age of convenience. Unlike Sara, Eleanor Roosevelt favoured a small staff in exchange for increased electronic household appliances. Visitors to Val Kill remarked frequently upon Eleanor Roosevelt’s approachability, and ‘simple, homey good taste.’¹⁵⁰ Though she could not escape her bourgeois upbringing and never learned, for example, to cook any meals herself, this posture usefully allied Eleanor Roosevelt with working Americans and other middle-class women around the nation.¹⁵¹

A portrait of creative control

Home renovation prominently displayed the personal character of Roosevelt and Churchill. Both men took a deep interest in their estates and were confident of their ability to manage large-scale construction projects from beginning to end. Both men demonstrated a capacity for creative expression, attention to detail, and eye for balance and beauty—traits often ignored in conventional political histories. A home in the country provided an irresistible outlet for the aesthetic passions that Churchill and Roosevelt shared. In the words of Stefan Buczacki, ‘Chartwell possessed Churchill as he possessed Chartwell.’¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium*, 14.

¹⁴⁸ 1989 Home of FDR Visitor’s Brochure, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, 1989.

¹⁴⁹ Curtis Roosevelt, *Upstairs at the Roosevelts’: Growing Up with Franklin and Eleanor* (University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 13, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1pv89hw>.

¹⁵⁰ Lester Entrup, *ibid.* Roosevelt, 11.

¹⁵¹ O’Farrell, *She Was One of Us*, 1–3.

¹⁵² Buczacki, *Churchill and Chartwell*, 115.

The construction process also revealed the controlling nature of these ambitious men. Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt took responsibility for all decisions, which carried down to the details of the build. In fact, Churchill and Roosevelt considered themselves to be equally capable as the professional architects and contractors. Robin Fedden has described Churchill as an ‘impatient perfectionist,’ who was ‘intolerant of fools and incompetents and took an interest in every craft and trade in the builder’s profession and thought he knew a fair bit about many of them.’¹⁵³ The same could be said of Roosevelt, who fashioned himself as an expert on carpentry, painting, plumbing and electricity as circumstances demanded. Furthermore, the intricate finances did not escape each man’s careful probe. ‘Roosevelt was always tinkering with the contractual relation... He always wanted to get something cheap,’ said Henry Toombs, and likewise, not a cheque or bill passed Churchill’s desk without questions being asked.¹⁵⁴

If Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt who were the driving force in their home’s reconstruction, the women surrounding Churchill and Roosevelt left their own impressions on their houses. It would be remiss to ignore the colour, life and vibrancy that was added by each. Mary Soames described Clementine’s dedication to carving out a comfortable abode. ‘My mother imprinted the stamp of her lovely, and always unaffected, taste on both house and garden.’¹⁵⁵ In the same way, the spirit of Sara Roosevelt was inseparable from the operation of the Big House, and Eleanor Roosevelt deeply shaped Val Kill to her own liking.

Roosevelt and Churchill are not the first prominent politicians to have engrossed themselves in the grit – and the beauty – of architecture and construction. In the United States the tradition stretches back to Thomas Jefferson and his grand plantation mansion, Monticello. Undertaken at the start of his political career, reimagined multiple times over his lifetime, and the object of careful ongoing attention, Monticello held a place in Jefferson’s life not altogether different from Churchill’s cherished Chartwell and Roosevelt’s beloved Springwood and Val Kill. While designing and dedicating himself to the pursuit of perfection at Monticello, Jefferson was not just striving for architectural success, but societal success too. As Andrew Burstein has argued, ‘Jefferson associated the construction of Monticello with the life he dreamed for Patty and himself and their offspring...The

¹⁵³ Fedden, *Churchill and Chartwell*, 153.

¹⁵⁴ Rexford Tugwell interview with Henry Toombs, Undated. “Interview with Henry Toombs and Tap Bennet,” Box 1, Small Collections: Oral Histories, FDR Library.

¹⁵⁵ Garnett, *Chartwell*, 5.

construction of Monticello was meant to support Jefferson's dual ideal of intellectual enjoyment and amiable society.'¹⁵⁶ Similarly, as Roosevelt and Churchill conjured notions of windows, woodwork and fireplaces, they were reaching for something beyond the physical house into the realm of their unrealised personal and political potential. Writing about the refinement of America, Richard Bushman has described houses as 'outward signs of what the inhabitants hoped would be an inward grace.' Ultimately, the Roosevelt and Churchill families 'wished to transform themselves along with their environments.'¹⁵⁷

In 1929, acting as chairman of the Hyde Park Holland Society, Franklin Roosevelt wrote the introduction for a short book he had commissioned about historic Dutch colonial houses in the Hudson Valley. The 'collection of architectural data' within was worthy of celebration, Franklin Roosevelt noted, but it was *not* the book's major achievement. Rather Roosevelt was drawn to the 'manners and customs of the settlers' of the Hudson Valley, uniquely revealed by an examination of the houses the people lived in.¹⁵⁸ In the same way, through uncovering the design and building process of three houses in this chapter, we have seen beyond the intricacies of architecture, into something of the 'manners and customs' of the Roosevelt and Churchill families. For Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt, the construction of their homes provides a tantalising glimpse into an inner world. Hidden family dynamics and deeply held aspirations for success and status were carved into the walls of their country houses.

¹⁵⁶ Andrew Burstein, *The Inner Jefferson: Portrait of a Grieving Optimist*, 1st pbk. ed (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 24, 29.

¹⁵⁷ Richard Lyman Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011), xii.

¹⁵⁸ Franklin D. Roosevelt "Introduction" from Helen Wilkinson Reynolds, *Dutch Houses in the Hudson Valley before 1776* (Holland Society of New York: Dover Publications, 1929).

Chapter Two:

Tending the Home

The rise of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill was no straightforward trajectory. Both men experienced seasons in the middle of their lives when their political potential seemed to be entirely quashed. This chapter will examine these periods of dismay and disappointment from the vantage point of the home, the place where each man escaped to recoup. By considering how Roosevelt and Churchill responded to insecurities, inabilities and outright failure, this chapter will probe the coping mechanisms that each man turned to during trouble.

Interestingly, these periods of personal and political difficulty prompted both Roosevelt and Churchill to tend to their gardens. In communing with nature, they found parallel, but different, outlets for their frustrations. For FDR, the goal was productivity, as he planted trees and developed farmland, eager to see the fruits and profits of his labour. Churchill's aim was aesthetic as he delighted in picturesque rural scenes and sculpted the landscape according to his painter's eye. Tending to the soil, the gardens, and the trees sustained each man during the barren years and yielded a psychological bounty that ensured they would one day reclaim their public places. A careful examination of Franklin Roosevelt's and Winston Churchill's intense preoccupation with grounds-keeping suggests a deeper struggle against depression and emasculation taking place just beneath the surface.

Roosevelt and Churchill's shared a desire to improve on their environments, beginning at the back door. Each man recognised that the hidden assets of his estate could only be cultivated with dedication and hard work. Each was eager to invest time and money in cultivation, seeing in this investment a path toward personal recovery. In the gardens at Hyde Park and Chartwell, FDR and Churchill found places of solace, productivity and learning – equipping them for the years of national leadership that lay ahead.

Crises of emasculation

In August 1921, at the age of thirty-nine, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was climbing towards an all-time career high. Having served as State Senator of New York since 1910, Roosevelt became Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1913 (a position once held by his cousin Theodore Roosevelt) and in 1920 ran for Vice-President under Governor James Cox, eventually losing out to Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge. It was at this moment in his career that FDR was struck with Infantile Paralysis – otherwise known as Polio – and lost all power of

movement in his lower body.¹ The condition came upon him swiftly, after an ocean-swim whilst on holiday with his family in Campobello, changing the course of his and Eleanor's lives unalterably.

While the physical pain was agonising (and made worse by misguided treatment which advised frequent massaging) FDR's immobilisation was a much greater loss. Compounding the physical paralysis was the psychological damage done by contracting an *infantile* disease, not one that usually struck a man of FDR's stature.² In September 1921, a month after his diagnosis, Dr Lovett wrote to Roosevelt's supervising doctor to warn against the 'mental depression' and 'irritability' that should be expected for an adult man in FDR's position.³ Lovett suggested that Roosevelt take frequent hot baths (where movement would feel more free) and be placed sitting up in his chair. Both treatments were designed to foster independence in the patient. The prospects for recovery were unknown.

Living with a disability in the 1920s was a significant social stigma.⁴ Aside from the injuries sustained by war veterans, visible bodily damage or physical impairment was widely regarded to be indicative of moral failing or character weakness.⁵ This was especially true of polio victims, a condition which had historically been associated with the lower classes. Amongst many Americans, it was assumed that 'character causes the disease.'⁶ A further humiliation attached to disability was the societal expectation that such individuals would necessarily become 'unproductive citizens.'⁷ Sarah Rose argues that lacking the 'interchangeable parts' that came with 'fully functional, intact bodies,' American workplaces slowly edged victims of polio and other debilitating diseases out of the production line,

¹ Biographies which focus on Roosevelt's battle with disability include Tobin, *The Man He Became*; Ward, *A First Class Temperament*.

² The diagnosis of Polio (Infantile Paralysis) was assured by all physicians at the time. Contemporary scholars suggest that FDR may have, in fact, contracted Guillain-Barré syndrome. This condition was not readily identified by American physicians in the 1920s.

³ Robert W. Lovett to E. H. Bennett, September 2, 1921, Infantile Paralysis: FDR's Attack and Treatment, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

⁴ See Daniel J. Wilson's social history of polio survivors in this era, Wilson, "A Crippling Fear."

⁵ Daniel Holland, "Franklin D. Roosevelt's Shangri-La: Foreshadowing the Independent Living Movement in Warm Springs, Georgia, 1926–1945," *Disability & Society* 21, no. 5 (August 1, 2006): 513–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590600785993>.

⁶ Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors* (London: Penguin UK, 2013), 47.

⁷ For an interrogation of the intertwining of disability and labour history, see Sarah F. Rose, *No Right to Be Idle: The Invention of Disability, 1840s–1930s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press Books, 2017).

bringing about a second-class citizenship in the twentieth century, which had not previously been associated with disability in the Antebellum period⁸.

The popular discourse of disability was also highly gendered.⁹ Thus a condition like polio threatened to not only impair, but even to emasculate, an individual. As the twentieth century unfolded, manliness had moved from being an innate noble quality to a visible trait expressed in body and skill and proven through external markers.¹⁰ This period can be viewed as a transitory moment from what Gail Bederman has described as ‘civilised manliness’ (seen in the honour codes established in the mid nineteenth century) into the twentieth century’s prism of ‘primitive masculinity’ which was marked by traits like physical power, sexual prowess and social dominance.¹¹ As Michael Kimmel has put it, ‘the body did not contain the man, expressing the man within; now that body *was* the man.’¹² Such essentialist claims posed disabled men as the binary opposite of able-bodied men, in other words they were seen to be ‘weak, vulnerable, dependent and even feminine.’¹³

Although FDR’s polio diagnosis brought him face-to-face with such stigmas as infantility, moral degeneration, unproductivity and emasculation, the greatest blow he received was the threat to his political ambitions. His foremost ambition had always been to attain the presidency, but as Amos Kiewe has argued, in 1921 (and perhaps even today) a disabled person ‘could not be conceived as the holder of the highest office in the land.’¹⁴ In a culture for which the body politic was imagined to be an organism or an extension of the leader themselves, illness or disease at the head threatened to create an unhealthy society.¹⁵ Furthermore, the eugenic rationale that pervaded the Western world in this period had

⁸ Rose, 111.

⁹ Steve Robertson, “Men and Disability,” in *Disabling Barriers, Enabling Environments*, ed. John Swain et al. (New York: SAGE, 2004).

¹⁰ Michael S Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

¹¹ Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, *Women in Culture and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 84, 215.

¹² Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 127.

¹³ David Serlin, “Introduction,” in *Phallacies: Historical Intersections of Disability and Masculinity*, ed. Kathleen M. Brian and James W. Trent (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 4, <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780190458997.001.0001/oso-9780190458997-chapter-1>.

¹⁴ Amos Kiewe, “The Body as Proof: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Preparations for the 1932 Presidential Campaign,” *Argumentation and Advocacy* 36, no. 2 (September 1, 1999): 88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00028533.1999.11951640>.

¹⁵ Kiewe, 89.

determined that physical disability ‘was an automatic disqualification for public life, let alone for the highest political office.’¹⁶

So in 1922, after five months of paralysis, when questions about the future began to circulate, FDR was not surprised. Should Roosevelt abandon his political ambitions? Was full recovery possible? And if it wasn’t, how could he retain his dignity and productivity? On this matter, Eleanor Roosevelt and Sara Roosevelt offered competing strands of thought. Sara held tightly to a bygone image of Victorian manliness. Concerned for her son’s wellbeing and not wishing him to over-exert himself, she argued that he should retire to Hyde Park for good. She believed that, as a male invalid, he should cultivate his farm interests and live a noble and quiet life. This dignified passivity would have equated to little more than emasculation for Franklin in a world of tough, war-hardened, and vigorous masculinity. Eleanor Roosevelt declared, against her mother-in-law’s wishes, that FDR had ‘broader interests’ which would not be satisfied ‘unless he had been doing something in a wider field than that of a country squire, retiring to live a life of ease on his estate.’¹⁷ Eleanor’s views supposed that too much rest and inaction would frustrate his masculine potential. She recommended he fight back against the toll of the disease.

Unsurprisingly, it was this second opinion which Franklin favoured. He took stock and prepared to undertake a long battle to regain his muscular strength and return to the political circuit. Unbridled optimism for a full recovery dominated his public correspondence in this period, though his true prospects remained unclear. In February 1923 Roosevelt insisted, ‘There is no question that every month there is distinct improvement in [my legs] strength and it is merely a question of time before I am able to get about again without the use of crutches.’¹⁸ In October of that year he consoled another polio sufferer with the wisdom of a doctor who had claimed that he could be sure, ‘you will get progressively better year by year until you die.’¹⁹ It is impossible to tell how deep this confidence ran. Geoffrey Ward has claimed FDR’s positive attitude was ‘as practical as it was courageous... No nation has ever chosen a crippled man to lead it; pity was a poison to his political future.’²⁰ It is

¹⁶ Carol Poore, *Disability in Twentieth-Century German Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 224.

¹⁷ Eleanor Roosevelt, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Hyde Park*, 12.

¹⁸ FDR to C. N. Haskell, February 14, 1923, Infantile Paralysis: FDR’s Attack and Treatment, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹⁹ FDR to Paul D. Hasbrouck, October 17, 1923, Infantile Paralysis: FDR’s Attack and Treatment, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

²⁰ Ward, *A First Class Temperament*, 750.

unquestionable that Roosevelt acted to diminish the sob-story of his diagnosis, seeking to remain seen as a lively public figure, even whilst recovering at home. This reputation was successfully garnered, as indicated by an article in the *Boston News* that celebrated FDR as ‘an active sick man’ with ‘varied and active interests,’ listing his ongoing presidency of four charitable foundations and trusteeship of another eight.²¹

Over the next two years – his years of ‘recovery’ – Roosevelt was based in Hyde Park and spent extensive period out of the public eye. Far from retiring, Roosevelt in fact began in intensive training regime. One saving grace was the nature of FDR’s disability: a paralysis that affected his lower body alone. Retaining the appearance of health in his face and upper body was paramount to the impression of vigour and confidence he needed to exude. Thus in the familiar and comforting environment of the Hudson, FDR began a tireless campaign to regain his physical strength.

Winston Churchill was also thrown into challenging personal circumstances in the interwar period. Unlike FDR, it was not the agony of bodily ailments or the stigma of disability that came upon him, but instead the humiliation of losing his political prominence and popularity. Churchill’s biographer has described the 1930s as his ‘wilderness years.’²² It was a time during which his controversial opinions and eccentric behaviour isolated him from his party and from many of his peers in Parliament. Public mockery was a stinging blow that threatened to leave Churchill’s dignity and manhood permanently bruised.²³

There were two losing battles that occupied Churchill’s political agenda during the 1930s – the India Bill and German Appeasement. The first of these was the 1935 Government of India Act. This bill was aimed at compromising British power in India and transferring many leadership roles to local control. It was designed to gradually move India towards self-government. Churchill strongly opposed this bill, fighting bitterly in various parliamentary speeches to argue that the people of India were ill-equipped to run their own democracy.²⁴ Churchill’s second battle was against Stanley Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain and others in the Conservative party who believed that Germany could be appeased and European peace retained. To this claim, Churchill instead pointed to the threat of a world-

²¹ Boston News, June 6, 1927, Infantile Paralysis: FDR’s Attack and Treatment, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

²² See Gilbert, *Winston Churchill - the Wilderness Years*.

²³ Graham Goodlad, “Churchill in the Wilderness: Why Was Churchill out of Office so Long?,” *20th Century History Review* 4, no. 1 (September 2008), <https://link-galegroup-com.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/apps/doc/A185386508/ITOF?sid=lms>.

²⁴ Roland Quinault, “Churchill and Democracy,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 11 (2001): 211.

wide conflict and passionately advocated for the rearmament of Britain's army and navy. His warnings were not heeded, even as Germany edged toward war.

Churchill held strongly to humanistic Darwinism, believing that the virtuous would ultimately attain their right order in society. His reading of Macaulay's history of England confirmed his beliefs in the relentless march of progress.²⁵ John Charmley has argued that influences like Gibbon, Huxley and Macauley resulted in his 'powerful vision of England as the beacon of this civilizing mission that made him the Whig-imperialist he was to remain.'²⁶ His views were Victorian and traditionalist, the sort of which seemed rapidly outdated in the disillusioned wake of the Great War. Leo Amery, one of the few Conservatives who supported Churchill's position on rearmament, nevertheless acknowledged his often archaic values. 'The key to Winston,' he said, 'is to realise that he is Mid-Victorian, steeped in the politics of his father's period and unable ever to get the modern point of view.'²⁷

Churchill's ideology, behaviour and public reception have been richly explored by Martin Francis in his exploration of British male politicians 'as gendered beings with affective lives.'²⁸ Francis suggests that in the mid-twentieth century, self-restraint was viewed by the British public as a marker for male political leadership. This ideal was often incongruous with Churchill's 'extravagant patrician personality'.²⁹ Churchill sentimentalism, romance and self-expression was born of another era, and was also the result of his indulgent aristocratic heritage which 'offered the possibility of a richer, less inhibited, approach' to politics.³⁰

Churchill became an eccentric celebrity amongst Parliamentarians. He was loud and outspoken on matters of the India Bill and Rearmament. 1934 alone, Churchill published fifty articles and made twenty speeches, according to Martin Gilbert, meaning his opinions were heard by the British public more than once a week.³¹ Kenneth Thompson has described Churchill's grand view of the world which painted the 'tragic proportion of life and politics'

²⁵ Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England, from the Accession of James II — Volume I* (London: Dent, 1906), <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1468>.

²⁶ Charmley, *Churchill*, 18.

²⁷ Leopold S Amery and John Barnes, *The Leo Amery Diaries VII: The Empire at Bay* (London: Hutchinson, 1988), 510.

²⁸ Francis, "Tears, Tantrums, and Bared Teeth," 356.

²⁹ Francis, 358.

³⁰ Francis, 366.

³¹ Gilbert, *Churchill*, 502.

through his battle cry speeches.³² Though mesmerising, these speeches did not prove to be as persuasive as he had hoped. Churchill's meticulously prepared scripts were often ill-suited to the mood of the Commons but his refusal to improvise or alter course left him high and dry. David Cannadine has described these occasions as moments of inevitable humiliation, when Churchill was 'so tied to his text that he could only plough on inexorably towards disaster.'³³ His rhetoric was matched only by his dress and mannerisms, a 'sartorial tableaux' that would go on to feature siren suits, oriental dressing gowns, unconventional hats and archaic uniforms.³⁴ The public perception of Churchill as disproportionately passionate comes across in various *Punch* cartoons of this era, where he is depicted wildly riding Indian elephants, mockingly dressed in Indian traditional garb and painting large depictions of the Union Jack.³⁵

Churchill's behaviour and exaggerated tendencies were not just old-fashioned, but also began to seem increasingly inappropriate for a man of Churchill's stature. As Francis argues, discourses of English manhood were becoming more 'domesticated,' private and understated, no longer accommodating for the exuberant masculinity that Churchill displayed.³⁶ Churchill's attitude was depicted as almost barbarian, and certainly uncivilised. In 1934, Sir Stafford Cripps attacked Churchill's outdated views on German appeasement, describing him as 'some old baron in the Middle Ages.' Churchill, he suggested, wanted to rely on brute force to 'maintain the safety of his cows.'³⁷ Churchill's epic tone and dramatic performance was viewed as excessive and unsuitable in a changing political environment that had begun to value calm and controlled rhetoric. This new definition of political manhood was ill-suited to the style that Churchill, now in his 60s, had long since adopted. Thus the Government frequently delighted in mocking Churchill, both in public and private.³⁸

The events of history and the advent of the Second World War seemed to somewhat vindicate his years in the wilderness. Writing many years later, Churchill would portray

³² Kenneth W. Thompson, *Winston Churchill's World View: Statesmanship and Power* (LSU Press, 1987), 103.

³³ David Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow: Confronting the Past in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 95.

³⁴ Francis, "Tears, Tantrums, and Bared Teeth," 372.

³⁵ For images, see Punch Photo Shelter Online, accessed from <https://punch.photoshelter.com/>

³⁶ Francis, "Tears, Tantrums, and Bared Teeth," 374.

³⁷ Gilbert, *Prophet of Truth*, 557.

³⁸ Gilbert, *Churchill*, 558.

himself as a lone genius, prophesying upon deaf ears.³⁹ In recent years, scholars have sought to complicate this simplistic and self-aggrandizing narrative. Graham Goodlad has argued that the MPs' lack of trust in Churchill's claims actually reflected Winston's own poor political decisions in the 1910s and 1920s regarding Gallipoli and the General Strike, and his inconsistent character, making him difficult to take seriously during these years.⁴⁰ Appearing to be deliberately quixotic and relishing in conflict, Goodlad argues Churchill developed a reputation for reacting disproportionately and being difficult to manage.⁴¹ Richard Toye has added that his dogged attacks on Indian independence in the early 1930s lent incoherence to his complaints about the Nazis, causing many in the party – even those who agreed with his views on appeasement – to fear associating themselves too closely with Churchill.⁴² Furthermore, Churchill's support for Edward VIII in the Abdication Crisis of 1936, amongst other incidents, proved him to be out-of-touch with the mood of the nation. Baldwin, conversely, was receiving immense popular support in this period, and his views on appeasement reflected the feelings of many everyday Britons.⁴³

Whether his reception was justified or not, Churchill's exclusion from the inner workings of the Conservative Party throughout the 1930s was a difficult pill to swallow. The decade began with Churchill being knocked down – quite literally, when a car hit him as he crossed New York's Fifth Avenue in 1931 – and continued in such a fashion as his views were repeatedly dismissed.⁴⁴ Churchill's writing suggests this experience was not weathered easily. On several occasions, he lamented the thankless task of warning the nation. 'It has not been a pleasant task,' he reflected in 1936, 'It has brought me into conflict with many former friends and colleagues. I have been mocked and censured as a scaremonger and even as a war monger.'⁴⁵ On another occasion he bemoaned the path he had taken which was 'beset with every kind of difficulty and exposed to mockery and misunderstanding.' Fifteen years later, upon reflection, he described the experience of fighting against appeasement in this way: 'To

³⁹ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume 1. The Gathering Storm*. (London: Cassell (printed by E. Baylis and Son, and Wyman and Sons), 1948).

⁴⁰ See Goodlad, "Churchill in the Wilderness."

⁴¹ Goodlad, 6.

⁴² Richard Toye, "Churchill and Empire," 2012, *Churchill Archive In-Depth Guides*, Accessed October 8, 2019 from <http://www.churchillarchive.com/teaching-and-research/in-depth-guides/mod1>

⁴³ "Challenging the Churchillian View" *Churchill Archives Education*, Accessed October 8, 2019 from <https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/archives/education/churchill-era/exercises/appeasement/challenging-churchillian-view/>

⁴⁴ Churchill, *The Second World War*, 61.

⁴⁵ Gilbert, *Prophet of Truth*, 760.

be so entirely convinced and vindicated in a matter of life and death to one's country, and not to be able to make Parliament and the nation heed the warning, or bow to the proof by taking action, was an experience most painful.'⁴⁶ Pain, embarrassment, humiliation and defeat characterised Churchill's public life in the 1930s.

Churchill's frustration at being excluded and emasculated is discernible in his literary output. During the 1930s he undertook a biography of his relative, the first Duke of Marlborough. In a bid to revive Marlborough's reputation and 'recall this great shade from the past,' Churchill was not only vindicating his subject but articulated many thinly veiled observations about himself.⁴⁷ Churchill described Marlborough's years of custody under King William III as 'ten years when the chances of a lifetime seemed finally to die.' It is not hard to see the parallels to Churchill's own wilderness years as he reflected on Marlborough's isolation. 'As he brooded on these wasted opportunities,' wrote Churchill, 'as he no doubt felt how surely and how swiftly he could reshape the scene, and yet how carefully trammelled he was, can we wonder at the anger that possessed his soul?'⁴⁸ It was not necessary for Churchill to wonder at this anger, being like his muse, trapped outside of what he thought was his rightful place in leadership. As Andrew Roberts has argued, 'For Churchill, writing history was a natural adjunct to making it. Like all his works, *Marlborough* tells us about the author as well as the subject.'⁴⁹

Later, after vindication, Churchill was able to reflect on these years affectionately. Writing over a decade later, he described much of the 1930s as 'personally very pleasant to me.'⁵⁰ Amidst the injuries to his pride, Churchill found a sense of virile achievement elsewhere. This was bound up in grounds at Chartwell – a site which functioned as a place of solace, but never stagnation.

A natural solution

Both Roosevelt and Churchill sought solutions to their travails in nature. Their dreams of achieving physical and political healing, reasserting control and regaining a sense of productivity could be realised in the unlikely place: the grounds of their estates. In the popular imagination of the time, the challenge of taming nature and the opportunity to

⁴⁶ Churchill, *The Second World War*, 96.

⁴⁷ Winston Churchill, *Marlborough; His Life and Times* (C. Scribner's Sons, 1933), 8.

⁴⁸ Churchill, *Marlborough*, 164.

⁴⁹ Roberts, *Churchill*, 72; Reynolds, *In Command of History*.

⁵⁰ Churchill, *The Second World War*, 62.

marshal its resources for fruitful gain was a powerful outlet for frustrated manhood. As Chapter One described, land use and ownership was being renegotiated in this period. In the UK, the aristocratic elite relinquished its country home perch (and accompanying rural setting) as economic reforms destabilised class relations and energy shifted towards the rising bourgeoisie in the cities. In America, the closing the Western frontier represented to some the end of the ‘American Dream,’ which had promised every man the opportunity to own his own land and be his own master. In both countries, modernisation was challenging men to reconfigure their relationship to nature, to the outdoors and to their masculine selves. In the United States, the natural trope has frequently found its genesis on the wild frontier, while British thought has dwelt on the garden and the countryside. These varying sites have shared a gendered dimension as places ‘in which and against which manliness is tested and structured.’⁵¹

On both sides of the Atlantic, many men felt as though their manhood was under siege in the early decades of the twentieth century.⁵² As Gail Bederman and others have argued, many of the traditional Victorian markers of male virtue – self-restraint, honour, gentility and respectability – were losing their appeal in a world of immigration, consumer capitalism, and increasing female autonomy.⁵³ Rapid industrialisation was also changing the character of the workforce in both nations.⁵⁴ Michael Roper and John Tosh have asserted that middle class manliness had gotten intertwined in the nineteenth century with economic self-sufficiency and the ability to master one’s own fate. But in moments of economic change and joblessness, such as those preceding both world wars, ‘not only [mens’] income but their masculinity [was] threatened.’⁵⁵ Industrialisation was crowding out typical middle class jobs in farming and craftsmanship and forcing men to take up monotonous urban work on the production line, sacrificing their manhood for the sake of earning a living.

In America, nature was quickly becoming a place for proving one’s masculinity. The rugged Western frontier (and its accompanying myths of Cowboys and Indians) was

⁵¹ Claire Lawrence, “A Possible Site for Contested Manliness: Landscape and the Pastoral in the Victorian Era,” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 4, no. 2 (1997): 17.

⁵² For a transnational history of manliness see J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester [Greater Manchester]: Manchester University Press, 1987).

⁵³ See the argument of Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*.

⁵⁴ For Industrialisation and its social consequences see Eric Hopkins, *Industrialisation and Society: A Social History, 1830-1951* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000).

⁵⁵ Michael Roper and John Tosh, *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991), 18.

enshrined as a mythological site of untarnished manliness. Efforts to prove masculinity through the conquering of nature was encapsulated in the performative actions of Theodore Roosevelt, who took multiple hunting pilgrimages to the West and then to South America and Africa. These widely publicised adventures were crucial in cementing his political reputation and removing his boyhood stigma of being a 'sissy'.⁵⁶ Many have spoken of the 'crisis' of masculinity that came upon modern American men in the early decades of the twentieth century, who (unlike the privileged Teddy Roosevelt) were unable to display or achieve the heights of masculine bravado in their hum-drum white-collar lives.⁵⁷ Transitioning from nineteenth century bravado to a twentieth century economy of management and discipline (that privileged the ability to get along and fit in) cognitively challenged many men.

Nevertheless, there is evidence of American men seeking a compromise. Their response was to find a place where nineteenth century values could continue to exist in the hyper-organized twentieth century world. By applying modern managerial strategies to the rugged environment men were able to reconcile new masculine expression with some of the traditional ideals of manhood. Jackson Lears describes the 'retailoring of Victorian manliness to meet the demands of modernity' in which the value of morality was replaced by managerial abilities.⁵⁸ Benjamin Rene Jordan has compellingly demonstrated that the American Boy Scouts, founded in 1910, issued a program of engagement with the natural world designed to cultivate young men's civic skills for a modern society.

'Scouting discouraged boys from "feminine," romantic sentimentalization of nature and from "unproductive" primitivism. Scouts instead practiced scientific categorization, observation, and data collection through Nature Study. Approved forms of "hiking with a purpose" encouraged Scouts to make productive use of their leisure time by learning quantitative assessment and mapping, time discipline, and even appreciation for industrial production.... Conserving natural resources taught Scouts expert management, monetary evaluation of nature, and service to the nation.'⁵⁹

⁵⁶ See Monica Rico, *Nature's Noblemen: Transatlantic Masculinities and the Nineteenth-Century American West*, The Lamar Series in Western History (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2013).

⁵⁷ See the argument of Kimmel, *Manhood in America*.

⁵⁸ Jackson Lears, "The Managerial Revitalization of the Rich," in *Ruling America*., ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 183, <https://www.dawsonera.com:443/abstract/9780674037199>.

⁵⁹ Benjamin René Jordan, *Modern Manhood and the Boy Scouts of America: Citizenship, Race, and the Environment, 1910-1930*, 2016, 124, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4443594>.

In this new century, manhood could be expressed through the Scout's intellectual mastery of nature, rather than the mythic frontiersman's physical endurance of the elements (and the Indians). The idea of overcoming nature with rationality was also central to the formation of the National Park Service in 1915, as Chapter Four will discuss.

Franklin Roosevelt was a strong proponent of the Scouts movement and had represented the organisation since his tenure as Assistant Secretary for the Navy.⁶⁰ During his presidency, FDR even organised the first Scouts' Jamboree gathering outside the White House. In this matter, his attitude differed from the rugged outdoor activities—big game hunting, leading a cavalry charge up San Juan Hill—practiced by cousin Teddy. Described by Brian Black as 'more complex' than his larger-than-life family predecessor in the wilderness, FDR's environmentalism rested not on war or strenuous living but on applied bureaucracy, scientific management and ecological understanding.⁶¹ As was being taught to the Boy Scouts, FDR found an outlet for his masculine potential in his methodical mastery of the grounds at Hyde Park.

The confluence of masculinity and nature has been less developed in British historiography than in American studies. Nevertheless, there is evidence that imagery of the English countryside has long symbolised civilisation and manhood.⁶² British society has held onto what Michael Bunce describes as the 'Countryside Ideal'.⁶³ Bunce argues that the historicising of the countryside is essential to the cultural milieu of Great Britain.⁶⁴ From grand homes in the country and rural leisure activities to widespread preservation movements, a sense of Englishness has often been tied up with the great outdoors.⁶⁵ But due to the elite landowning tradition, for many years this claim to 'Englishness' and with it, civilised male society, was predominantly in the hands of aristocrats and bourgeoisie.

⁶⁰ Thomas P. Campbell, "A Best Friend in the White House," *Scouting Magazine*, March-April 2003, Issue 303. Accessed online from <https://scoutingmagazine.org/issues/0303/d-wwas.html>

⁶¹ Brian Black, "The Complex Environmentalist," in *FDR and the Environment*, ed. David B Woolner and Henry L Henderson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 19–48, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=555376>.

⁶² Lawrence, "A Possible Site for Contested Manliness," 17.

⁶³ M. F. Bunce, *The Countryside Ideal: Anglo-American Images of Landscape* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).

⁶⁴ For the limits of this view and the temptation for over-simplification, see Peter Mandler, "Against 'Englishness': English Culture and the Limits to Rural Nostalgia, 1850-1940," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 7 (1997): 155–75, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3679274>.

⁶⁵ Kenneth Olwig analyses the intellectual inseparability of the environment and the body politic through the evolution of words like 'country' and 'landscape.' See Kenneth Olwig, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=3445421>.

Therefore gentlemanly pursuits of leisure on the land, such as hunting, horseback riding, shooting and angling had historically been out of reach for the lower classes.⁶⁶

The twentieth century brought with it the opening up of the English landscape for enjoyment of the masses. In the eighteenth century, ‘picturesque’ locations like the Lake District and the Scottish Highlands became sites of domestic tourism and travel, as the aspiring middle classes began to enjoy access to common British land.⁶⁷ With the release of these tracts of land came a new and very English male middle-class leisure activity of rambling through the countryside. In popular culture, the landscape of the south was seen as ‘the bedrock of Englishness,’ and thus dominion over it (and rambling through it) was the ultimate expression of patriotism.⁶⁸ This was also the moment when athletic ability became a marker of male identity, and the outdoor movement came to rural Britain. Endurance walking in particular, came to be seen as a ‘character-building battle against nature.’⁶⁹

Nature was also characterised as a source of moral uplift for the middle and working classes. The Victorian ‘Back to the Land’ movement had created a dichotomy in the popular imagination between the vices of the city and the virtue of the country.⁷⁰ Social progressivism began to look to accessible green spaces as a means of protecting the urban masses from deprivation. First, parks were embraced as a way to purify the cholera-infected cities of the 1840s. Then a broader conservation movement began to press for common land to be protected against construction and preserved for leisure pursuits.⁷¹ As Chapter Four will detail, progressives such as Octavia Hill, Robert Hunter and Hardwicke Rawnsley had founded the National Trust for places of Historic Interest of Natural Beauty (commonly known as the National Trust) in 1895 with the intent of setting aside land for public betterment.⁷² By turn of the twentieth century, urban planners were including allotments in public housing estates because it was believed that there was the ‘possibility of

⁶⁶ Richard G. Kraus, *Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society* (Burlington, Mass.: Jones and Bartlett, 1998), 191.

⁶⁷ Carl Thompson, “The Picturesque at home and abroad,” *Picturing Places*, *British Library*, accessed March 30, 2020, available from <https://www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/the-picturesque-at-home-and-abroad#>

⁶⁸ Melanie Tebbutt, “Rambling and Manly Identity in Derbyshire’s Dark Peak, 1880s–1920s,” *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 4 (December 2006): 1126, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X06005760>.

⁶⁹ Tebbutt, 1129.

⁷⁰ H. L. Malchow, “Public Gardens and Social Action in Late Victorian London,” *Victorian Studies* 29, no. 1 (1985): 98.

⁷¹ Malchow, 102.

⁷² David Cannadine, “The First Hundred Years,” in *The National Trust: The Next Hundred Years* (London: The National Trust, 1995).

accomplishing much good among the poor classes by directing their attention to the beauty of flowers... that will not tempt them to drink, or gamble, or fight, or slander.’⁷³ Recreational gardening became a new manly leisure pursuit. The benefits of ‘socialising over the garden fence,’ providing for the family with homegrown vegetables and undertaking the physical labour of ‘man’s work,’ were applauded by many social reformers as a route toward redeeming working-class masculinity.⁷⁴

Thus by the early twentieth century, the aristocratic class had lost its exclusive claim to the rural landscape. As property and some of their more extravagant leisure activities began to slip through their hands, so did broad acceptance of their hereditary right to rule. Some sought escape in the New World, to ‘distant and exotic places in search of some new setting where traditional aristocratic values such as hierarchy and honour could still prevail.’⁷⁵ Those who remained in Britain watched as the middle classes forged a new connection to land—often their land—and to nature. A rising middle-class of opulent wealth who had earned new capital were flaunting aristocratic outdoor fashions, like foxhunts, and even sometimes letting their homes.⁷⁶ Even the lower classes were laying claim to gardens, parks and nature in newfound ways. Meanwhile the old elite, separated from the security of landholding, had to find new means of earning and new forms of leisure.⁷⁷ Into this group Churchill found himself, eager to reassert his Victorian values and his class’s historic connection to landed estate. His attachment to owning, moulding and mastering his garden at Chartwell – an iconic piece of Southern English landscape – demonstrates his ongoing commitment to re-establishing a world that was rapidly vanishing. Churchill believed in the Victorian allies of land, class and masculinity, even as the world around him moved on.

Roosevelt’s healing

Franklin Roosevelt’s years of ‘recovery’ were marked by a series of new pursuits. Throwing himself into rehabilitation strategies from exercise to sun exposure was only the beginning. Soon Roosevelt found new enterprises into which his frustrated energies could be channelled, like founding a rehabilitation centre, immersing himself in local history and reorganising his

⁷³ *Amateur Gardening Magazine* Quoted in Lisa Taylor, *A Taste for Gardening: Classed and Gendered Practices* (London: Routledge, 2016), 22, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315565293>.

⁷⁴ Franklin Ginn, “Dig for Victory! New Histories of Wartime Gardening in Britain,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 38, no. 3 (July 2012): 301, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2012.02.001>.

⁷⁵ Rico, *Nature’s Noblemen*, 7.

⁷⁶ Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, 342.

⁷⁷ Mangan and Walvin, *Manliness and Morality*, 1.

estate's farming and forestry regime. In the grounds at Hyde Park, Roosevelt was able to learn and practice managerial strategies which brought the natural world under his control and reinvigorated his masculinity.

Exercise therapy

The first tenet of FDR's recovery programme was rigorous physical exercise. Sport and athleticism had emerged in the American consciousness as a restorative activity for everything from nervous dispositions and physical ailments to flagging masculinity.⁷⁸ The more strenuous, the better. Thus it seemed imperative to everyone, not least Roosevelt himself, that his muscles should be stretched and awoken from their slumber. 'The muscles of the legs, as a result of the infantile paralysis attack, were practically put out of commission,' wrote FDR to another polio patient in 1923, 'the problem is the building up of them and this is being accomplished by regular forms of exercises.'⁷⁹ Unlike at his New York City townhouse, at the Hyde Park estate FDR had the freedom and facilities to establish an extensive exercise program in private.

This regime began in the morning whilst he was still in bed, with a set of trapeze rings rigged to the headboard from which FDR could pull himself up and down.⁸⁰ After breakfast, FDR would focus his attention on the double set of parallel bars. Here he could put support his weight on his arms and lurch himself, one hand in front of the other, in a walking motion.⁸¹ As his arm muscles grew stronger, FDR began using a spinal brace to keep his legs rigid. With this in place, he soon found he could heave himself along the parallel bars and develop the appearance of a strange-gaited walk. Roosevelt approached his exercises with stubborn willpower, even customizing a children's swing set to function as a proxy rowing machine, so that he could push the swings backwards and forwards with his legs.⁸² Oftentimes the morning exercises were followed by an episode of 'horse-back riding' as he

⁷⁸ See Kimmel, *Manhood in America*. Especially "Chapter Four: Playing For Keeps".

⁷⁹ FDR to C. N. Haskell, February 14, 1923, Infantile Paralysis: FDR's Attack and Treatment, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

⁸⁰ George Palmer interview with Louis Depew, January 5, 1948, Box 1, Small Collections: Oral Histories, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

⁸¹ George Palmer interview with Louis Depew, January 5, 1948, Box 1, Small Collections: Oral Histories, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

⁸² FDR to Abram I. Elkus, August 20, 1923, Infantile Paralysis: FDR's Attack and Treatment, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

was gingerly led around on his daughter's pony.⁸³ Roosevelt's aim was to be able to walk the length of the driveway – a quarter of a mile – unaided. Though he never achieved this feat, his daily attempts became an enduring image in the folklore surrounding FDR's struggle with polio.⁸⁴

Summer afternoons at Hyde Park were filled with Roosevelt's favourite form of exercise: swimming. In 1922 Roosevelt began visiting Vincent Astor's estate twice weekly to spend a few hours in their pool.⁸⁵ So enamoured was he with water exercises that in February 1923 Franklin took six weeks holidaying on a houseboat, 'Larocco', off the coast of Florida so that he could enjoy warmer weather and salt water swimming.⁸⁶ In April he reported the trip to have been 'highly successful,' full of fishing and frolicking, the result of which was 'vast improvement in the leg muscles.'⁸⁷ Submerged in warm water, Franklin experienced maximum mobility and sensation in his legs, giving him a sense of progress. On one occasion at the Astor pool, the Roosevelt butler, Louis Depew, recalls FDR revealing his philosophy: 'The water put me where I am and the water has to bring me back.'⁸⁸ With this mentality, FDR continued to swim frequently throughout the 1920s.

Franklin Roosevelt's personal quest for liberation from his restrictive condition would be lifelong. Significantly, the opening years of this journey were spent at Hyde Park in a period marked by hope and disappointment. Rexford Tugwell has described this period in these terms:

'Recovery from the effects of polio was not a mere matter of passive convalescence; it had to be worked at daily; and it involved terrible intervals of despair. Again and again he had to face the fact that some exercise, some regimen, some place, was not yielding the beneficial effects he had been led to expect. As he gradually became something of an expert himself, the realization grew on him that his own paralysis was never likely to be

⁸³ FDR to Arthur M. Van Renusselaer, December 21, 1923, *Infantile Paralysis: FDR's Attack and Treatment*, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

⁸⁴ Amy Berish, "FDR and Polio" *FDR Library and Museum*, Accessed October 8, 2019 from <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/polio>

⁸⁵ In the following years, Eleanor Roosevelt's new Dutch cottage at Val Kill was built, providing an alternative swimming hole closer by. George Palmer interview with Louis Depew, January 5, 1948, Box 1, Small Collections: Oral Histories, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

⁸⁶ FDR to C. N. Haskell, February 14, 1923, *Infantile Paralysis: FDR's Attack and Treatment*, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

⁸⁷ FDR to R. W. Lovett, April 12, 1923, *Infantile Paralysis: FDR's Attack and Treatment*, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

⁸⁸ George Palmer interview with Louis Depew, January 5, 1948, Box 1, Small Collections: Oral Histories, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

more than partially overcome. He repeatedly reduced his hopes; but the hopes remaining were always just as precious as those he had earlier held for more complete recovery.’⁸⁹

Sun therapy

It was not only at Hyde Park that Franklin Roosevelt worked on achieving physical restoration. During the 1920s FDR became enamoured with a separate, and remarkably different, environment: the Southern town of Warm Springs, Georgia. From his first visit in October 1924, Roosevelt was hooked on ‘sunlight therapy’ combined with the feeling of bathing in the naturally occurring thermal hot water springs.

The root of this new passion was medical. Although FDR had been diligent in his daily leg exercises at Hyde Park, he soon became intrigued by supplementary balms of healing – especially those which he believed could come from Mother Nature herself. By October 1923, Roosevelt had placed his hopes in the power of sunlight to regenerate his lost nerve cells. He wrote:

‘My treatment, up to date, has consisted of exercise, massage and swimming. I have, however, found for myself one interesting fact which I believe to be a real discovery, and that is that my muscles have improved with greater rapidity when I could give them sunlight. Last winter I went to Florida and was much in the open air under the direct rays of the sun with very few clothes on, and there is no doubt that the leg muscles responded more quickly at that time than when I am at home when I am, of necessity, more in the house. This summer also I have made a real effort to sit in the sun for several hours every day, and the improvement has undoubtedly been much more rapid... My theory is that by exercise we can only develop the muscles up to a certain point.’⁹⁰

These ideas originated with Doctors Starr and Barrett, a pair of osteopaths from Kansas City known for their light therapy theories. In the summer of 1923 they examined Roosevelt, commending him on his exercises but insisting that his nerve cells also required sunlight to regenerate.⁹¹ With the promise of a hastened and fuller recovery, FDR embraced their recommendation to undergo artificial light therapy. Soon a lamp was sent to Hyde Park and FDR began daily sun baths in his room for an hour each morning.⁹² This arrangement was

⁸⁹ R. G. Tugwell, “The Fallow Years of Franklin D. Roosevelt,” *Ethics* 66, no. 2 (1956): 99.

⁹⁰ FDR to Paul D. Hasbrouck, October 17, 1923, *Infantile Paralysis: FDR’s Attack and Treatment*, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

⁹¹ FDR to K. Lake, July 23, 1923, *Infantile Paralysis: FDR’s Attack and Treatment*, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

⁹² W. J. Weber to FDR, October 26, 1923, *Infantile Paralysis: FDR’s Attack and Treatment*, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

undertaken behind the back of Dr Lovett, his supervising doctor, who did not approve of these methods. Years of exercise, self-examination and research into various treatments had caused FDR to begin to feel that he was more of an expert on his disease than several of his physicians.

Roosevelt had already taken every opportunity to indulge his exposure to light and water – from sunbathing on the porch at Hyde Park, to taking long trips on his houseboat, *Larocco*, in southern waters. When he learned of a man, Lewis Josephs, overcoming paralysis by bathing in hot water springs, he soon followed suit, traveling to Warm Springs, Georgia in October 1924 to investigate the claims of healing being made by the owner of the resort, George Foster Peabody.⁹³ FDR was encouraged to try their facilities himself by swimming three times a day and bathing in the abundant Southern sunshine. After experiencing the buoyant, mineral-rich warm water he declared that he could move his right leg for the first time in three years.⁹⁴ This encouraging sign reinvigorated his hopes that recovery would be possible. The day after his arrival at the resort, FDR eagerly told a journalist that the only thing required to heal from his polio was ‘to swim as much as possible, and bask in the sunlight.’⁹⁵ Warm Springs, Georgia, seemed to hold the key to this recovery.

Roosevelt’s public endorsement of Warm Springs enhanced the popularity of the resort. After his interview with the *Atlanta Journal*, many other polio survivors arrived in Warm Springs to seek the curative power of its waters.⁹⁶ The burgeoning interest quickly exposed the dilapidated and run-down nature of the establishment. The existing accommodation was a late nineteenth century hotel, the Meriwether Inn, in need of extensive refurbishment.⁹⁷ In 1925 Roosevelt began planning to build his own cottage at the site so that he could stay comfortably for extended periods. Then in 1926 FDR decided to buy the Warm Springs resort outright.⁹⁸ Eleanor Roosevelt later described this as the biggest financial risk

⁹³ Verville and Ditunno, “Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Polio, and the Warm Springs Experiment.”

⁹⁴ “Warm Springs Historic District,” *National Park Service Website*, Accessed October 8, 2019 from https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/presidents/roosevelts_little_white_house.html

⁹⁵ William B. Rhoads, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Architecture of Warm Springs,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (1983): 73.

⁹⁶ Naomi Rogers, “Polio Chronicles: Warm Springs and Disability Politics in the 1930s,” *Asclepio; Archivo Iberoamericano de Historia de La Medicina y Antropología Medica* 61, no. 1 (2009): 147, <https://doi.org/10.3989/asclepio.2009.v61.i1.275>.

⁹⁷ Rhoads, “Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Architecture of Warm Springs,” 72.

⁹⁸ David B Woolner and Henry L Henderson, *FDR and the Environment* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 31–32, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=555376>.

that he ever took, investing ‘the greater part of his own fortunes’ in the flailing resort.⁹⁹ Franklin Roosevelt hoped to transform the old village into ‘a combination of a health resort and country club’ that could bring the gift of healing to a generation of Polio sufferers.¹⁰⁰ In 1928, it became the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation, a not-for-profit rehabilitation resort.¹⁰¹

FDR continued to visit his ‘Little White House’ to relax and check on developments.¹⁰² When he was onsite he often worked with patients alongside the physician, becoming ‘a doctor and physio-therapist, all rolled into one.’¹⁰³ FDR thrived on the paternal role he played at Warm Springs, becoming known affectionately as ‘Doctor Roosevelt’ by those in the vicinity.¹⁰⁴ He also consulted with the architects whilst the new renovations were underway, ‘giving free advice on the moving of buildings, the building of roads, setting out of trees and remodelling the hotel.’¹⁰⁵ According to Frank Freidel, ‘the Warm Spring enterprises brought Roosevelt an outlet for his organizing and promotional skills and sent his morale soaring.’¹⁰⁶ There he enjoyed the sun and water, and experienced renewed authority and respect. It is no surprise that FDR returned to Warm Springs regularly throughout the rest of his life.

Necessary distractions

History tells us that Franklin Roosevelt was never able to unlock the secrets of physical recovery – not from special exercises, from mineral-rich water or from sunlight exposure. However, his injuries were not only physical. His years in recuperation at Hyde Park needed also to be spent addressing the other wounds his illness had inflicted - on his pride, career and confidence.

⁹⁹ Frank Freidel interview with Eleanor Roosevelt, Jul 13, 1954, Small Collections: Oral Histories, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹⁰⁰ Rogers, “Polio Chronicles,” 148.

¹⁰¹ Rogers, 148.

¹⁰² By 1925, writes Kenneth Davis, he had established a ‘Warm Springs Spirit’ which ‘spun out of his own buoyant, infectious optimism.’ Kenneth S Davis, *FDR: The Beckoning of Destiny, 1882-1928 : A History* (New York: Putnam, 1972), 789.

¹⁰³ PPA, 1934: 487-488, FDR to Livingston David, April 25, 1925

¹⁰⁴ Davis, *FDR*, 789.

¹⁰⁵ PPA, 1934: 487-488, FDR to Livingston David, April 25, 1925

¹⁰⁶ This was a lifelong passion – in fact, it was during a brief stay at Warm Springs in April 1945 that Franklin Roosevelt suffered the fatal stroke that took his life. Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 47.

When he was not preoccupied with exercises, the polio diagnosis left Franklin Roosevelt with a surplus of free time. The mantle of distracting Roosevelt from the misery of his condition was taken on by a multitude of friends, associates and service staff, as Chapter Three will explore. Roosevelt had access to a large community of friends and allies from his home-base at Hyde Park. Visitors to Springwood were abundant and continuous. It was not unusual for some neighbours to accompany him while he chatted away and attended to his daily exercises. It may have been these conversations that kept FDR's political savvy alive in a time when he was far away from mainstream politics. He took an interest in the local politics of the Hudson River Valley, rallying to get a prominent upstate lawyer nominated for the Court of Appeals in 1923.¹⁰⁷ He also kept abreast of state and national developments, sharing his opinions in his correspondence. In these years, argued his staff member, Rexford Tugwell, he continued to learn about public affairs albeit through observation rather than participation.¹⁰⁸

As Roosevelt adjusted to his limited physical abilities, he also had to adapt to the new social dynamics of his paralysis. Well-wishers were constantly assuring him of a rapid recovery. 'I have so often thought of you,' wrote Charles Haskell, previous governor of Oklahoma, in 1923 'and hoped for your complete recovery, which I am sure, with your general vigorous constitution, is only a question of time.'¹⁰⁹ Franklin responded to these sympathisers with cheer and good humour, oftentimes joking about his injuries. 'How many cocktails does one need after the blood-letting to restore the circulation?' he wrote in regards to a request for blood donation.¹¹⁰

Geoffrey Ward, FDR biographer and fellow polio sufferer, has insightfully speculated about the effect of Roosevelt's handicap on his social persona:

His old tendency to fill every second of silence with talk had in fact grown more marked since his crippling, in part because uninterrupted talk offered him an outlet for energy otherwise pent up, but also because of the need, common among handicapped persons but exaggerated in Roosevelt's case, to entertain as well as converse. Unable to move on his own, dependent on others for the performance of the simplest tasks, and uneasy always that his listeners might remain with him only out of kindness, it became important for him

¹⁰⁷ FDR to Abram I. Elkus, August 20, 1923, *Infantile Paralysis: FDR's Attack and Treatment*, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹⁰⁸ Tugwell, "The Fallow Years of Franklin D. Roosevelt," 99.

¹⁰⁹ C.N. Haskell to FDR, February 10, 1923, *Infantile Paralysis: FDR's Attack and Treatment*, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹¹⁰ FDR to George "Dan" Draper, July 27, 1925, *Infantile Paralysis: FDR's Attack and Treatment*, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

to be able simultaneously to talk people into doing his bidding and to relieve himself of the burden of asking for their help by putting on a nonstop show.¹¹¹

Though never wanting for company, Roosevelt's condition required him to sacrifice a number of his personal passions. On the sprawling and magnificent estate which FDR had freely roamed since a child, his newfound lack of mobility was a major blow. Stripped of physical mobility, FDR could no longer indulge in active pursuits like golf and horse-riding, and thus was forced to return to more stationary or solitary activities such as stamp collecting and model shipbuilding. By 1923 he was able to sit upon a small horse, but it was necessary that he be led around by a helper. Roosevelt joked about his need for a 'horse which is constitutionally unable to trot, and which is also guaranteed against any sideways motions' in order to return to his passion for riding.¹¹² Mercy came in the form of a special bespoke car transformed with hand-controls replacing the foot pedals, enabling FDR to drive through grass and woodland all on his own. The first such car he owned was a Chrysler but he soon adopted the iconic blue Ford which would become his best-known.¹¹³ This was not just as a step towards mobility, but a leap forwards in independence, as Roosevelt could now travel about unaided and unaccompanied.

The final distraction that Roosevelt discovered during these years was a renewed interest in local and national history. FDR had always been fascinated by naval history, extending back even before he had (fittingly) become Assistant Secretary for the Navy. During the 1920s he spent much time collecting niche Navy memorabilia such as prints, pictures and manuscripts. His pursuit of memorabilia was so comprehensive that in 1925 the *Boston News* reported him to be the owner of 'the finest collection [of naval pictures] in this country.'¹¹⁴ As Chapter One explored, FDR was also drawn to the local history of Dutchess County, and specifically the town of Hyde Park.¹¹⁵ In mid-1923, in conjunction with the work of the Dutchess County Historical Society, he decided to undertake a thorough exploration of the history of the town. By 1924 he was gathering local maps and

¹¹¹ Ward, *A First Class Temperament*, 749.

¹¹² FDR to Arthur M. Van Rensselaer, December 21, 1923, *Infantile Paralysis: FDR's Attack and Treatment*, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹¹³ Louis Depew could not recall the dates at which these cars were purchased. George Palmer interview with Louis Depew, January 5, 1948, Box 1, *Small Collections: Oral Histories*, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹¹⁴ *Boston News*, June 6, 1927, *Infantile Paralysis: FDR's Attack and Treatment*, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹¹⁵ Anecdotes regularly report on FDR's enjoyment in speaking to his neighbours and learning the stories of past generations in Hyde Park.

photographing them whilst making enquiries with the records office in Albany.¹¹⁶ In July 1926 he was appointed Local Historian of Hyde Park. FDR had the intention of compiling a historical publication that set out the history of the area in details.¹¹⁷ These endeavours were interrupted by FDR's run for governorship in 1928. Nevertheless, during his period of polio-induced isolation, Roosevelt turned to reading, researching and writing history to fill many empty hours.¹¹⁸

Land management

The most significant intellectual development prompted by FDR's time in 'recovery' was his fascination with farming and forestry. He had always shown interest in these subjects, but his passion for the grounds and Hyde Park multiplied in the years following his diagnosis. The skills he learned and practiced in the grounds at Hyde Park were not only personally satisfying but later proved instrumental in shaping his presidential response to the Dust Bowl and other matters having to do with successful land management and conservation.

Franklin Roosevelt had grown up on an estate with a rich farming history. Land in the Hudson Valley had been cultivated for more than two centuries and farms neighbouring Springwood had once produced award-winning corn. However, by 1910 the land had been overworked, the topsoil exhausted and run off in the Hudson River, and crop yield cut in half from what it had been in 1840.¹¹⁹ 'I can lime it, cross-plough it, manure it and treat it with every art known to science,' Roosevelt lamented, 'but it has just plain run out.'¹²⁰ Curious about how to revive the land's fertility, FDR conducted a brief experiment on the apple orchard in 1922. After researching the commercial prospects of different varieties, he set out a program of alternating apple types in the Springwood orchard and planting peach trees as fillers to increase the nutrients in the soil. Instructions on how to enact this strategy were duly conveyed to the relevant tenants.¹²¹ Thus Roosevelt began to manage a series of land-nutrient

¹¹⁶ FDR to A. C. Flick, January 24, 1924, Correspondence about Local History, Box 21, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹¹⁷ A. C. Flick to FDR, July 17, 1926, Correspondence about Local History, Box 21, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹¹⁸ For analysis of this 'antiquarian interest' on the development of FDR's maturity see Tugwell, "The Fallow Years of Franklin D. Roosevelt."

¹¹⁹ Woolner and Henderson, *FDR and the Environment*, 25.

¹²⁰ Franklin Roosevelt to Hendrik William Van Loon, February 2, 1937, President's Personal File, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹²¹ FDR to Mary Jean Sherwood, November 28, 1922, Hyde Park Matters Miscellaneous, Box 21, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

experiments, overseeing the work of local farmers and tenants on his property. Roosevelt was able to utilise their skills and borrow from their experiences in order to develop his own robust working knowledge of agricultural practice.

FDR became absorbed in reforestation, a land strategy that also promised to bring nutrients back into the soil at Hyde Park. His cousin Theodore Roosevelt, when president, had made himself the country's leading conservationist – knowledge of which could not have escaped the aspiring younger Roosevelt. In 1911, Franklin became chairman of the Forest, Fish and Game Committee in the New York Senate, and later chairman of the State Senate Conservation Committee.¹²² FDR was intrigued by what he learnt, and began to track and log the progress of trees at Hyde Park. However, his flirtation with forests faded as Franklin's career blossomed and as War broke out. Only after his bout with polio did FDR return his attentions to Hyde Park and to the problem of unsustainable planting. It was during these years that FDR set out his first woodland plantations.¹²³ By the end of his life, Roosevelt had planted over half a million trees and fostered eighty-one new plantations on the land around Springwood.¹²⁴ During the 1920s he began to seek out likeminded tree planters and eagerly encouraged planting practices amongst his neighbours. In 1922 he became one of the founders of the Adirondack Mountain Club, later responsible for protecting valuable New York State forests.¹²⁵ In 1925 he convened a Hyde Park Nature study group; it failed, due to a shortage of local interest, but Roosevelt's interest in reforestation continued to expand.¹²⁶

From the early years FDR had taken an avid interest in the commercial opportunities to be found in tree-planting. Though he recognised the ecological benefits of forestation, he was eager to see the process was self-sustaining, and perhaps even profitable. He was very much a conservationist in the Gifford Pinchot mould, believing that forests should be scientifically managed and enlisted as a source of self-sustaining lumber practices. Roosevelt insisted on utilising his own trees for electricity poles across the estate to save on private contractor costs. Later, when he encouraged Eleanor Roosevelt, Nancy Cook and Marion

¹²² Charles W. Snell, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and Forestry at Hyde Park, New York, 1911 to 1932," May 20, 1955, FDR & Forestry at Hyde Park 1911-1932, Box 2, Roosevelt Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archive.

¹²³ John F. Sears, *FDR and the Land*, 17.

¹²⁴ John F. Sears, 18.

¹²⁵ Charles W. Snell, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and Forestry at Hyde Park, New York, 1911 to 1932," May 20, 1955, FDR & Forestry at Hyde Park 1911-1932, Box 2, Roosevelt Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archive.

¹²⁶ FDR to George "Dan" Draper, July 27, 1925, Infantile Paralysis: FDR's Attack and Treatment, Box 23, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

Dickerman to build their Val Kill Cottage, he required them to buy floorboarding from his own white oak stock.¹²⁷ Roosevelt was acutely aware of the monetary value of his trees, easily reeling off their size and worth to Nancy Cook, and making recommendations of what the women needed to purchase.¹²⁸ He saw nothing wrong with cutting down trees as long as they were regularly replaced and the new young trees cultivated into maturity. Thus, he contacted various Granges in Hyde Park to ask them to collaborate with him in ordering trees from the Conservation Commission. FDR offered to combine his order with theirs to save their shipping costs. In his letters to the Granges he advocated for the profits to be made by robust forestation practices. 'I am firmly convinced that it pays to plant these trees,' he declared, 'almost every farm has some section of rocky or otherwise unsuitable land for crops which could be planted to trees which in time would have real commercial value.'¹²⁹ In all of these efforts, Roosevelt tried to orchestrate the commitment of Hyde Park landowners to sustainable forestation.

A crucial moment in FDR's environmental career was his partnership with Nelson Brown from the New York State College of Forestry in Syracuse. Brown began consulting for FDR from 1929 until his death, oftentimes visiting Hyde Park for extended drives with Roosevelt through the surrounding woodland. Even after FDR returned politics, the fire in his belly for reforestation had not been quenched. Roosevelt's increasing influence allowed him to spread his passion for reforestation with evangelistic fervour. Within a decade, FDR's hobby interest in planting had resulted in domestic New Deal programs like the Civilian Conservation Corps which engaged tens of thousands of unmarried and unemployed young men in the tasks of erosion control, forestation and wildlife conservation. His household convictions were now being implemented on a nation-wide scale. His passion for forestation, fostered from the confines of a wheelchair at Hyde Park and then developed from the chair of the Oval Office, led some, like Nelson Brown, to label him as the individual who has contributed most to the development of forestry in American history.¹³⁰ Though he may not

¹²⁷ FDR to William Plog, September 19, 1925, Financial Matters: Val Kill: 1927-1935, Box 60, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹²⁸ FDR to Nancy Cook, September 20, 1925, Financial Matters: Val Kill: 1927-1935, Box 60, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹²⁹ FDR to William Overfield, December 2, 1923, Hyde Park Matters Miscellaneous, Box 21, Family, Business & Personal, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹³⁰ Nelson C. Brown, 1942-1945, Small Collections: Reminiscences by Contemporaries, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

have outdone Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot's efforts, he certainly continued and amplified his namesake's commitment to this national project.

Roosevelt's investment in farming and forestation at Hyde Park was a reflection of the 'New Ecology' discourse. Donald Worster has described this as a movement in the early decades of the twentieth century which 'saw nature through a different set of spectacles: the forms, processes and values of the modern economic order as shaped by technology.'¹³¹ FDR was a believer in the capacity of humanity, aided by modern equipment, to control the environment and funnel it into economic gain. This managerial ethos (originally a development of modern economics which was now being applied to the natural world) allowed men to reclaim a historic masculine setting – the wilderness – with modern manly ideals like expertise and scientific rigour.

However there was at least one deeply rooted historical precedent to Roosevelt's approach to land management. Thomas Jefferson was the esteemed historical figure whom Franklin Roosevelt sought to emulate, not only in his capacity as president but also as a farmer, agriculturalist, architect and landscaper. FDR was well aware of Jefferson's credentials, describing him as a 'creative genius'.¹³² FDR was even part of the movement to help preserve Monticello – Jefferson's home and gardens – for future generations. Thomas Jefferson's landscaping during the late eighteenth century echoed the naturalism of Britain, but his agricultural passions caused him to favour production and self-sufficiency over style or flair. 'Useful was one of Jefferson's most used words,' write Frederick Nichols and Ralph Griswold, 'never a theorist detached from reality, Jefferson kept his feet firmly on the ground.'¹³³ Likewise, pragmatic management dominated FDR's approach to his grounds, assessing Hyde Park's value according to the resources it could provide.

FDR's conceptualisation of the land at Hyde Park was always imbued with human history that accompanied it. Like Jefferson, he was acutely aware of the economic and social network that provided Hyde Park's lifeblood. As he developed the farms and forests, he never let aesthetic concerns come before business or commercial potential. He recognised that his Springwood estate could not be viewed in isolation, but was interconnected with the surrounding farmers, shopkeepers and townspeople. FDR's admiration for Hyde Park's rural

¹³¹ Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 293.

¹³² FDR speech at Monticello, July 4, 1936. Audio available from <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/utterancesfdr>.

¹³³ Frederick Doveton Nichols and Ralph E. Griswold, *Thomas Jefferson, Landscape Architect* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1981), 24.

legacy echoed Jefferson's anti-urban belief in the need 'to preserve a pattern of civilization which was essentially agricultural.'¹³⁴

FDR deepened and diversified his interests and activities when he had to pause his involvement in public life. With rigour he applied his mind to new projects and task. At Hyde Park he had a community of supportive family and loyal friends, a bank of local farming and forestry knowledge, and a peaceful environment in which to explore and manage nature. Franklin Roosevelt's connection to Hyde Park was strengthened during these years as he sought not only to understand the history of the place better, but to improve the essential condition of the land and the grounds themselves. In a period of physical debilitation, Hyde Park proved most fertile for Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Churchill's healing

During his 'Wilderness Years' Churchill found himself drawn increasingly to the grounds and gardens at Chartwell. When he was not writing books, dictating speeches or crafting political articles, Churchill found both joyous scenes of contemplation and a motivating source of inspiration in what lay beyond the windows of his home. Whilst he enjoyed partaking in the masculine assertion of physical labour to remodel the landscape, his ultimate solace was in painting what he saw, a much more Victorian form of manly leisure.

Seasonal optimism

In the years when the yield of Churchill's political plantings were meagre, the garden production at Chartwell was a hopeful sign of abundance. Fruit and veg, farm animals, flowering plants and garden features began to accumulate delightfully year after year. During the late 1920s, Winston wrote letters to Clementine as she travelled, cheerfully reporting on the growing animal population at Chartwell. First it was the pigs; one collection of sows produced large litters in October of 1927. Then it was forty-eight new chickens in April 1928, and a flock of lambs that same spring. Churchill had also purchased five new cows, 'as big as elephants, and one immediately had a beautiful white calf.'¹³⁵ His favourite animal appears to have been the swans, of which he had white and black varieties patrolling his man-made lake. In 1928 Churchill described them caring for their nine unhatched eggs: 'they not only sit on

¹³⁴ August C. Miller, "Jefferson as an Agriculturist," *Agricultural History* 16, no. 2 (1942): 66.

¹³⁵ WSC to CSC, August 7, 1928, 2/21:15-16, CSCT, Churchill Archives.

these alternately but together, side by side. I never knew that they did this.’¹³⁶ In his letters, Winston Churchill was always bursting with anecdotes about his motley animal crew, delighting in describing the ‘incidents’ in his ‘zoo’.¹³⁷ Adventures included the horse who got second prize at the local Show, the sow who became agitated by the sound of a pick-axe and killed over half of her new litter of piglets, the sheep who died birthing a lamb and the goose who, after an encounter with a local dog, ended up with a broken leg.

Churchill evidently found his animals’ behaviour charming. Tending to the livestock at Chartwell was a good distraction from his failing political career. If he found his animals entertaining, he also regarded them unsentimentally, as sources of food and profit. If ‘a sheep had to be killed for having a dead lamb which could not be delivered,’ he wrote, ‘we are going to eat her, in order to mitigate our loss.’¹³⁸ Likewise, the chicken stock at Chartwell was a calculated investment, as the live fowls he purchased in the autumn were fattened for spring feasts. The other chickens were put on an intense egg-producing regiment. ‘This [method of buying live fowls] is cheaper and far less trouble than using the incubator,’ he insisted.¹³⁹

Winston was also fascinated by the ebb and flow of the seasons and its effect on the various flowering plants in his garden. ‘The Dahlias and Chrysanthemums make a fine show,’ he declared in October 1927. ‘For more than three months they have been a solid mass of bloom.’¹⁴⁰ His letters from the spring of 1928 are peppered with references to the bulbs and blooms. ‘The daffodils are lovely and the tulips are pushing forward,’ he wrote in one letter, ‘the pink and crimson rhodies [Rhododendrons] in the water garden are at their best,’ in another.¹⁴¹ He spoke of enjoying many aspects of the grounds, from the ‘beautifully rolled and smooth and mown’ lawn to the apple orchard and the kitchen garden

In a period plagued by personal political failure and frustration, he gloried in the abundant successes of his gardening and husbanding. Winston’s correspondence about the state of Chartwell’s flora and fauna in these years is full of life and poetic colour. Churchill liked to nickname his favourite animals and characterised their antics affectionately. His

¹³⁶ WSC to CSC, April 15, 1928, 2/21:9-11, CSCT, Churchill Archives.

¹³⁷ WSC to CSC, August 7, 1928, 2/21:15-16, CSCT, Churchill Archives.

¹³⁸ WSC to CSC, April 5, 1928, 2/21:2-6, CSCT, Churchill Archives.

¹³⁹ WSC to CSC, September 26, 1927, 1/20, CSCT, Churchill Archives.

¹⁴⁰ WSC to CSC, End of October, 1927, 1/20:33-34, CSCT, Churchill Archives.

¹⁴¹ WSC to CSC, April 5, 1928, 2/21:2-6, CSCT, Churchill Archives and April 15, 1928, 2/21:9-11, CSCT, Churchill Archives.

letters painted rich images of the vibrant scenes he observed, such as new-born lambs ‘couched in front of my windows among the daffodils.’¹⁴² He was particularly pleased when he could see growth and multiplication, whether in flower beds or geese eggs.

The landscape in action

The gardens at Chartwell inspired more than just optimism; a quest for improving the landscape stirred Churchill to action. With the arrival of new head gardener Albert Edwin Hill (and two under-gardeners Bill Knight and Victor Trowbridge) in 1927 came a new and ambitious era at Chartwell. Merely overseeing the work was never enough; Churchill was eager to get physically involved in the enterprise. Over the next twelve years he would undertake a variety of tasks in the garden, from wading through his leaking swimming pool to helping construct the garden cottages. For Churchill, physical exertion in his garden was a source of great pride.

Ever since he purchased the home, Churchill had been preoccupied with altering and adding to the garden’s water features.¹⁴³ During the 1920s he had begun fixing up the existing upper and lower lakes which suffered from weeds, bogging and leaking. With a variety of creative solutions (including draining the upper lake and re-lining it with bitumen), Winston was pleased to report to Clementine in late 1927 that ‘the lake is practically finished and is rising a few inches every week carrying the leaks and seepage in its stride.’¹⁴⁴ By the 1930s, Winston’s landscaping plans had grown in confidence and grandiosity. In 1931 a pond-like swimming pool was built above the upper lake. Then a second, more extravagant, pool was added lower down the valley.¹⁴⁵ Churchill was interested in water works of every kind – lakes, pools, ponds and reservoirs.

The archives contain an insightful set of letters between Winston and Clementine from the Spring of 1935. Labelled as the ‘Chartwell Bulletins,’ these letters contain updates from Winston on his landscaping projects at Chartwell.¹⁴⁶ The projects Winston undertook over this three-month period were wide-ranging and large in scale. Winston was particularly

¹⁴² WSC to CSC, April 15, 1928, 2/21:9-11, CSCT, Churchill Archives.

¹⁴³ Buczacki, *Churchill and Chartwell*, 164.

¹⁴⁴ WSC to CSC, End of October, 1927, 1/20:33-34, CSCT, Churchill Archives.

¹⁴⁵ Buczacki, *Churchill and Chartwell*, 184.

¹⁴⁶ He was writing for the benefit of Clementine who was travelling on an extended tropical Yachting holiday.

energised about, ‘one of those great mechanical diggers’ which, he reported in January 1935 with boyish enthusiasm, would be coming to Chartwell.¹⁴⁷

The visit of an industrial-scale digger was a cause of much excitement. But the hiring of machinery did not necessarily mean the task would be ‘hands-off’. In fact, the digger required the extra installation of a small railway across the garden so that skips of earth and rubble could be carried away from the worksite. Churchill’s letters ooze with excitement and pleasure at the prospect of such a massive enterprise.¹⁴⁸ Describing the digger, Churchill wrote animatedly, ‘when he gets to work he is simply marvellous... he lifts nearly a ton in one mouthful and puts it wherever he wishes... he also pushes great heaps of earth sideways or forwards like an elephant with his trunk, and pulls great rocks out of the ground as if they were walnuts.’¹⁴⁹ Churchill’s admiration for the machine’s power, technology and strength is unmistakable. In fact, Churchill measured the machine’s value according to manpower, claiming that it could accomplish in a week what otherwise would have taken forty hired men to achieve.

The first task given to the digger was to create a ‘ha-ha’ – a sunken wall and raised slope lawn – behind which a fox fence could be concealed. With a ha-ha installed, the otherwise conspicuous fence would be invisible for an observer enjoying the valley.¹⁵⁰ After the ‘ha-ha’ had been built, the digger was put to work creating a decorative island in the lower lake. Then it was time for the orchard to be re-turfed, paths remade and some obtrusive sycamore and elder trees cut down. Meanwhile, Churchill was working on building a new cottage on-site as well as refurbishing an older one. Churchill appeared very satisfied by the pace of work, ‘all the work here is progressing steadily,’ he wrote in one letter, ‘great activity is proceeding on the estate,’ in another.¹⁵¹

The Chartwell landscaping project was not without delays and difficulties. In January Winston reported to Clementine that the skips of waste were repeatedly falling off the railway lines.¹⁵² Then in February work on the island was halted completely when the digger broke and ‘got itself into a hole from which the greatest efforts have been necessary to

¹⁴⁷ WSC to CSC, Chartwell Bulletin 1, Jan 1, 1935, 273:1-7, CHAR 1, Churchill Archives.

¹⁴⁸ WSC to CSC, Chartwell Bulletin 1, Jan 1, 1935, 273:1-7, CHAR 1, Churchill Archives.

¹⁴⁹ WSC to CSC, Chartwell Bulletin 2, Jan 18, 1935, 273:8-13, CHAR 1, Churchill Archives.

¹⁵⁰ This style of concealed landscaping has its roots in early eighteenth-century French country gardens, and quickly became popular with aristocratic gardens in Britain.

¹⁵¹ WSC to CSC, Chartwell Bulletin 9, Mar 10, 1935, 273:38-43, CHAR 1, Churchill Archives and WSC to CSC, Chartwell Bulletin 12 (Undated), 273:8-13, CHAR 1, Churchill Archives.

¹⁵² WSC to CSC, Chartwell Bulletin 3, Jan 21, 1935, 273:14-18, CHAR 1, Churchill Archives.

extricate it.’¹⁵³ An ongoing concern was finances, as Churchill’s expenses often seem to exceed his income. Winston had to assure Clementine that his journalistic income was more than covering these costs. ‘We have finished up the year better than we have ever done,’ he wrote in January 1935, ‘and the financial prospects of this year are very much more favourable than anything we have known.’¹⁵⁴

Churchill’s hands-on attitude was most evident in his determination to become a master bricklayer. At some point during the 1920s Churchill first attempted the practice, learning under the tutelage of his own workmen and a bricklayer by the name of Benny Barnes.¹⁵⁵ His earliest work was the wall at the bottom of the Kitchen Garden at Chartwell. Within a decade Churchill had grown in his bricklaying confidence, and in 1935 he purchased 6,000 bricks for a new wall at the top of the property, beside the road.¹⁵⁶ He described his progress proudly to his wife: ‘I have begun to lengthen the brick wall with the balled pillars to Hill’s cottage, and am already a quarter way through the first bay,’ he wrote on the first of January, ‘I think you will like this when you see it.’¹⁵⁷ He wrote again in April, ‘I am half way through the last bay but one,’ he declared, ‘I think you will like it very much when you return.’¹⁵⁸ His physical mark on the property was displayed with great pride. A plaque was even installed on the kitchen garden wall, declaring that the greater part of it had been built with ‘Winston’s own hands’.

Churchill’s greatest handiwork at Chartwell was a small children’s house, known affectionately by the family as ‘Marycot’. Situated beneath the kitchen garden on the eastern end of the grounds, Marycot was a brick cottage scaled down to children’s size, with its own front lawn, windows and furnishing. It even had its own functioning coal stove. Winston began laying the bricks for the Marycot in August 1928, hoping to create a space for Sarah and Mary, his youngest daughters, to play.¹⁵⁹ His achievement became a family treasure, a ‘source of endless delight and occupation for me and my friends,’ reflected Mary Soames

¹⁵³ WSC to CSC, Chartwell Bulletin 6, Feb 21, 1935, 273: 32-38, CHAR 1, Churchill Archives.

¹⁵⁴ WSC to CSC, Chartwell Bulletin 1, Jan 1, 1935, 273:1-7, CHAR 1, Churchill Archives.

¹⁵⁵ Buczacki, *Churchill and Chartwell*, 169.

¹⁵⁶ Buczacki, 172.

¹⁵⁷ WSC to CSC, Chartwell Bulletin 1, Jan 1, 1935, 273:1-7, CHAR 1, Churchill Archives.

¹⁵⁸ WSC to CSC, Chartwell Bulletin 10, Apr 5, 1935, 273:116-122, CHAR 1, Churchill Archives.

¹⁵⁹ WSC to CSC, August 7, 1928, 2/21:15-16, CSCT, Churchill Archives.

seventy-five years later.¹⁶⁰ Winston Churchill's creative designs for his children was also showcased in his building multiple treehouses for them.

Stefan Buczacki has remarked that Churchillian gardening always involved 'seriously rearranging the landscape.'¹⁶¹ Not content with merely the land as it existed, Churchill regularly altered the topography of his gardens. Churchill enjoyed performing his masculinity through building, turfing, and bricklaying at Chartwell. He was determined to implant his will on actual landscapes, inserting ponds and levelling hills, much as he was determined to implant his will on the political landscape. In the years he spent in political exile, his celebrated garden landscaping may have helped to ameliorate his disappointment about having no influence in those years over 'political landscaping'. Winston had an immense will, and he needed to exercise it.

An aesthetic outlet

Aesthetically, Churchill was very much a Victorian. The garden was a vista onto which Churchill hoped to fashion picturesque scenes, many of which he reproduced on canvas. In fact, throughout the 1930s Churchill regularly took time away from his political and gardening work in order to paint in his cottage studio at the bottom of the hill. At times he would invite eminent painters, such as Walter Sickert and John Lavery, to join him.¹⁶² Churchill had taken up oil painting only in midlife, after his fortieth birthday, when his disastrous Gallipoli campaign had led to Churchill's expulsion from government. In this moment, he later wrote, 'the Muse of Painting came to my rescue.'¹⁶³ Prodded by Lavery, Churchill picked up the paintbrush and began a lifelong appetite for artistic expression. He would return to this hobby frequently during times of stress and uncertainty.

Churchill was not private about his newfound passion. In a series of pieces published in the *Strand* magazine in 1920 and 1921, Churchill elaborated on his delight in painting, urging readers to follow suit. Later published as a single essay, *Painting as a Pastime* was Churchill's manifesto for painting as the ideal and unfailing hobby. 'Painting is a friend who makes no undue demands,' wrote Churchill, 'excites to no exhausting pursuits, keeps faithful pace even with feeble steps, and holds her canvas as a screen between us and the envious

¹⁶⁰ Mary Soames, *A Daughter's Tale: The Memoir of Winston Churchill's Youngest Child* (New York: Random House, 2012), 64.

¹⁶¹ Buczacki, *Churchill and Chartwell*, 164.

¹⁶² WSC to CSC, September 26, 1927, 1/20, CSCT, Churchill Archives.

¹⁶³ *Painting as a Pastime* (Winston S. Churchill, 1932), 17, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472580016>.

eyes of Time or the surly advance of Decrepitude.¹⁶⁴ His production increased during the years of his greatest political isolation. Between 1930 and 1939 alone, Winston produced approximately 250 paintings, which would go on to equal half of his life's total.¹⁶⁵ Mary Soames, Winston and Clementine's eldest daughter, recognised the canvas and oil paints as a pillar in the life of her father. She wrote that 'painting opened up to him a complete new world of colour, of light and shade, of proportion and perspective.'¹⁶⁶

Many of Churchill's pieces depict stunning European scenes. His earliest efforts often focused on the Riviera where he would holiday with his family. In the winter of 1922 Winston and Clementine stayed in a Cannes villa for six months during which time Winston 'painted away to his heart's content.'¹⁶⁷ When lengthy holidays of this sort were not an option, Winston painted Chartwell. Sometimes the subject of his work would be the house itself, at other times it was the surrounding hillside. When the weather forced him indoors he painted still-lives of flowers and interiors. In 1925 Churchill painted an impressionistic image of the home covered by snow – 'Winter Sunshine, Chartwell' – which he anonymously submitted to an amateur art competition.¹⁶⁸ He was awarded first prize, which won him admission to the Royal Academy. This was as close to critical acclaim that Churchill's painting ever brought him. Primarily, painting remained for Winston an engrossing hobby and a means of escape. 'Painting is complete as a distraction,' he wrote, 'I know of nothing which, without exhausting the body, more entirely absorbs the mind.'¹⁶⁹

An examination of Winston Churchill's passion for painting brings us closer to understanding how and why he was motivated to continue to develop the house and grounds. In his own view, the hobby of painting increased his capacity for observation. When preparing to paint a scene, he described being 'quite astonished to find how many things there are in the landscape.'¹⁷⁰ With the ability to put his metaphorical painter's hat on, Churchill's view on the world around him increased in intensity and admiration, 'I think this heightened sense of observation of Nature as one of the chief delights that have come to me

¹⁶⁴ *Painting as a Pastime*, 12.

¹⁶⁵ Soames, *Winston Churchill*, 74.

¹⁶⁶ Coombs, Churchill, and Churchill, *Sir Winston Churchill's Life through His Paintings*.

¹⁶⁷ Soames, *Winston Churchill*, 87.

¹⁶⁸ Barry Phipps, "An Impressionistic View: Winter Sunshine, Chartwell," *Finest Hour*, Issue 178, Fall 2018. Accessed October 8, 2019 from <https://winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour/finest-hour-178/winter-sunshine-chartwell/>

¹⁶⁹ *Painting as a Pastime*, 44.

¹⁷⁰ *Painting as a Pastime*, 24–25.

through trying to paint.¹⁷¹ This applied especially to Chartwell, a site he constantly observed with both the critical and admiring eye.

Churchill believed that he was able to turn his heightened powers of observation back on his landscaping projects. Speaking of the plans to build a ha-ha, he wrote that it would allow ‘your eye to plunge, as you desire, across the valley of unbroken green.’¹⁷² He remarked often about the ‘effect’ that could be created with particular garden features. It is easy to imagine him speaking as a painter creating a perfect canvas scene. At Chartwell he began to work to highlight the sweeping undulation of vales and hills. ‘I am now reconciled to the effect of the valley,’ he declared in 1935, ‘and the enclosing arms entirely of green slopes.’¹⁷³ His painting and gardening were profoundly, and symbiotically, connected.

Jonathan Rose has explored Churchill’s creative impulses as ‘author, reader, actor’ and argues he was a ‘late member of the Aesthetic movement.’¹⁷⁴ Aestheticism, the idea of ‘Art for Art’s sake,’ was a powerful movement in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Coming hand-in-hand with the expression of a rising middle-class lifestyle, aestheticism was marked by an obsession with decadent form, quality material, and the necessity of beauty in everyday life. Its outworking was seen in intricate interior design, architecture and furniture which blurred the historic division between ‘fine’ arts (painting, sculpture, etc.) and artisanal craftsmanship.¹⁷⁵

In the late nineteenth century, aestheticism was sometimes associated with the figure of the aesthete, someone who celebrated colours and outrageous costumes.¹⁷⁶ These artists practiced ‘Dandyism,’ a subversive form of masculinity which was responding to the failures (and hypocrisies) of imperialist concepts of manhood and moralism. Dandy men held a theatricality in everyday life and knew the ‘fine art of dressing well and contemplating society with an exacting eye to form.’¹⁷⁷ The decadence of aestheticism and the outspoken dandy lifestyle caused it to become a target for suspicions of sexual depravity, culminating in the 1895 trial and imprisonment of Oscar for gross indecency.

¹⁷¹ *Painting as a Pastime*, 25.

¹⁷² WSC to CSC, Chartwell Bulletin 1, Jan 1, 1935, 273:1-7, CHAR 1, Churchill Archives.

¹⁷³ WSC to CSC, Chartwell Bulletin 6, Feb 21, 1935, 273: 32-38, CHAR 1, Churchill Archives.

¹⁷⁴ Rose, *The Literary Churchill*, 49.

¹⁷⁵ <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/an-introduction-to-the-aesthetic-movement>

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/aestheticism-and-decadence>

¹⁷⁷ Kerry Powell and Peter Raby, *Oscar Wilde in Context* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 221.

Churchill was hardly a ‘dandy’ but his paintings, with their audacity and playfulness partook of this fin-de-siecle aestheticism. Churchill used ‘brilliant colours’ and contrasts, irrespective of the reality of the scene he was depicting.¹⁷⁸ The joy of painting and the delights of colour on canvas were their own aesthetic reward, providing what he believed was a much needed ‘joie de vivre’ (zest for life).¹⁷⁹ Churchill also frequently associated with flamboyant individuals of the Aesthetic movement like Philip Sassoon, whose famous mansion, Port Lympne, was described as a ‘voluptuary of the senses’ and a ‘rapturous medley of strong, exotic colours.’¹⁸⁰

Churchill’s style can also be traced to a longer heritage of British landscape design. The looming figure whom Churchill admired was Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown. Brown was a designer of over 170 aristocratic gardens in the mid-eighteenth century. His nickname arose from his imaginative approach to gardening, able to see in his mind’s eye the ‘capability’ of his client’s landscape. Winston Churchill was born at Blenheim Palace, one of Brown’s most famous landscaping sites. Blenheim is marked by many of Brown’s signature features: a serpentine lake with flowing cascades bringing water in and out, grassy open lawns, man-made hills and reforested woodland.¹⁸¹ Capability Brown was a key part of the eighteenth century zeitgeist in Britain for naturalised gardens. The aim of this style was to avoid regular, artificial and geometric design and instead to create ‘an image of an idealised England which matched the romantic visions of contemporary painters.’¹⁸²

The tradition of naturalistic design is evident in Churchill’s style at Chartwell. Foremost among his ‘Brownian’ features was Churchill’s use of ha-has. The sunken fence, or ha-ha, that Churchill built was used heavily by Brown because it was able to ‘confuse the eye into believing that different pieces of parkland, though managed and stocked quite differently, were one.’¹⁸³ Likewise, Churchill’s preoccupation with lakes at Chartwell may have come from the magnificence of the Blenheim lake beside which he grew up. Lancelot Brown’s biographer, Jane Brown, states that although Lancelot ‘would never have thought of

¹⁷⁸ <https://www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org/the-artist-winston-churchill.html>

¹⁷⁹ *Painting as a Pastime*.

¹⁸⁰ Damian Collins, *Charmed Life: The Phenomenal World of Philip Sassoon* (London: HarperCollins UK, 2016).

¹⁸¹ “Blenheim Palace Garden,” *Gardenvisit.com*, Accessed October 8, 2019 from https://www.gardenvisit.com/gardens/blenheim_palace_garden

¹⁸² Gilly Drummond, “The Genius of Capability Brown,” *The Telegraph*, January 14, 2016. Accessed October 8, 2019 from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/gardens-to-visit/the-genius-of-capability-brown/>

¹⁸³ H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison, eds., “Lancelot Capability Brown,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3635>.

himself as the inventor of the ornamental lake,' he still installed at least 150 of them in the southern counties during a time when 'lowland England was a land without lakes'.¹⁸⁴ This Brownian heritage informed and inspired Churchill, who wished to recreate at Chartwell something of the grand pinnacle of England's country homes, none of which could be considered complete without elaborate water works.

Decadent waterworks and a landscape fashioned to evoke natural beauty rather than reveal the labour of agriculture – these ideas complemented the aesthetic ideal that Churchill strove towards in his garden. Unlike the utilitarian, managerial perspective harboured by Franklin Roosevelt, Churchill preferred to cultivate beauty for its own sake. Both men took great personal pride in the transformations they were able to achieve in the grounds of their home. Churchill's efforts rarely produced material profit or practical gain, in fact, oftentimes his schemes were hugely impractical. These types of projects would have frustrated the results-driven Roosevelt, who was ruthless in his search for efficiency in the grounds of Hyde Park.

The significance of the setbacks

Personal and political strife propelled both Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill back home in the 1920s. At Hyde Park and Chartwell even the most monumental setbacks could be transformed into opportunities for growth and productivity. Far from neglecting these years of personal struggle, we ought to recognise them as central in the development of the character and career of each man.

It is difficult to deduce the exact ways in which polio transformed Franklin Roosevelt's personality, relationships and politics. During his lifetime, public knowledge on the extent of his disability was severely limited.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, the Franklin Roosevelt archives only contain only two photographs of FDR in his wheelchair. However, for Roosevelt's intimate circle the extent and significance of his handicap was strongly felt. Many reported on the way that it seemed to develop and sharpen his character. According to Eleanor, it accentuated his capacity for self-control, decisiveness and peace of mind. He learnt that 'once you make a decision' – such as his course of polio treatment or a major decision in politics –

¹⁸⁴ Jane Brown, *The Omnipotent Magician: Lancelot "Capability" Brown, 1716-1783* (London: Pimlico, 2012), 131–32.

¹⁸⁵ Watson, "Physical and Psychological Health."

‘you must not worry about it.’¹⁸⁶ Franklin’s son, Elliott, believed that polio made him a more intense man, increasing his independence of mind and determination.¹⁸⁷ Rexford Tugwell, who went on to employment in various positions in Roosevelt’s administration, described polio as a factor which deepened FDR’s experience of the world, maturing him and readying him for a life in politics.¹⁸⁸

This chapter has demonstrated that FDR, in the years following his paralysis, found a new mission in managing the grounds of Hyde Park and exploring the land and its history. Without the need to pause and extract himself from public life, it is difficult to imagine whether Roosevelt would have ever found the time to undertake projects like studying the local history or organising neighbourhood nature groups. But perhaps the causation worked both ways, because the project at Hyde Park – investing in its land, its soil and its community – seems to have sustained FDR during his lowest years. Not only did his devotion to conservation increase, a commitment that would later manifest itself in multiple New Deal programmes, but this work also brought him into touch with the challenges that ordinary American farmers and townspeople faced every day. Perhaps FDR’s legendary bond with the common man was first forged through his forestry work at Hyde Park.

Churchill’s time in the wilderness had less political consequence. At the onset of war, he moved swiftly from First Lord of the Admiralty in 1939, to British Prime Minister in May 1940. Still, this time seems to have been crucially restorative. Churchill’s home life was marked by a sense of fun and action. During the 1930s with young children and a menagerie of pets and livestock outside, Winston Churchill may have been at his most creative and expressive. He found inspiration in his artisanal work and in his painting. He wrote frequently about the improvements he could see in his own crafts. In September 1927, he described a meeting with Walter Sickert as giving him ‘a new lease of life as a painter.’¹⁸⁹ In other places he reflected on the method of literary writing: ‘I have been working fairly hard... The beginning is the difficult part of a book. Once one’s thoughts are flowing in that channel, they gather material as they move.’¹⁹⁰ He even used these years at Chartwell to (briefly) experiment with his oratory style. When the India Bill was being debated, Churchill was

¹⁸⁶ Frank Friedel interview with Eleanor Roosevelt, July 13, 1954, Box 1, Small Collections: Oral Histories, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹⁸⁷ Elliott Roosevelt, *As He Saw It* (Bombay: Asia Pub. House, 1947), 635.

¹⁸⁸ Tugwell, “The Fallow Years of Franklin D. Roosevelt,” 111.

¹⁸⁹ WSC to CSC, September 26, 1927, 1/20, CSCT, Churchill Archives.

¹⁹⁰ WSC to CSC, August 7, 1928, 2/21:15-16, CSCT, Churchill Archives.

required to produce a lot of material in quick succession, a demand that rendered his traditional longform address obsolete. ‘At sixty I am altering my method of speaking,’ he declared, ‘I now talk to the House of Commons with garrulous unpremeditated flow. They seem delighted. But what a mystery the art of public speaking is!’¹⁹¹ Very far from stranding him, his ‘wilderness years’ brought newfound stimulation and the freedom to innovate. In these years he acquired and developed many skills that would cause him to become known as one of Britain’s greatest speechmakers, statesmen and writers.

Both Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill recognised the powerful symbolism of physical strength as a marker of their manly capacity for civic leadership. But owing to matters of disability and age, neither was able to fully inhabit this hegemonic masculine ideal. Instead, by laying claim to other assets, like managerial ability in the case of FDR and artisanal work and painting, in the case of Churchill, each recast themselves.

For FDR, the land at Hyde Park represented an opportunity for productivity. He increasingly recognised the estate as a set of resources to be effectively managed and multiplied. Relegated to a wheelchair, FDR refused to stop creating products and profits. From electricity poles to the cultivating and harvesting of Christmas trees, Hyde Park now pulsed with site economic activity; in such a way Roosevelt proved his manly capacity for self-betterment. FDR also seemed to believe that Hyde Park’s natural beauty could rub off on him, its woods, sunshine and water able to accelerate his healing. Ironically, his time at Hyde Park did not cure FDR’s body but it arguably cured both his mind and the long overworked land of his estate.

For Churchill, the land at Chartwell represented the potential for order and beauty - inseparable traits in his own mind. In the chaos of political strife and unpredictable world affairs, Churchill was able to express his need for control by exercising dominion over his own landscapes, sculpting them according to his meticulous urges. Churchill created magnificent vistas which allowed the eye to move across the land (and his paintbrush to move across the canvas) with effortless flow. Meanwhile the iconic ‘Englishness’ of the scenes he created affirmed his civic service at a time when influence in government was denied him.

¹⁹¹ WSC to CSC, Chartwell Bulletin 12 (Undated), 273:8-13, CHAR 1, Churchill Archives.

Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill shared an affinity for the natural environment. They were united in their mission to master the landscape at a time when each experienced a loss of control over their public lives. Likewise, each found immense satisfaction in the experience of self-sufficiency they developed via their ability to manipulate natural resources, from farming woodland to managing livestock and harvesting vegetables. Where FDR's highest aspirations were utilitarian, Churchill's were aesthetic.

Chapter Three:
Populating the Home

Chartwell and Hyde Park were alike in their constant buzz of human presence. Far from the vast, empty and echoing houses that we might imagine, each was filled with the sound of activity. The clatter and hum of errands revealed the unseen work that occurred ‘backstairs,’ behind closed doors. Servants and domestic staff filled their days with cooking, cleaning and preparing the home. Meanwhile, secretaries also worked around the clock, making their presence known in the ubiquitous clack-clack of typing, as vital thoughts were recorded on paper. The laughter of visitors, or hushed tones of confidantes reverberated through the walls from those who had dropped by for dinner or perhaps planned to stay for the weekend. Then there was the occasional doorbell or telephone interlude from the community outside, as local people and events, ceremonies and occasions moored Hyde Park and Chartwell to their geographic surroundings.

Hyde Park and Chartwell roared to life when their owners Roosevelt and Churchill were in residence. Chartwell was ‘alive, restless,’ according to one secretary, ‘When *he* was away it was as still as a mouse. When he was there it was vibrating.’¹ Eleanor Roosevelt declared a similar sentiment about Hyde Park, ‘After [Franklin Roosevelt] leaves, the Big House becomes a silent, empty place.’² Like an island, each home offered the privacy, people-power, space and equipment that were necessary for all kinds of projects to be achieved. Such productivity was separate from the bustle of politics in London or Washington. Here at home, civic labour was closely intermingled with pleasure, intimacy, domesticity and power.

The various individuals who populated Hyde Park and Chartwell were drawn into the powerful spheres of Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt. Because of their charisma, unwavering self-assuredness and demanding personalities, these men operated at the pinnacle of the home, while family members, staff, secretaries, friends and associates orbited around them. Such an atmosphere encouraged uncompromising service. Caught up in the mission to

¹ Gilbert, *Winston Churchill - the Wilderness Years*, 254.

² Eleanor Roosevelt, “My Day, August 14, 1939,” *The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Digital Edition* (2017), accessed March 12, 2020, <https://erpapers.columbian.gwu.edu/my-day> .

thrust Roosevelt and Churchill into the political limelight, many sacrificed their own freedoms along the way.

Privileged lifestyles

The circumstances described in this chapter flowed directly from class inequalities that suffused Roosevelt and Churchill's household setups. These power imbalances were rarely acknowledged, let alone probed, by those who had been raised to accept the inevitability of their station. By birth, both Roosevelt and Churchill were inheritors of upper crust privilege and etiquette. Though, as Chapter One demonstrated, the essence of their supposed superiority varied according to American and British notions of elite status and gentility. Nevertheless, in the early decades of the twentieth century, both men saw the need to move towards, if not embrace, the rising democratic presence of the lower classes. As this chapter explores, the extent to which this was belied in their personal relationship with, and treatment of, inferiors varied.

Despite his privilege, Franklin Roosevelt eventually aligned himself with the lower classes, inviting the notorious charge from his peers that had become a 'traitor to his class.'³ His New Deal in the wake of the Great Depression promised to provide everyday Americans with 'a more equitable opportunity to share in the distribution of national wealth.'⁴ Policies and fiscal measures aimed at energising the national economy led to greater government intervention and caused many to see FDR as a quasi-socialist.⁵ Churchill, too, was often viewed suspiciously by his aristocratic peers, especially when allied with the Liberal party from 1904-1924. His support of Lloyd George's 1909 reforms, described by David Lough as 'a program of radical policies to lay the foundations of Britain's modern welfare state,' was particularly contentious.⁶ 'As much as Winston may have wanted to lead the Liberal charge on privilege, he couldn't escape his Blenheim background,' argues Michael

³ Brands, *Traitor to His Class*.

⁴ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago," July 3, 1932, *The American Presidency Project*, Accessed April 27, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-presidential-nomination-the-democratic-national-convention-chicago-1>.

⁵ John A. Garraty, "The New Deal, National Socialism, and the Great Depression," *The American Historical Review* 78, no. 4 (1973): 907-44, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1858346>.

⁶ Lough, *No More Champagne*, 3.

Shelden, 'He merely gave his enemies on both the right and the left an opportunity to ridicule him for trying.'⁷

Despite their political support for social security and welfare, Roosevelt and Churchill held to many cultural and behavioural norms of the elite of which they were part. Their leisure habits, choicest cuisine, mannerism and language all conveyed their ingrained privilege. Both men grew up with a deep-seated self-assurance. As an only, much-beloved, child, Roosevelt was doted upon by his mother Sara.⁸ He was privately educated by a series of European governesses until the age of fourteen when he entered Groton, an elite northeastern boarding school.⁹ These experiences instilled in young Franklin an unshakeable belief in his own significance. He entered his adulthood as a 'confident, if somewhat self-centred, boy of considerable talent and promise.'¹⁰ Though by comparison, Churchill's childhood was characterised by parental neglect, it was nevertheless privileged. Born at Blenheim Palace, raised by a nanny and sent away to school at the age of seven, Churchill was sheltered from the experiences of most Britons. 'Winston Churchill was born into a caste that held immense political and economic power in the largest empire in world history, and that had not yet become plagued by insecurity and self-doubt,' writes Andrew Roberts, 'Churchill's sublime self-confidence and self-reliance stemmed directly from the assurance he instinctively felt in who he was and where he came from.'¹¹

Throughout his life, Churchill retained his sense of entitlement. Unlike Roosevelt, Churchill never learned (or perhaps, never *tried*) to hide his condescension of those beneath him. Churchill has been widely criticised for his inability to empathise with the lower classes. Apparently, Clementine Churchill once told Lord Moran (Churchill's physician) 'You probably don't realize, Charles, that he knows nothing of the life of ordinary people. He's never been in a bus and only once on the underground.'¹² Churchill's taste was expensive and his habits were profligate. In 1935 alone, Churchill spent four hundred pounds on wine and spirits delivered to Chartwell, including 240 pints of his favourite champagne – the 1921

⁷ Shelden, *Young Titan*, 215.

⁸ For FDR's youth see Ward, *Before the Trumpet*.

⁹ Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Political Life*, 21.

¹⁰ Coker, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 4.

¹¹ Roberts, *Churchill*, 5.

¹² Dr Maurice Ashley, "As I knew Him: Churchill in the Wilderness," *Proceedings of the International Churchill Societies 1988-1989*, 19th August 1989, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://winstonchurchill.org/the-life-of-churchill/wilderness-years/as-i-knew-him-churchill-in-the-wilderness/> .

vintage Pol Roger – personally imported from France.¹³ Churchill had become accustomed to being waited upon by staff who were trained to meet his every whim. ‘Churchill was quite simply spoiled,’ writes Cita Stelzer, ‘He felt no need to abandon the lifelong experience of having his wishes be someone else’s command; to Churchill that was the natural order of things.’¹⁴ Indeed, until the last decade of his life, he had never even dialled a telephone number by himself. As Andrew Roberts has argued, ‘Churchill was emphatically *not* representative of the coming Age of the Common Man.’¹⁵

Roosevelt’s lifestyle and social patterns were much more familiar to ‘ordinary’ Americans than those of his British counterpart. The community friendships that Roosevelt fostered, as this chapter will argue, kept him grounded – or at the very least, gave the general public the impression that he was. Robert Dallek has written about Roosevelt’s schooling in Germany at the age of nine, where he privately loathed the provincial children but nevertheless ‘displayed his proper breeding by treating them with a politeness and warmth that won their approval and made him one of the most popular boys in the class.’¹⁶ In later years, Roosevelt would come to pride himself on his camaraderie with Hyde Park ‘neighbors’ like Moses Smith and William Plog. The fact that these individuals were almost always either employed by Roosevelt or tenants on his land has escaped popular memory, obscuring the power imbalance of these friendships. Nevertheless, Roosevelt was applauded for his relatability, encapsulated in his experience of polio which many claimed helped him to empathise with the unseen battles facing American citizens.

Domestic labour

Foundational to the operation of Chartwell and the Big House at Hyde Park was an ever-present system of often invisible domestic staff who ensured that the homes operated smoothly. The staff at the Big House in Hyde Park was particularly large, reflecting the traditional Victorian ideals that Sara Roosevelt, the matriarch of the home, wanted to instil. Though Eleanor Roosevelt (at Val Kill) and Clementine Churchill (at Chartwell) did not employ servants on the same scale, each of these women recognised that a system of butlers, valets, maids and cooks was necessary to keep the hospitality machine turning. This staff,

¹³ Clarke, *Mr Churchill’s Profession*, 137.

¹⁴ Cita Stelzer, *Working with Winston* (London: Head of Zeus, 2019), 301.

¹⁵ Roberts, *Churchill*, 6.

¹⁶ Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Political Life*, 20.

though usually unnamed in the archives, vitally sustained the lifestyles and productivity of Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill.

While the First World War began a long term movement of the working class out of domestic service, wealthy families like the Roosevelts and the Churchills continued to rely on large service staffs to keep their homes going.¹⁷ This was especially true in their country houses which were far too grand to maintain single-handedly. Even with the advent of modern conveniences and electric powered household goods, such as the earliest stoves and refrigerators, service staff were a norm through the 1920s and 1930s. Even in 1937, one US survey revealed that ‘70 percent of the rich, 42 percent of the upper middle class, 14 percent of the lower middle class’ reported hiring some help.¹⁸ Likewise, in 1931, Britain’s population was made up of 13.4% indoor domestic servants, with one in twenty families employing domestic help.¹⁹

Springwood, the ‘Big House’ on the Hyde Park estate, relied heavily on the labour of domestic servants. The base staff included up to eight indoor servants, and six outdoor servants, with supplemental laborers hired when necessary. The grandeur of the home was ‘practically out of a Victorian or Edwardian play or film’ recalled a Roosevelt grandson.²⁰ The large staff mirrored the standard set by neighbouring river mansions. For example, the Vanderbilt home, situated two miles north and operated by Frederick and Louise Vanderbilt, had enough single rooms to accommodate ten female domestic servants.²¹ Likewise at Hyde Park, servants had special living quarters in a wing upstairs, each provided with his/her own bedroom. Attached to the kitchen was also a servants dining area, where the staff would eat together around a long rectangular table.²²

In 1971, the National Park Service took an oral history with Gudrun Seim, a Norwegian woman who had been a chambermaid at Hyde Park in 1931.²³ This interview

¹⁷ For domestic service in the 20th century, see Lucy Delap, *Knowing Their Place: Domestic Service in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Phyllis Palmer, *Domesticity And Dirt: Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

¹⁸ Palmer, *Domesticity And Dirt*, 8.

¹⁹ Tinniswood, *The Long Weekend*, 330.

²⁰ Roosevelt, *Upstairs at the Roosevelts*, 10.

²¹ National Park Service, Vanderbilt Mansion: Description of the Mansion, *Park History*, accessed April 27, 2020 from https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/hh/32/hh32k1.htm.

²² Gudrun Seim, interview by National Park Service, October 13, 1971, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association>.

²³ Gudrun Seim, *ibid*.

provides a crucial, if fleeting, glimpse into the lives of backstairs occupants (though the passage of time between events and the recollection, as well as the international fame and renown attributed to President Roosevelt in the intervening years, may have tainted the accuracy of the account). Seim's recollections paint a picture of a 'happy house,' with a communal atmosphere amongst the domestic staff, spending time 'laughing together and helping each other.' In their quiet hours, they would sit on the porch over the Hudson and talk together – chambermaids, butler, cook and valet alike. Seim's picture of life on the Hudson is tinged with idyllic imagery, although she was employed for only a year before having to leave for family reasons. 'I remember we were laughing and talking. And always beautiful weather.' ²⁴

Hints of discontent colour her account. For example, Seim's memories of Sara Roosevelt as a mistress were less upbeat. Seim recalled that Sara's loud and commanding voice was her most dominant feature. The Hyde Park cook who was also from Norway, seemed to resent Sara ('the Madam') Roosevelt's daily visit to instruct her on what to cook that day. Seim remembers that the cook despaired over the old-fashioned facilities and the coal-fire stove. There is also evidence of mistreatment. For example, the domestic staff at Hyde Park laboured relentlessly and were only granted a day off once every few weeks. On these days, Seim would travel down to New York to stay with her sister for the night. Despite the toilsome labour she undertook, when speaking to members of the National Park Service, Seim held to her fond memories of the Roosevelts, 'They all were so nice and kind,' she insisted. ²⁵

Many of the staff at Hyde Park were European immigrants from Sweden, Ireland, Scotland, Norway, and France. Historically, the northern part of America had relied upon European (especially Irish) domestic workers, whilst African-Americans dominated the labour market in the South. Seim recalled that Sara and Eleanor Roosevelt also hired some African-Americans. 'They were very fond of coloured people, very kind to them,' she stated, 'And they worked hard, the coloured people.' It is unclear whether these observations about the Roosevelts' racial views came from her own experience, or were gathered from later press attention that Eleanor Roosevelt received for her willingness to be a public voice for

²⁴ Gudrun Seim, *ibid.*

²⁵ Gudrun Seim, *ibid.*

civil rights. By the 1920s, African-American domestic servants accounted for three-quarters of indoor domestic workers across the US.²⁶

On Christmas Day, the Roosevelts hosted a special celebration for their domestic staff. Many sources recall this annual event and point to it as a marker of the family's generosity. The opportunity to invite 'the help round the place and give them presents' apparently occurred as early as 1915 and was a yearly tradition until FDR's death.²⁷ At about 5pm on Christmas Day the servants, local employees and their children were invited into the Big House. Children would line up to enter the grand Library, where one by one they would be placed on FDR's lap as Eleanor delivered them their present. 'He would speak to you for a minute,' recalled one young visitor, 'and then take the next [child]'.²⁸ In the corner of the room was a huge ornamental Christmas tree, and on some occasions the children were invited to perform Christmas carols.²⁹ One maid also recalled being given a Christmas card with a photo of the Roosevelt family adorning the front.³⁰

At the nearby Val Kill Cottage, Eleanor Roosevelt also employed a couple of staff to assist with the running of the home. Most accounts describe Eleanor as a generous and gentle employer. 'Everything was plain, not much formalities,' recalled one of her employees.³¹ Well into her later years, after FDR's death, Eleanor would also host a Christmas party at Val Kill for her help. She would order as many as 25 turkeys at Christmas time, and distribute them, along with a cheque from her charity fund, to friends and employees alike.³²

It is somewhat more difficult to paint an overarching picture of the service staff employed at Chartwell during the interwar years. Their presence is undisputed, but there are few traces of them in the archives. Unlike the National Park Service, the National Trust never conducted interviews with interwar staff. It is most likely that during busy seasons the home

²⁶ Janet Henshall Momsen, *Gender, Migration and Domestic Service* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 2.

²⁷ Josephine Plog, interviewed by George A. Palmer, National Park Service, December 19, 1947, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association>.

²⁸ Willis Draiss, interviewed by Susan Brown, National Park Service, September 11, 1981, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association>.

²⁹ Willis Draiss, *ibid.*

³⁰ Gudrun Seim, interview by National Park Service, October 13, 1971, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association>.

³¹ Lester Entrup, interviewed by National Park Service, February 2, 1978, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association>.

³² Lester Entrup, *ibid.*

employed as many as eight female servants (in their roles as housemaids, kitchen maid, lady's maid, cook and housekeeper), as well as about five male servants (in positions as chauffeur, butler, gardeners and carpenter).³³ But the records indicate that staff turnover was high, with many individuals lasting less than a year in their positions. The Churchills were hard to please, and financial troubles also frequently caused them to invoke cost-cutting measures, including downsizing the staff.³⁴

Some sources suggest that Clementine Churchill was an exacting perfectionist who lorded proper rituals of housekeeping and hospitality over her staff. According to her daughter's reminiscences, Clementine would meet with the resident cook each morning and make detailed edits and improvements on every suggested menu.³⁵ Letters from this period indicate Clementine's growing exhaustion as she faced managing the complexity of household organisation. Clementine's tasks included ordering flowers, decorating the home and writing up table plans for every meal. 'Upon Clementine necessarily fell the hard work of providing for this endless succession of guests and keeping the establishment in good running order,' writes Geoffrey Best, 'no small task through the 1930s.'³⁶

One of the few detailed analyses of the servants at Chartwell comes from Annie Gray's account of the life of their longest serving cook, Georgina Landemare.³⁷ Gray's research reveals that the Churchills hired help on a needs-basis, would regularly ask their staff to travel with them between their residences, and often brought in extra domestic help for short periods or to mark special events, such as birthday weekends. Gray argues that during the 1930s the Churchill's had a 'constant procession of servants'. Due to their financial woes, expensive tastes and picky attitude, they 'seem to have haemorrhaged staff.'³⁸ But one benefit of working for the Churchills was coming under Clementine's tutelage, as she took it upon herself to train them in housekeeping, particularly menu planning and French cuisine.³⁹

³³ Best, *Churchill*, 146.

³⁴ Annie Gray, "Georgina Landemare: The Churchill's Longest-serving Cook," *Finest Hour*, Vol 183, International Churchill Society, Accessed from <https://winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour/finest-hour-183/georgina-landemare-churchills-longest-serving-cook/>.

³⁵ Soames, *A Daughter's Tale*, 67.

³⁶ Best, *Churchill*, 146.

³⁷ Annie Gray, *Victory in the Kitchen: The Life of Churchill's Cook*, Main edition (London: Profile Books, 2020).

³⁸ Gray, 186.

³⁹ Gray, 188.

Both Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill relied upon their butlers, valets, maids and cooks in order to maintain their social schedules and meet the hospitality expectations of visitors. In the UK, many country homes had been renovated into weekend retreats, especially designed for entertaining, where service staff were trusted to keep the food and drinks flowing.⁴⁰ Weekends in the country (often planned to include shooting trips) were common amongst Churchill's peers.⁴¹ At Hyde Park, an extra set of butlers were called upon in the case of bigger parties, which were frequent. Without the flexibility of their staff, especially those who willingly travelled between various residences in New York and London, the Roosevelts and Churchills would have been unable to fulfil their social obligations.

Secretarial labour

Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill would have been lost without the labour of their secretaries. These women were employed as typists but their responsibilities extended to a variety of domestic and political tasks far beyond their pay grade. The sources left by these individuals – several of whom have recorded their memories in speeches, memoirs and oral histories – suggest that their loyalty and adoration of Roosevelt and Churchill was almost total. Yet a probing of the texture of their daily lives demonstrates that the burdens they carried on behalf of their boss threatened to engulf them. Their all-consuming employment required sacrificing personal freedoms, independence and non-work relationships. Tellingly, almost all of the secretaries researched here died in service or, if having outlived their master, went on to advocate for ongoing support for their causes. Roosevelt and Churchill's close ties with these women did endow the latter with certain privileges, such as the experience of being subsumed into the family unit, as well as the opportunity (especially as time went on) to influence the behaviour of their seniors. The secretaries employed by Roosevelt and Churchill, though unflinchingly dedicated, learnt how to counteract their boss' weaknesses and nudge them toward greater productivity. In this regard and many others, the credit apportioned them for the later achievements of Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill ought to be substantial.

⁴⁰ Tinniswood, *The Long Weekend*.

⁴¹ Gray, *Victory in the Kitchen*, 141.

Martin Gilbert has argued convincingly that historians should pay closer attention to the insights that secretaries can provide about national leaders. Seeing them ‘at close quarters, in all circumstances and moods, and at critical moments,’ he wrote, secretaries may have much to reveal about their employers.⁴² One of Roosevelt’s secretaries later reflected on the intimate perspective she held. ‘I saw him as a human being,’ she wrote, ‘with moods and humors, whims and appetites, joys and sorrows like any other man.’⁴³ These women have left both oral histories and written accounts for the benefit of historians wishing to understand these men in their more private moments. The nature of Roosevelt and Churchill as looming national figures predisposes these sources, most written after their deaths, to a form of hero-worship. Nevertheless, they enlighten us to the vast and unceasing labour that was necessary to support the political career of each man.

The term ‘secretary’ is insufficient to comprehend the breadth of the responsibility given the women known by this term. They typed up dictations, of course, but they also completed tasks as varied as feeding pets, hosting dinner parties and providing companionship. Cita Stelzer’s recent monograph on Churchill’s secretaries, *Working with Winston*, suggests we would better understand them as performing roles akin to chief of staff, press secretary or advisor.⁴⁴ Not based solely at Chartwell and Hyde Park, these women were also expected to work wherever and whenever they were needed. For example, Churchill frequently mixed work and hobbies, thus requiring a secretary to be present at all times in case inspiration struck for his latest book or article. According to one of his secretaries, dictation could just as commonly occur whilst Churchill was up a ladder bricklaying, or in the car on the way to Parliament.⁴⁵ Other anecdotes recall Roosevelt similarly requiring secretaries to work in bizarre locations, such as the dictation of his 1928 nomination speech for Al Smith which took place whilst picnicking near the Val Kill creek.⁴⁶ Though they differed in their relationship to their secretaries, both Roosevelt and Churchill required them to be flexible and constantly available.

Churchill saw his secretaries as a means of efficiency, convenience and information-gathering. He regularly referred to the secretaries’ office on the ground floor as his ‘factory,’

⁴² Martin Gilbert, *In Search of Churchill: A Historian’s Journey* (London: HarperCollins, 1994), 153.

⁴³ Grace George Tully, *F.D.R., My Boss* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1949), 1.

⁴⁴ Stelzer, *Working with Winston*, xvi.

⁴⁵ Gilbert, *Prophet of Truth*, 866.

⁴⁶ Moses Smith, interviewed by George A. Palmer, National Park Service, January 15, 1948, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association>.

reflective of the systematic organisation of the women who worked around the clock at Chartwell. Churchill was determined that his physical distance from London shouldn't harm his productivity. As Roy Jenkins has put it, 'Churchill went to Chartwell in order to lengthen the stride of his political work, but not greatly reduce its quality.'⁴⁷ Described by one of his employees as a genius administrator, Churchill was able to draw huge efforts from the relatively small number of people who surrounded him.⁴⁸ The first woman employed by Churchill as an assistant was Violet Pearman, principle secretary from 1929 to 1938. By all accounts she was tall, striking and incredibly efficient. Grace Hamblin described her running up and down the stairs at Chartwell and being in charge of 'every single thing – not anything special – just *everything*.'⁴⁹ Devoted to Churchill and seemingly inexhaustible, Pearman (or 'Mrs P' to Churchill) was indispensable, especially during the interwar years. In 1932, at the age of 26, Grace Hamblin joined the fold, given the job, so she claimed, 'because I lived just round the corner and I had no obligations that kept me from working far into the night.'⁵⁰ In 1937 a further secretary was added to the mix, Kathleen Hill, especially to help with late evening and very early morning dictation. Hill was resident at Chartwell, so she could theoretically take dictation until two or three in the morning without facing a long journey home. 'The idea was that I would get a rest in the afternoon,' she recalled, 'It hardly ever happened.'⁵¹ These women, and numerous others who joined later during wartime, worked together to cover Churchill's whims for every hour of the day. Their cooperation was remarkably seamless. He often treated them as separate parts of the whole. 'He cared very little which secretary responded to the call "Miss"', writes Cita Stelzer, 'so long as it was a familiar face.'⁵²

Churchill's working routine was winding and exhaustive. He took breakfast in bed and enjoyed beginning the day by dictating for a few hours in his pyjamas, as a secretary settled into the corner of his bedroom.⁵³ Though his mode was relaxed, his mind was

⁴⁷ Jenkins, *Churchill*, 415.

⁴⁸ Dr Maurice Ashley, "As I knew Him: Churchill in the Wilderness," *Proceedings of the International Churchill Societies 1988-1989*, 19th August 1989, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://winstonchurchill.org/the-life-of-churchill/wilderness-years/as-i-knew-him-churchill-in-the-wilderness/>.

⁴⁹ Gilbert, *Prophet of Truth*, 362.

⁵⁰ Grace Hamblin, Address at Inner Wheel Club, Westerham, October 24, 1974, HAMB 1/1, Churchill Archives Centre.

⁵¹ Gilbert, *Prophet of Truth*, 866.

⁵² Stelzer, *Working with Winston*, xx.

⁵³ Later in life, his physicians would recommend he stay in bed for as long as possible in order to not over-exert himself. Dr Maurice Ashley, "As I knew Him: Churchill in the Wilderness," *Proceedings of the International*

constantly active. Martin Gilbert argues that Churchill liked to ‘ruthlessly’ partition the day, ‘there was never a wasted moment, he had intense control.’⁵⁴ Churchill would break up his political work at Chartwell with his outdoor projects – which he considered almost equally urgent – attending to the animals and surveying the building works. As one secretary recalled, ‘Work and action were to him the breath of life.’⁵⁵ Churchill took the view that after dinner ‘the day’s work really began’, and he would frequently work into the early hours of the morning, dictating to his secretary or on the phone to newspaper editors for the latest news.⁵⁶ His lifestyle also entailed much travel. ‘We were always on the move,’ remembered one secretary, ‘a quick day at the House of Commons, a weekend in one of the big country houses with his friends... visits to Blenheim where he was researching the life of his great Ancestor [Marlborough].’ Even when there was no immediate work to be done, Churchill insisted ‘a secretary had to accompany him.’⁵⁷ This was all part of the energy that exuded from Churchill’s compulsion to get involved in the action, wherever it was. Harold Macmillan remembered Churchill’s response at Chartwell in 1939, when he heard that Mussolini was invading Albania. ‘Maps were brought out; secretaries were marshalled; telephones began to ring,’ recalled Macmillan, ‘Where was the British fleet?’ Churchill wanted to know.⁵⁸ While out of office, Churchill’s use of his secretaries enabled him to keep his finger on the pulse of London politics.

If Churchill’s daily routine was unusual, his character as a boss was even more eccentric. He was unafraid to ask much of his inferiors, even things that seemed impossible or unknowable. Stelzer recalls one such occasion when he requested that his slippers be warmed up whilst on an overseas flight.⁵⁹ He was easily dissatisfied when his secretaries were unable to deliver what he wanted, precisely when he wanted it. He relied on them for such tasks as keeping the wine cellar stocked, ordering in maggots to feed the orfe fish, hiring contractors for his garden projects and cleaning his paintbrushes. All his secretaries quickly learned to answer any difficult questions with the favourite phrase ‘I’m not sure, but I’ll find

Churchill Societies 1988-1989, 19th August 1989, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://winstonchurchill.org/the-life-of-churchill/wilderness-years/as-i-knew-him-churchill-in-the-wilderness/>.

⁵⁴ Gilbert, *Winston Churchill - the Wilderness Years*, 178.

⁵⁵ Hamblin *Inner Wheel* 1974

⁵⁶ Garnett, *Chartwell*, 27.

⁵⁷ Grace Hamblin, Address at The Adolphus, Dallas, Texas, October 30, 1987, HAMB 1/2, Churchill Archives Centre.

⁵⁸ Harold Macmillan, *Winds of Change 1914-1939*. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1966), 592.

⁵⁹ Stelzer, *Working with Winston*, xvi.

out.’⁶⁰ Various anecdotes indicate their efforts to satisfy Churchill’s eccentricities and avoid disappointing him. Elizabeth Nel’s memoir recalls the mix-up associated with Churchill’s unique vernacular, such as his word for a holepunch – a ‘Klop’.

‘Mrs [Kathleen] Hill told me how when she had first worked for him at Chartwell he had told her “Gimme Klop,” whereat much to his astonishment she had brought in fifteen volumes of an encyclopaedia by a gentleman named Kloppe which she noticed in his library, when he merely wanted the paper punch.’⁶¹

Franklin Roosevelt took a much more familiar and relaxed tone with his secretaries, preferring to be accommodating rather than demanding. He employed two main secretaries over the course of his career. The first, Marguerite ‘Missy’ LeHand joined him during his days as a lawyer in 1920 and stayed with him as private secretary until ill health forced her to resign in the summer of 1941. LeHand was stylish, well-mannered, cheerful and attractive. Kathryn Smith, LeHand’s biographer, characterises her as possessing common sense, honesty, sure instincts and unshakeable loyalty.⁶² Missy was undoubtedly Roosevelt’s favourite. His second secretary was Grace Tully, who came on board as assistant secretary during his tenure as Governor of New York. Tully was responsible for a greater proportion of the dictation work, and was perceived by many to be more naïve, believing Roosevelt ‘was the most wonderful man that ever lived & incapable of doing wrong or making a mistake.’⁶³ Together, they ensured Roosevelt’s correspondence, speeches, bills and affairs were kept in order.

A typical day of work for LeHand and Tully during the interwar years began before nine am. After having his breakfast in his bedroom whilst reading the papers, Roosevelt would send for a secretary to take dictation at his bedside.⁶⁴ Once he came downstairs (through the use of a hand-pulled elevator), FDR would sit at his desk and continue to work through papers and correspondence, always with his typist at hand. According to Tully, FDR dictated ‘slowly but briefly and distinctly’ and often ‘commented in asides to me about some

⁶⁰ Grace Hamblin, Address at The Adolphus, Dallas, Texas, October 30, 1987, HAMB 1/2, Churchill Archives Centre.

⁶¹ Elizabeth Nel, *Winston Churchill by His Personal Secretary: Recollections of the Great Man by a Woman Who Worked for Him* (New York: iUniverse, 2007), 34.

⁶² Smith, *The Gatekeeper*, 7.

⁶³ Francis G. Goodale, Reminiscences, August 17-19, 1936, Box 1, Small Collections: Reminiscences by Contemporaries, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

⁶⁴ Grace Tully, interviewed by George A. Palmer and Frederick L. Rath, National Park Service, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association>.

of the letters and his deductions as to why they had been written to him.’⁶⁵ But at Hyde Park, quiet mornings never lasted long. Tully recalled the barrage of visitors who would come knocking. Once the appointments started, ‘they ran through until luncheon time. Always people, always guests for luncheon. People that the President wanted to talk with. It saved time to have them at luncheon.’⁶⁶ Guests would feature prominently at dinner times, too. Differing from Churchill’s relentlessness, Roosevelt often took time at Hyde Park to relax, especially in the years of his presidency. He would usually take a break from business to go for his afternoon drive, ‘down through the woods, over to see an old church or an old house that he was interested in, and then perhaps visit a neighbour or one of the family for tea.’⁶⁷

The sources left by Roosevelt and Churchill’s secretaries indicate their remarkable depth of commitment and emotional investment in their jobs. Most credit their boss with inspiring them to serve most wholeheartedly. ‘What really set the pace was that he worked so hard himself,’ wrote Grace Hamblin of Winston Churchill. ‘He expected the same from others and he accepted it as his right, and in time we all realised that in full return for the stress and strain we had the rare privilege of getting to know closely all the beauty of this dynamic but gentle character.’⁶⁸ Each secretary’s loyalty was reflected in a willingness to work long hours, travel far distances and attempt difficult and unusual tasks. But this took its own toll, and often cost these women their own personal freedom and private relationships.

Time constraints alone prevented these women from investing in life outside of work. Churchill’s secretaries were never given regular days off, sometimes working as many as six weeks consecutively.⁶⁹ Antisocial hours was another problem, as well as unpredictable schedules. Hamblin recalls one occasion that her plans to dine with a male friend were ambushed, when at four in the afternoon Churchill insisted, ‘You’ll dine with me tonight.’

“‘Oh, I’m terribly sorry but I’m dining out.” “Oh, who with?” “A friend.” “Lady or Gentleman?” “Gentleman.” “Oh, well he must come too.” I remember being terribly cross but my friend, of course, was delighted – enchanted! He dined on it ever since.

⁶⁵ Tully, *F.D.R., My Boss*, 37.

⁶⁶ Grace Tully, *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Grace Tully, *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Grace Hamblin, Address at Inner Wheel Club, Westerham, October 24, 1974, HAMB 1/1, Churchill Archives Centre.

⁶⁹ Hamblin, *ibid.*

But I thought it was terrible for me not to have an evening out and not have his company for the evening.’⁷⁰

For Roosevelt’s secretaries, it was not only difficult to get time alone, but space too, as they lived with their boss in his Hyde Park home. Missy LeHand is believed by historians to have harboured love for the US ambassador to Moscow, William C. Bullitt, whom she met in 1934.⁷¹ Their budding relationship was conducted almost entirely via letters for seven years, until LeHand’s untimely stroke. The extent of their friendship was largely hidden from Roosevelt, who was also amicable with Bullitt.⁷² Thomas Corcoran, part of Roosevelt’s ‘brains trust’ later put it bluntly: LeHand’s marriage to Bullitt just ‘couldn’t happen. Missy belonged to the Boss.’⁷³

The way in which undercurrents of power shaped each secretary’s relationship to her boss is unsettling to the mind of a twentieth-first century researcher. Certainly, Roosevelt and Churchill were not conducting what we would today consider ethical employer-employee relationships. Paternalism was a marker of their style. Both Roosevelt and Churchill demonstrated ties of affection to their secretaries, but were often condescending in their language. Churchill routinely referred to his secretaries as ‘dear,’ while FDR used the term ‘child.’ There is also evidence of each extending charitable financial help to their secretaries and their families during times of personal difficulty. Franklin Roosevelt paid Missy LeHand’s hospital bills after she suffered a stroke in 1941.⁷⁴ And Winston Churchill, after Violet Pearman’s death in 1938, paid a monthly salary to her daughters and put money each year towards their ongoing education.⁷⁵ Churchill also habitually gave his secretaries some of his original paintings which he could have sold at a high price.⁷⁶ Both would occasionally sign off their hand-written letters to these women with the final greeting, ‘Yours affectionately’.

Churchill could be abrasive with his secretaries, a style that occasionally veered close to harassment, though sources suggest his tone was never malicious. His demeanour was

⁷⁰ Grace Hamblin, Address at The Adolphus, Dallas, Texas, October 30, 1987, HAMB 1/2, Churchill Archives Centre.

⁷¹ Costigliola, *Roosevelt’s Lost Alliances*, 70.

⁷² Smith, *The Gatekeeper*.

⁷³ Quoted in Costigliola, *Roosevelt’s Lost Alliances*, 75.

⁷⁴ Tully, *F.D.R., My Boss*, 342.

⁷⁵ Gilbert, *In Search of Churchill*, 159.

⁷⁶ Dr Maurice Ashley, “As I knew Him: Churchill in the Wilderness,” *Proceedings of the International Churchill Societies 1988-1989*, 19th August 1989, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://winstonchurchill.org/the-life-of-churchill/wilderness-years/as-i-knew-him-churchill-in-the-wilderness/> .

usually gruff and often irritated. ‘There is no doubt he was a terribly hard taskmaster,’ recalls Hamblin, ‘Nobody ever disputes this.’⁷⁷ Others remember him being ‘ruthless’ and ‘impatient,’ which Kathleen Hill attributed to his being a ‘disappointed man waiting for the call to serve his country.’⁷⁸ Nevertheless, as Gilbert has argued, Churchill’s took a genuine interest in his secretaries’ wellbeing.⁷⁹ He would refuse to let them carry heavy objects, ensured that fires were lit in the rooms they worked, was quick to apologise when he lost his temper and frequently ended their evening sessions with a hearty smile and ‘good night.’ Though his verbal appreciation was hard-won, Churchill would often indicate his gratefulness to his secretaries through other means, such as humorous notes or speaking well of them to others. ‘He had a subtle way of showing his approval,’ recalled Hamblin, ‘This, of course, was part of his charm and part of the force which kept us at it.’⁸⁰

Churchill’s dissatisfaction was never personal or pointed (keen as he was to ‘keep each stratum in its proper place,’) but Roosevelt readily blurred his role as employer with his personal relationships.⁸¹ Where Churchill was aloof from his secretaries, Roosevelt was relationally and emotionally dependent upon them. One of their unspoken roles was to enable their boss to relax, keep him entertained and help him to let off steam. Roosevelt viewed these women as equal partners in games and discussion, and they would play cards and board games together well into the evening. Missy LeHand had a reputation as a long-running champion at the game Parcheesi.⁸² FDR got to know his secretaries individually. He referred to LeHand, who came from a blue-collar Boston background, as his ‘conscience.’⁸³ In return for this attention, they were required to maintain a cheerful and pleasant presence. Roosevelt disliked hearing about sickness and sadness, so these sides of their personas needed to be suppressed in his company, only surfacing in their correspondence with others.⁸⁴ Eleanor Roosevelt often remarked on the admiring gaze of Roosevelt’s secretaries, who provided him with unfaltering praise. ‘He might have been happier with a wife who was completely

⁷⁷ Grace Hamblin, Address at Inner Wheel Club, Westerham, October 24, 1974, HAMB 1/1, Churchill Archives Centre.

⁷⁸ Gilbert, *In Search of Churchill*, 162.

⁷⁹ Gilbert, 170.

⁸⁰ Grace Hamblin, Address at Inner Wheel Club, Westerham, October 24, 1974, HAMB 1/1, Churchill Archives Centre.

⁸¹ Nel, *Winston Churchill by His Personal Secretary*, 55.

⁸² Smith, *The Gatekeeper*, 56.

⁸³ Smith, 9.

⁸⁴ Costigliola, *Roosevelt’s Lost Alliances*, 71.

uncritical,' she wrote, 'that I was never able to be, and he had to find it in other people,' foremost amongst whom were his secretaries.⁸⁵

During the 1920s Roosevelt started to trust his secretaries, especially Missy LeHand, to work independently on his tasks. She shouldered a significant portion of his correspondence, acting as a ghost writer on his behalf. 'In the course of time,' she recalled, 'I came to know exactly how Mr Roosevelt would answer some of his letters, how he would couch his thoughts. When he discovered that I had learned these things it took a load off his shoulders, for instead of having to dictate the answer to many letters he could just say "yes" or "no" and I knew what to say and how to say it.'⁸⁶ Costigliola argues that many scholars have overlooked LeHand who 'stood so close to FDR that many historians have had difficulty seeing her.'⁸⁷ She was described by those who saw her in action, such as Samuel Rosenmann, as 'the one indispensable person,' and 'one of the five most important people in the US.'⁸⁸ Kathryn Smith has described LeHand as Roosevelt's 'Gatekeeper' – protecting, advising and assisting him, especially by limiting who had access to 'Eff Dee' as she called him.⁸⁹ Roosevelt allowed his secretaries into the sanctum of his work in a way that outdid Churchill, who never became so personally invested in the women that surrounded him.

For the Roosevelt and Churchill families, secretaries were a part of family life and were included and treasured as such. Those who reminisce about times spent at Hyde Park or Chartwell in the interwar years often paint a picture of a very generous extended family – secretaries, servants and close friends woven together into the same daily rhythms.⁹⁰ This was felt and appreciated keenly by the secretaries themselves. 'It is not just a use of words to say that most persons who worked with for F.D.R. were in effect part of a family,' wrote Grace Tully, 'He treated us as individuals and personalities, took an interest in our lives, our families and our problems, and drew us into his own life.'⁹¹ Similarly, Grace Hamblin recalled the 'warmth and affection' she received from the Churchill family, accompanied by a 'tremendous sense of belonging and involvement.'⁹²

⁸⁵ Ward, *Closest Companion*, xvii.

⁸⁶ Quoted by Smith, *The Gatekeeper*, 43.

⁸⁷ Costigliola, "Broken Circle," 717.

⁸⁸ Quoted by Costigliola, 677.

⁸⁹ Smith, *The Gatekeeper*.

⁹⁰ Roosevelt, *Upstairs at the Roosevelts*, 14.

⁹¹ Tully, *F.D.R., My Boss*, 340.

⁹² Grace Hamblin, Address at The Adolphus, Dallas, Texas, October 30, 1987, HAMB 1/2, Churchill Archives Centre.

Though they were unfailingly loyal, the secretaries employed by Roosevelt and Churchill took their own initiative in swaying their bosses' behaviour when they felt it was needed. 'On certain occasions,' Grace Tully mused, 'Missy and I combined to dissuade [Roosevelt] from certain utterances or actions.'⁹³ Another acquired skill was organising appointments by inferring who their master would like to see, and which letters needed to be attended to most urgently. For Churchill's secretaries, reminding (and urging) him to pay his outstanding bills was a 'thankless task' every month.⁹⁴

As Martin Gilbert has put it, 'Churchill's extraordinary productivity depended on such large measure upon these unsung labourers in the Churchill vineyard.'⁹⁵ In 1938, Eleanor Roosevelt echoed the same sentiment about FDR's secretaries. '[Missy LeHand] proves what I have often said,' wrote Eleanor, 'that men who do important things in the world nearly always have a woman somewhere near at hand who helps out with the details of the job, however big that job may be.'⁹⁶ The way each of these secretaries took up the tedium and grit with such poise, able to 'serve without being servile' is worthy of recognition.⁹⁷

Intimacy, proximity and companionship

Both Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, of course, had deeper needs and desires beyond day-to-day political work. It was the job of service staff to provide for their baseline physical needs, and the role of secretaries (at least on the surface) to take care of the office labour, but the craving for intimate bonds and tender care remained. Through different avenues, Churchill and Roosevelt sought out intimacy and emotional companionship in the home.

Most of Winston Churchill's emotional needs were met by his wife, Clementine. Historians agree that theirs was a love-marriage, marked by loyalty and tenderness, despite the often tumultuous circumstances.⁹⁸ Their marriage began in 1908 and was long-lasting,

⁹³ Tully, *F.D.R., My Boss*, 342.

⁹⁴ Grace Hamblin, Address at Inner Wheel Club, Westerham, October 24, 1974, HAMB 1/1, Churchill Archives Centre.

⁹⁵ Gilbert, *In Search of Churchill*, 171.

⁹⁶ Eleanor Roosevelt, "My Day, January 7, 1938," *The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Digital Edition* (2017), accessed March 12, 2020, <https://erpapers.columbian.gwu.edu/my-day>.

⁹⁷ Stelzer, *Working with Winston*, xviii.

⁹⁸ For scholarly exploration of the Churchill marriage see Richard Hough, *Winston and Clementine: The Triumphs and Tragedies of the Churchills* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990); Purnell, *First Lady*.

ending only when Winston died in 1965. Affectionate letters – which would often be sent only when spending a few days apart – indicate their ongoing romance. Love flowed between ‘a girl with so much intellectual quality and such strong reserves of noble sentiment’ (as he described her) and a man ‘instinctive with life and vitality’ (as she saw him).⁹⁹

Surviving archival correspondence shines with marital affection. The Churchills favoured the use of pet names, and throughout their lives would adorn their letters with cartoon images of themselves as animals. Winston was known as ‘pug,’ which later became ‘pig’ – ‘and pigs or pugs happy or sad, rampant or frivolous – even the occasional lion or peacock – decorated many of his letters to his wife’ wrote their daughter.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, Clementine was known as ‘cat,’ or ‘kitten,’ pictures of which she would draw beside her signature in turn. Even in the late 1950s, when Winston and Clementine were now aged in their 60s and 70s, letters between them remained filled with declarations of ‘tender love,’ and ‘devotion.’ ‘You have all my fondest love my dearest,’ wrote Winston in October 1958, ‘The closing days or years of life are grey and dull, but I am lucky to have you at my side. I send you my best love & many kisses. Always your devoted, W.’¹⁰¹

By the 1920s, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt had been married for over 15 years. Scholars agree that their marriage was a pragmatic partnership, based more on mutual respect than passion or romance.¹⁰² Hazel Rowley has argued that this was a conscious and ‘joint endeavour’ which enabled them to gain what they needed from each other to ‘do their best work.’¹⁰³ Although they were firm life partners, they did not necessarily try to provide for each other’s deep-seated emotional needs. Instead, each found companionship elsewhere.¹⁰⁴

Franklin Roosevelt’s extra-marital affairs have generated much speculation. The story begins, so they say, in 1918, when Eleanor discovered love letters from her social secretary, Lucy Mercer, in Roosevelt’s suitcase.¹⁰⁵ Though Eleanor Roosevelt claimed to have

⁹⁹ Churchill, Spencer-Churchill, and Soames, *Speaking for Themselves*, 7–8.

¹⁰⁰ Churchill, Spencer-Churchill, and Soames, 19.

¹⁰¹ WSC to CSC, 14 October 1958. Quoted in Soames, 627.

¹⁰² For scholarly exploration of the Roosevelt marriage see Rowley, *Franklin and Eleanor*; Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*.

¹⁰³ Rowley, *Franklin and Eleanor*, xvii.

¹⁰⁴ Eleanor Roosevelt’s own intimate affairs with other women have been broadly speculated upon. For a discussion of her sexuality and friendships with Marian Dickerman, Nancy Cook and Lorena Hickok see Emily Herring Wilson, *The Three Graces of Val-Kill: Eleanor Roosevelt, Marion Dickerman, and Nancy Cook in the Place They Made Their Own* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press Books, 2017); Quinn, *Eleanor and Hick*.

¹⁰⁵ Willis, *FDR and Lucy*, 3.

‘forgiven, but not forgotten,’ this event, most scholars contend that this discovery irrevocably changed the makeup of their marriage.¹⁰⁶ In later years, Franklin Roosevelt was linked romantically with three other women, Missy LeHand (his primary secretary), Margaret ‘Daisy’ Suckley (his distant cousin and childhood friend) and Crown Princess Martha of Norway.¹⁰⁷ Out of everyone, it was LeHand’s companionship that FDR most treasured. Scholars have speculated about the true nature of their intimacy. Frank Costigliola argues that this relationship, which may have begun in a sexual manner, likely altered over time as other admirers (such as William C. Bullitt) crept in.¹⁰⁸

Difficult though it may be to imagine, Franklin Roosevelt’s affairs were conducted and maintained within the home environment. James Roosevelt, remembers the family dynamics of his childhood as ‘pretty confusing and pretty complex.’¹⁰⁹ Missy LeHand would frequently come and go from FDR’s bedroom in her nightclothes. Occasionally she would sit on his lap, and at other times take the front seat of the car next to FDR instead of Eleanor.¹¹⁰ When Eleanor Roosevelt was away, Missy would act as Hostess, and until her death in July 1944, she also carried power of attorney to manage FDR’s finances.¹¹¹ Yet Eleanor Roosevelt and Missy LeHand had an amicable relationship. Eleanor’s grandson, Curtis, describes what he saw as ‘a remarkable mutual sympathy and understanding’ between them.¹¹² Doris Kearns Goodwin suggests this may have been because Eleanor knew that ‘without Missy to attend to Franklin’s personal needs, the independent life she had labored to create for herself would be impossible to maintain.’¹¹³ Others argue that Eleanor Roosevelt’s lack of jealousy over her husband stemmed, in part, from Missy LeHand’s lower social class and status.¹¹⁴

Daisy Suckley and Princess Martha were also frequent visitors to Hyde Park, and to Franklin Roosevelt’s room. Indeed, Suckley first came to stay in Spring 1922 upon the invitation of Sara Roosevelt who insisted ‘her son was lonely and needed company.’¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁶ Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*, 377.

¹⁰⁷ Authors who discuss these relationships include Willis, *FDR and Lucy*; Ward, *Closest Companion*; Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*.

¹⁰⁸ Costigliola, *Roosevelt’s Lost Alliances*, 70.

¹⁰⁹ James Roosevelt is quoted in Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*, 121.

¹¹⁰ Costigliola, *Roosevelt’s Lost Alliances*, 69.

¹¹¹ Tully, *F.D.R., My Boss*, 113.

¹¹² Roosevelt, *Upstairs at the Roosevelts*, 73.

¹¹³ Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*, 120.

¹¹⁴ Smith, *The Gatekeeper*, 40.

¹¹⁵ Ward, *Closest Companion*, xv.

Correspondence discovered on the event of Suckley's death in 1991 indicated the extent of their 'old fashioned love story, genteel but clandestine and sometimes distinctly flirtatious' relationship.¹¹⁶ Princess Martha came to the fold later in the day, when the Norwegian Royal Family sought asylum in the U.S. in 1940. Described by President Roosevelt's aides as his 'girlfriend,' James Roosevelt has conceded that there 'is a real possibility that a true romantic relationship developed between the president and the princess.'¹¹⁷ Finally, Lucy Mercer (now Lucy Mercer Rutherford), also reappeared as a companion in Roosevelt's final years, and was present visiting him at Warm Springs on the day that he died. To comprehend the presence of multiple extra-marital women peacefully coexisting in the domestic arena requires reconfiguring our conception of the Roosevelt family. 'The Roosevelt marriage had become a community,' argues Rowley:

'There had always been more than two in this union (Sara Delano Roosevelt loomed large from the beginning), and after FDR contracted polio several close companions entered the picture. The Roosevelts believed in "community," "neighbors," and "friends". These would become key words in FDR's speeches over the years. Their houses were like residential hotels, with family and close friends staying for weeks or months at a time.'¹¹⁸

The evidence shows that FDR 'liked to relax in the company of women,' especially women who would listen, affirm and admire him.¹¹⁹ Whether emotional or sexual (or both), Roosevelt valued these intimate companions very highly. Missy LeHand encapsulated this role, and it became a mantle which was also taken up by the aforementioned women in turn.

However, a history of servants and secretaries as the fabric of Chartwell and Hyde Park causes us to consider another paradigm: not just intimacy but also proximity. Due to his debilitating illness, FDR was particularly dependent on a special few people who were omnipresent in Roosevelt's private sphere in order to assist him with daily grooming, hygiene and upkeep. In particular, FDR was very fond of his valet Irvin McDuffie. McDuffie was an African-American who grew up in Georgia and had a previous life shining shoes in a barber shop. After meeting him in Warm Springs, McDuffie became a 'special favourite' of FDR's, who thereafter referred to him simply as 'Mac'.¹²⁰ His wife Lizzie McDuffie, joined him to

¹¹⁶ Ward, x.

¹¹⁷ Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*, 154.

¹¹⁸ Rowley, *Franklin and Eleanor*, xix.

¹¹⁹ Costigliola, *Roosevelt's Lost Alliances*, 434.

¹²⁰ Tully, *F.D.R., My Boss*, 111.

become a household maid and both eventually moved with the Roosevelts into the White House.

McDuffie played a confidential role in caring for Roosevelt's physical needs and providing the dexterity and strength that FDR could not summon on his own. McDuffie was essential from the beginning of the day, where he would lift Roosevelt out of bed, strap braces to his legs, dress him and move him in and out of his wheelchair.¹²¹ McDuffie periodically cut Roosevelt's hair, and would give him 'a good scalp massage with special English tonic.'¹²² Gudrun Seim recalled watching out the window when Roosevelt arrived at Hyde Park, and McDuffie would emerge to carry him inside the house.¹²³ McDuffie was supremely dedicated to his boss's wellbeing, with a habit of removing superstitious items from his wardrobe and consistently monitoring Roosevelt's appetite, temperature and health.¹²⁴ This was a twenty-four hour job, and he was granted only one half-day off per week, which according to another of the White House maids eventually 'broke McDuffie's health' and caused him to suffer a 'nervous breakdown.'¹²⁵

The responsibility of being Roosevelt's valet was indeed a hefty one. Grace Tully's memoir lists three other men who cycled through the valet role after McDuffie's departure, Caesar Carrera, George Fields and Arthur Prettyman.¹²⁶ As valet, these individuals worked unceasingly in FDR's service, from handing him his toothbrush to turning down his bed, making his phone calls and running his errands.¹²⁷ They were also expected to be at his beck and call through the night, a fact which proved McDuffie's undoing. As Lillian Rogers Parks, a White House maid recalls it, Mac had taken to alcohol to calm his nerves:

'One night, though, relaxed from a few too many drinks, McDuffie didn't hear FDR's bell. FDR happened to be all alone for a little while, and by the time he was rescued he was terribly upset. Someone went to McDuffie's room and found him zonked out and asleep. The next day he was terribly sorry. FDR forgave him, but Eleanor heard

¹²¹ Sam Childers, "Presidential Valets: Confidantes of the Wardrobe," *White House History*, Fall 2012, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/presidential-valets> .

¹²² Tully, *F.D.R., My Boss*, 111.

¹²³ Gudrun Seim, interview by National Park Service, October 13, 1971, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association> .

¹²⁴ Sam Childers, "Presidential Valets: Confidantes of the Wardrobe," *White House History*, Fall 2012, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/presidential-valets> .

¹²⁵ Lillian Rogers Parks and Frances Spatz Leighton, *The Roosevelts: A Family in Turmoil* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981), xvii.

¹²⁶ Tully, *F.D.R., My Boss*, 111.

¹²⁷ Parks and Leighton, *The Roosevelts*, 21.

of it and had a conference with some of her sons and decided McDuffie was no longer reliable enough.’¹²⁸

After the next valet, Caesar Carrera, also succumbed to a health crisis, the Roosevelts took to hiring two valets to cover the job – ‘never again would just one man be on twenty-four-hour duty until he collapsed from exhaustion,’ remarked Lillian Parks.¹²⁹ Roosevelt regularly invited his valets, as well as his bodyguards (the most notable of which was Gus Gennerich), into otherwise private spaces, permitting them to observe and assist in even the most personal of activities. Through the service of these men, Roosevelt was able to overcome the physical debility that polio had imposed on him.

Though Churchill was able-bodied, he exhibited a certain blasé attitude to his private space and bodily needs whilst at home. Like Roosevelt, he enjoyed the service of a valet/butler who would help to dress him and would run him a very hot bath every day, from which Churchill happily conducted his daily business. Martin Gilbert, Churchill’s biographer, has collected many anecdotes of visitors appearing during bath-time. These include the memories of Captain Richard Pim in July 1945 (‘he turned quite grey in his bath’) and his literary assistant Denis Kelly in August 1949 (‘he splashed about in the bath’).¹³⁰ Apparently such habits amused the House of Commons who referred to Churchill’s friends as ‘Companions of the Bath.’ The ritual of dictating whilst bathing is evident even from Churchill’s childhood, when as a fourteen year old he wrote to his parents, ‘Milbanke is writing this for me as I am having a bath.’¹³¹ In later years, Churchill’s female secretaries were required to sit outside the bathroom door, whenever he was otherwise occupied, and listen up closely for his dictation.¹³²

Chartwell and Hyde Park were domestic sites but here the accepted division of public and private spheres seemed to fall away. With the influx of service staff as well as the constant presence of extended peers and friends, many ‘private’ affairs and activities took place within the sight of a few, if not a multitude, of people. Intimate companionship as well as close and proximate care-giving was acknowledged as an accepted part of home life.

¹²⁸ Parks and Leighton, 22.

¹²⁹ Parks and Leighton, 24.

¹³⁰ Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, 1988.

¹³¹ Churchill and Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, 1966, 192.

¹³² J. E. Driemen, *Winston Churchill: An Unbreakable Spirit* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Dillon Press, 1990), 86.

Closest allies

Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt had many acquaintances, but sought strength and support from a special few close friends, their ‘inner circle’. These companions perhaps saw more of each man than did their mother or wife. At Hyde Park and Chartwell, they were practically part of the wallpaper, as a backdrop to most mealtimes and celebrations. Each individual friend complemented the character of Roosevelt and Churchill, meeting their insufficiencies and challenging or encouraging them in turn. Scholars have theorised about the heavy lifting undertaken by these associates who wielded unseen power and influence on the minds of Churchill and Roosevelt.

Franklin Roosevelt’s closest friends were an unprepossessing bunch. Frank Costigliola has characterised them as themselves suffering from ‘disabilities,’ here defined in the broadest sense as struggling with inherent weaknesses such as lacking in health, aesthetic attractiveness or social skills. Foremost amongst them was Louis Howe, who suffered from facial disfigurement and chronic asthma and bronchitis.¹³³ Roosevelt’s grandson recalled Howe often smelled ‘rather stale’ and was described by his Granny (Sara Roosevelt) as ‘dirty.’¹³⁴ Costigliola argues that what appealed to FDR about friends like Howe (and later, others such as Harry Hopkins and Thomas G. Corcoran) was their ability to hone their skills and overcome obstacles to their success.¹³⁵

Louis Howe entered Franklin Roosevelt’s life in 1912 and went on to accompany him throughout his fight with polio and later through his rise to political prominence. A journalist-cum-political advisor, according to Geoffrey Ward, Howe never spent more than a few days apart from FDR in the decades that followed.¹³⁶ Indeed, Howe engineered many tactical decisions deployed by Roosevelt over the years, seeing FDR’s potential for leadership right from the beginning of their friendship. During his time as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Howe and Roosevelt developed their signature dynamic.

‘Franklin was the front man; Louis Howe maneuvered behind the scenes. Franklin thrived on the pomp and ceremony, inspection trips, seventeen-gun salutes, honor guards, speechmaking, and impressed people wherever he went. Howe was most comfortable behind a desk, on a phone, at a typewriter. Franklin, at thirty-one, was

¹³³ Costigliola, “Broken Circle,” 683.

¹³⁴ Roosevelt, *Upstairs at the Roosevelts*, 15.

¹³⁵ Costigliola, “Broken Circle.”

¹³⁶ Ward, *A First Class Temperament*, p.199.

youthful, impetuous and arrogant; Howe, ten years older, saw it as part of his job to “provide the toe weights.”¹³⁷

Central to their camaraderie was a deep trust that Howe had Roosevelt’s best interests at heart. This trust only grew during the grim months of 1921 when Roosevelt was holed up in Campobello, paralysed, pained and shocked. Howe came to his bedside. ‘All day he sat at the foot of the bed rubbing FDR’s feet, or stood over him rubbing his aching back,’ described his son, Harlow, who watched on, ‘while FDR said over and over, “I don’t know what is the matter with me, Louis, I just don’t know.”’¹³⁸ Howe was also instrumental in seeking a diagnosis of Infantile Paralysis and in ensuring Dr Robert Lovett, the nation’s leading expert on the condition, came to Campobello to make an assessment. ‘Thank heavens [Howe] is here, for he has been the greatest help’, wrote Eleanor Roosevelt in August 1921.¹³⁹ In the wake of the diagnosis, Howe quickly went back to work in New York to shore up FDR’s political prospects and prepare for a period of absence, after which he was convinced Roosevelt would emerge triumphant.

Louis Howe was such a presence at Hyde Park throughout the interwar years that, much to Sara Roosevelt’s disappointment, he moved in upstairs at the Big House, bringing his ‘personal sloppiness, his hacking cough and undisciplined smoking habits’ along with him.¹⁴⁰ When FDR wasn’t practicing his rehabilitation exercises, Howe would sit with him on the porch to construct model sailboats which they would later float along the Hudson River.¹⁴¹ Howe also spent these years quietly developing Roosevelt’s political stance, writing letters, building rapport and corresponding with important figures around the country.¹⁴²

Grace Tully described Howe as a ‘gnome-like little man of abounding energy and steel-trap mind.’¹⁴³ Eleanor Roosevelt called him ‘an unusually interesting man... and unending source of interest to the President.’¹⁴⁴ Howe was one of the few who would speak honestly to Roosevelt and chide him when necessary. Able to both argue with him and yet

¹³⁷ Quoted in Rowley, *Franklin and Eleanor*, 64.

¹³⁸ Lela Stiles, *The Man Behind Roosevelt: The Story of Louis McHenry Howe* (Cleveland, Ohio: World Publishing Company, 1954), 76.

¹³⁹ Rowley, *Franklin and Eleanor*, 101.

¹⁴⁰ Alfred B. Rollins (jr.), *Roosevelt and Howe* (Piscataway, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1962), 185.

¹⁴¹ Stiles, *The Man Behind Roosevelt*, 88.

¹⁴² Stiles, 88.

¹⁴³ Tully, *F.D.R., My Boss*, 135.

¹⁴⁴ Eleanor Roosevelt, “My Day, September 24, 1962,” *The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Digital Edition* (2017), accessed March 12, 2020, <https://erpapers.columbian.gwu.edu/my-day>.

remain loyal, Howe frequently acted as FDR's 'No Man' in a world of 'Yes Men.'¹⁴⁵

'[Franklin Roosevelt] is so much keener and more forceful than practically everyone he deals with,' Eleanor Roosevelt once disclosed, 'they can't stand up against him.' Eleanor recognised the important role that Howe played in refusing to only tell Franklin what he wanted to hear.¹⁴⁶

The importance of Franklin Roosevelt's friendships in launching and sustaining his political success is difficult to quantify. Frank Costigliola has explored what he calls FDR's 'Broken Circle,' by which he meant the various friends and confidantes lost to him over the years and the consequential decline in the quality of his political work. Costigliola argues that 'Roosevelt's effectiveness and health [had long] depended on his circle,' the likes of Missy LeHand and Howe, who could not be replaced.¹⁴⁷ A separate, but compelling question, is the impact of Franklin Roosevelt – with all his dependency, restlessness and intensity – on the friends whom he held close. Costigliola speculates that FDR's compulsion to mix play with work, his procrastination and postponement of decisions, his need to be surrounded by admirers, and his egocentricity must have taken their toll on individuals like Howe and LeHand.¹⁴⁸ Kathryn Smith's account of LeHand's years of service often details the times that she partook in activities 'that [Roosevelt] found relaxing – and she pretended to.'¹⁴⁹ The stress and responsibility revealed itself in many ways. Certainly, Louis Howe became an absent father and husband, choosing instead to join the Roosevelts, despite his own family's objections.¹⁵⁰ Though Franklin Roosevelt's charm and charisma took a powerful hold of these individuals, their capacity to support him was finite. Howe died in 1936 from health complications. Missy LeHand suffered a stroke in 1941 and died three years later, never having recovered her physical capacity or her emotional buoyancy. As Costigliola argues, the loss of these great aides signalled the beginning of Roosevelt's own physical and political decline.

Like Roosevelt, Winston Churchill was not short of friends. Over the years he built camaraderie with a number of his political peers. Stanley Baldwin both 'impressed and

¹⁴⁵ Costigliola, "Broken Circle," 683.

¹⁴⁶ Francis G. Goodale, *Reminiscences*, August 17-19, 1936, Box 1, Small Collections: *Reminiscences by Contemporaries*, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹⁴⁷ Costigliola, "Broken Circle," 678.

¹⁴⁸ Costigliola, 716.

¹⁴⁹ Smith, *The Gatekeeper*, 134.

¹⁵⁰ Rollins (jr.), *Roosevelt and Howe*.

amused' him.¹⁵¹ Once out of office in 1929, Churchill developed close friendships with three men in particular.¹⁵² The first, Frederick Lindemann was a Professor of Physics at Oxford University. The second, Brendan Bracken, was a Conservative MP. And the third, Desmond Morton, was Head of the Industrial Intelligence Centre in the War Office. These eccentric characters were strongly associated with the Chartwell years where they happily made themselves at home.

Lindemann, known as 'Prof,' fascinated Churchill and all those who observed their friendship. A vegetarian, non-smoking tee-totaller, the Prof was in many ways Churchill's antithesis. But he was invaluable to Churchill for his sharp mind and clear communication skills, which he would frequently use to help Churchill to comprehend complex scientific developments such as modern radar and antisubmarine sonar.¹⁵³ Martin Gilbert here recounts a popular anecdote that reveals Lindemann's skill and charm:

'There was no scientific question which Prof could not answer, or at least appear to answer. Sometimes, at dinner, he would be asked to explain a complex theory within a specific time, say five minutes. Out would come Churchill's watch, and the explanation would begin. Two minutes, three, then four would pass. The final sixty seconds would tick to a close. Then, only seconds from the end, the explanation would be over. Led by Churchill himself, the whole table, family and other guests, would burst into applause.'¹⁵⁴

Lindemann's scientific mind captivated Churchill, who was always eager to keep abreast of modern technologies. Lindemann was nearly always present at mealtimes and major family occasions at Chartwell. His signature is the most frequent to appear in the Chartwell visitors' book.¹⁵⁵ The Prof lived in Oxford, but happily drove up to three hours to stay for a weekend, or just to dine with Churchill at lunch.¹⁵⁶ He was a surrogate eccentric uncle to the Churchill children ('it is hard to remember an occasion on which he was not present,' wrote Sarah Churchill),¹⁵⁷ and a happy tennis partner for Clementine.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵¹ Best, *Churchill*, 117.

¹⁵² Best, 143.

¹⁵³ Colville, *Winston Churchill and His Inner Circle*, 52.

¹⁵⁴ Gilbert, *Winston Churchill - the Wilderness Years*, 13.

¹⁵⁵ Garnett, *Chartwell*, 25.

¹⁵⁶ Gilbert, *Winston Churchill - the Wilderness Years*, 13.

¹⁵⁷ Gilbert, *Prophet of Truth*, 443.

¹⁵⁸ Frederick Lindemann had, in fact, once been the tennis champion of Sweden.

Churchill exhibited admiration and affection for Lindemann. He trusted the Prof's views, and considered him wise counsel. 'He swore by Lindemann,' recalled Churchill's nephew, 'If Prof said it was all nonsense, Winston believed it was nonsense.'¹⁵⁹ His daughter also described Churchill's admiration for his friend's 'splendid mind' which allowed Churchill to forgive Lindemann's imperfections, like his stubbornness, grudge-holding and anti-Semitism. Churchill enjoyed teasing the straight-laced Lindemann. Despite Lindemann's tee-total stance, he once admitted to Churchill that scientifically the human body could ingest ten cubic centimetres of brandy without any notable impact. Soon, Churchill compelled Lindemann to sip this drink at every meal.¹⁶⁰

Brendan Bracken was an entirely different creature: red-haired and outspoken, passionate, brash and rough around the edges. He came on the scene in 1923 when he volunteered himself to assist Churchill with his unsuccessful campaign in Leicester West. Attaching himself to Churchill, his childhood hero, Bracken remained by his side in all the years that followed. 'Although Churchill had lost the election,' write Martin Gilbert, 'he had been impressed by Bracken's energy, enthusiasm and organizing powers.'¹⁶¹ According to John Colville 'Brendan Bracken was totally irrepressible and therein lay much of his strength.'¹⁶² Bracken was less popular with Clementine, particularly when the press latched onto the unfounded notion that he was Churchill's illegitimate son.¹⁶³ These reports pleased Bracken who had a 'flair for publicity' and enjoyed basking in Churchill's limelight.

John Colville, later Assistant Private Secretary to Churchill, has pointed to Bracken's positive energy as the key to their friendship. 'Invariably in high spirits, bursting with optimism and discounting bad news or depressing forecasts,' Bracken was able to lift the mood and bring Churchill out of himself.¹⁶⁴ He was so regularly a visitor for Sunday lunch at Chartwell that the family began to refer to it as 'Bracken Day.'¹⁶⁵ He continued to play this role well into Churchill's later life, appearing in 1953 on the doorstep at Chartwell after his friend had suffered a stroke. Colville argues that 'his confident predictions were so convincing that he restored Churchill's spirits and helped to raise him from what his doctor

¹⁵⁹ Gilbert, *Prophet of Truth*, 442.

¹⁶⁰ Henry James Scrymgeour-Wedderburn diary, September 21, 1928 Gilbert, 301.

¹⁶¹ Gilbert, *Winston Churchill - the Wilderness Years*, 45.

¹⁶² Colville, *Winston Churchill and His Inner Circle*, 61.

¹⁶³ Best, *Churchill*, 146.

¹⁶⁴ Colville, *Winston Churchill and His Inner Circle*, 61.

¹⁶⁵ Best, *Churchill*, 146.

feared was a deathbed.’¹⁶⁶ For all his airs of abrasiveness, Bracken was sensitive and a successful manager of Churchill’s moods.

Finally, Desmond Morton. Described by his biographer as ‘intensely private,’ Morton was a subtle presence at Chartwell, usually slipping in and out for covert meetings with Churchill.¹⁶⁷ In 1923, Morton purchased his own country home, a picturesque cottage called Earlylands, which was itself only a fifteen-minute walk from Chartwell. Churchill would often wander over there to discuss confidential matters with Morton.¹⁶⁸ Gill Bennett has argued that this proximity must be ‘more than a coincidence,’ due to their shared interests and friendship that had been kindled since first meeting in 1916.¹⁶⁹ Reflecting on their earlier work together during the Great War, Churchill described Morton as a ‘brilliant and gallant officer.’¹⁷⁰

During the 1930s, Morton had been gathering economic information about war preparations, as part of his work with the intelligence agency. This information proved central to Churchill’s fight for rearmament. Churchill’s crusade would have been lost without the facts and titbits gained from Morton, which he used to ‘pack his speeches and journalism with so much solid matter.’¹⁷¹ John Colville recalled being ‘mystified by his total indiscretion’ as Morton unpacked top-secret intelligence reports dispassionately to Churchill.¹⁷² His confidence and optimism about Churchill’s influence in the House of Commons reflected Morton’s sincere admiration for his friend.

Churchill chose his friends advantageously, and went on to benefit greatly from the knowledge and skills that they brought to the Chartwell table. As Gill Bennett has argued, Churchill viewed friendship as an interactive process from which he gained insight, advice and a sounding board when required.¹⁷³ ‘Was it significant,’ asks Geoffrey Best, ‘that all three were confirmed bachelors, and thus more likely than married men to give him their entire attention?’¹⁷⁴ Another trait they shared was extraordinary focus and a sort of

¹⁶⁶ Colville, *Winston Churchill and His Inner Circle*, 62.

¹⁶⁷ Gill Bennett, *Churchill’s Man of Mystery: Desmond Morton and the World of Intelligence* (London: Routledge, 2006), 1.

¹⁶⁸ Gilbert, *Winston Churchill - the Wilderness Years*, 16.

¹⁶⁹ Bennett, *Churchill’s Man of Mystery*, 61.

¹⁷⁰ Bennett, 28.

¹⁷¹ Best, *Churchill*, 147.

¹⁷² Colville, *Winston Churchill and His Inner Circle*, 570.

¹⁷³ Bennett, *Churchill’s Man of Mystery*, 29.

¹⁷⁴ Best, *Churchill*, 146.

confidence that many observers (though apparently not Churchill) found distastefully arrogant. Plus, all remained devoted and unfailingly loyal. Throughout his life, Churchill sought ways to repay the friendships he had benefitted from. Lindemann was repeatedly acknowledged by Churchill in his writings.¹⁷⁵ When Churchill gained power he was able to endow Lindemann, Bracken and Morton with top jobs and with honours. In 1941, the Prof became Lord Cherwell and Brendan Bracken was installed as Minister of Information. Desmond Morton was installed as Churchill's Personal Assistant during the war and knighted in 1945.

Home entertaining

The home was a favourite place for Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt to entertain guests from all walks of life. Political rivals, insider sources, celebrities and royalty all came to stay at Hyde Park and Chartwell – if not for the night or two, then at least for a meal. Roosevelt and Churchill both liked to combine their important meetings with mealtimes, which became lively discussions of current affairs and political matters. Winston Churchill was a dominating presence at any dinner table, where he was prone to deliver animated monologues or historical lectures. Franklin Roosevelt was known for his daily cocktail hour ritual, where he would gather his associates over an afternoon drink in his study. The Roosevelt family chose to entertain in a relaxed manner, especially in the summer months at Hyde Park where picnics and barbecues were a common occasion. The Churchills favoured formal dining more in accordance with an inherited aristocratic tradition.

Churchill was pleased to entertain friend and foe alike. He was known for his magnanimity, frequently dining with those he opposed in the House of Commons. According to Roy Jenkins, many politicians, though outspokenly opposed to Churchill during his wilderness years also 'enjoyed an opportunity to visit the fascinating ogre in his castle and to see where he produced the flesh-destroying speeches and articles.'¹⁷⁶ For example, a recurrent visitor to Chartwell during the 1930s was Maurice Hankey, a cabinet secretary who argued with Churchill vehemently both on the India Bill and on questions of rearmament. Jenkins suggests that visitors like Hankey continued to come because Churchill retained a social prestige, and even elicited some admiration during the years whilst the Conservative party rejected him so completely. It was not only political figures who were drawn to

¹⁷⁵ Best, 146.

¹⁷⁶ Jenkins, *Churchill*, 512.

Chartwell, but celebrities and writers, too. 'There was always wonderful talk going on an important and interesting people were forever coming and going,' wrote one of his secretaries. 'Soon after I arrived Charlie Chaplin came to lunch and in those days T E Shaw, Lawrence of Arabia, was often arriving in the middle of the night or early morning on his motorcycle.'¹⁷⁷

Chartwell benefitted from being within an hour's drive of London, where guests could easily luncheon with the Churchills and be back in time for tea. These visitors were treated to very memorable dinner table experiences. From historical monologue to political jousting, Churchill came alive at mealtimes. 'The political crisis of the moment might provide a starting point,' writes Oliver Garnett,

'on which Churchill would happily discourse in trenchant terms until one of the braver guests sought to contradict him. This would stimulate him to further rapier-like thrusts, which only the most nimble-witted could counter. From current politics conversation might leap to historical precedents, whether from Churchill's own long political career or his immense knowledge of British history. The tabletop would sometimes become a battlefield as he re-enacted the charge of the British cavalry at the Battle of Omdurman with pepper pots and salt cellars.'¹⁷⁸

Although Churchill was prone to monologue, others who dined with the Churchills recall that 'he was never a bore, invariably witty and entertaining.'¹⁷⁹ As Annie Gray has commented, 'he treated the dining room as a stage, and dinner as a performance.'¹⁸⁰ Indeed, Winston Churchill was appreciated as a generous and hospitable entertainer, providing 'unlimited champagne, cigars and brandy' and talking with his guests well into the evening hours.¹⁸¹ Those visitors who stayed overnight at Chartwell were subsumed the next day into Churchill's routine. Particularly, guests were encouraged join him on his daily inspection around the garden ('I had never seen Winston before in the role of landed proprietor,' remarked one flabbergasted guest¹⁸²) or to sit with him whilst he painted or laid bricks.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁷ Grace Hamblin, Address at Inner Wheel Club, Westerham, October 24, 1974, HAMB 1/1, Churchill Archives Centre.

¹⁷⁸ Garnett, *Chartwell*, 42.

¹⁷⁹ Dr Maurice Ashley, "As I knew Him: Churchill in the Wilderness," *Proceedings of the International Churchill Societies 1988-1989*, 19th August 1989, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://winstonchurchill.org/the-life-of-churchill/wilderness-years/as-i-knew-him-churchill-in-the-wilderness/> .

¹⁸⁰ Gray, *Victory in the Kitchen*, 180.

¹⁸¹ Henry James Scrymgeour-Wedderburn diary, September 21, 1928 in Gilbert, *Prophet of Truth*, 301.

¹⁸² Gilbert, 175.

¹⁸³ Jenkins, *Churchill*, 415. Best, *Churchill*, 146.

During the 1920s, many country homes were being repurposed as political salons, functionally ‘a setting for the making of strategy and the breaking of political alliances.’¹⁸⁴ Cita Stelzer has explored Churchill’s capacity for dinner-table diplomacy, turning mealtimes into ‘information-exchange seminars, international summits, intelligence-gathering operations, gossip-fests, speech-practice sessions and even semi-theatrical performances’ as the occasion required.¹⁸⁵ Stelzer argues that Churchill was able to manipulate the dinner table for his own political and wartime interests. During the 1930s at Chartwell, these skills were being refined and readied for the years that lay ahead. In fact, rarely would Churchill eat alone. If in some strange circumstance there happened to be no family or friends present then he insisted ‘a secretary must sit with him’.¹⁸⁶

At the Big House in Hyde Park, Franklin’s mother, Sara Roosevelt set the tone for mealtimes. Her strict adherence to social codes provided an air of European sophistication. Nevertheless, Franklin insisted on keeping things informal. Visitors were encouraged *not* to dress up (‘the President hates it & we never do unless we have to for some special occasion’ remarked Eleanor Roosevelt) while secretaries and security guards dined with them at the same table, much to the chagrin of his mother.¹⁸⁷ Guests were charmed by Franklin Roosevelt’s approachability. One visitor in the 1930s described the conversation as animated and free from constraint, full of surprising indiscretion and openness.¹⁸⁸ Another claimed, ‘He had the ability to make you feel extremely important.’¹⁸⁹

When Franklin Roosevelt was at Hyde Park it was always bustling with visitors. In 1936 Eleanor Roosevelt wrote about one evening when ten people came over between the hours of 5 and 6pm ‘just to say a few words to the President.’ Even before he took high office, Roosevelt was a popular host, ‘When my husband is home, guests spring out of the ground!’ wrote Eleanor.¹⁹⁰ One historian describes the home streaming with secretaries,

¹⁸⁴ Tinniswood, *The Long Weekend*, 343.

¹⁸⁵ Stelzer, *Dinner with Churchill*, Introduction by Andrew Roberts.

¹⁸⁶ Grace Hamblin, Address at The Adolphus, Dallas, Texas, October 30, 1987, HAMB 1/2, Churchill Archives Centre.

¹⁸⁷ Francis G. Goodale, Reminiscences, August 17-19, 1936, Box 1, Small Collections: Reminiscences by Contemporaries, Roosevelt Presidential Library.

¹⁸⁸ Francis. G. Goodale, *ibid*.

¹⁸⁹ Mary Susan Dorsett, interviewed by Sue Ellen, National Park Service, July 22, 1982, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association>.

¹⁹⁰ Eleanor Roosevelt, “My Day, September 28, 1936,” *The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Digital Edition* (2017), accessed March 12, 2020, <https://erpapers.columbian.gwu.edu/my-day>.

visitors and political associates during the 1920s and 30s, all constantly buzzing about, making the place akin to ‘a political club-house’.¹⁹¹ Throughout his life, Roosevelt enjoyed meeting with people from all walks of life and was just as happy to listen to his visitors as he was to dismiss their arguments.¹⁹²

In political circles, Franklin Roosevelt became known for his daily Cocktail Hour in which he would gather colleagues and friends together for a pre-dinner drink. Whether based in Albany, Hyde Park, or later in Washington, the afternoon ritual occurred without fail. In Hyde Park the setting was FDR’s small study ‘packed like sardines’, where all the usual characters would crowd together for martinis and whisky sours.¹⁹³ The Cocktail Hour was enshrined by FDR as an apolitical moment, where work matters were laid aside and camaraderie took its place. Here, manoeuvring, showboating or cutting a deal was far from the agenda. Indeed, Grace Tully described it as ‘the pleasantest period of the day.’¹⁹⁴ Curtis Roosevelt remembered watching his grandfather pouring the drinks and clearly in his element. ‘During the proceedings, my grandfather would sit back in his big chair,’ he recalled, ‘— telling stories, making quips, or maybe just smiling, raising his eyebrows, and laughing loudly at the remarks of others.’¹⁹⁵ The Cocktail Hour was regularly cut short by Eleanor Roosevelt who was ‘cordial but plainly reserved,’ and ‘didn’t believe in too much drinking’ so would rapidly call the guests through to dinner.¹⁹⁶

Despite her aversion to alcohol, Eleanor Roosevelt also enjoyed hosting. The Val Kill cottage was home to innumerable picnics which took place beside the swimming pool and tennis courts. Hamburgers and hot dogs were cooked on the barbecue, which ‘looked like a big fireplace set on the lawn.’¹⁹⁷ ‘There wasn’t any fanfare,’ stated a former employee, ‘The guests came and they were treated with kindness and made to feel at home.’¹⁹⁸ Eleanor

¹⁹¹ Rollins (jr.), *Roosevelt and Howe*, 183.

¹⁹² Tully, *F.D.R., My Boss*, 66.

¹⁹³ Roosevelt, *Upstairs at the Roosevelts*, 75.

¹⁹⁴ Tully, *F.D.R., My Boss*, 23.

¹⁹⁵ Roosevelt, *Upstairs at the Roosevelts*, 73.

¹⁹⁶ Lester Entrup, interviewed by National Park Service, February 2, 1978, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association>.

¹⁹⁷ Roosevelt, *Upstairs at the Roosevelts*, 11.

¹⁹⁸ Lester Entrup, *ibid.*

Roosevelt's style was 'simple, homey good taste,' which often stood in direct rebellion of the class distinctions and aristocratic atmosphere that her mother-in-law favoured.¹⁹⁹

The Roosevelts were also happy to include children in their social world. One such child was Diana Hopkins, Harry Hopkins daughter. Diana had become a proxy member of the Roosevelt family and even moved in with them at the White House in mid-1940 after her mother died of cancer in 1937. A friend of Diana's, Mary Susan Dorsett recalled staying with Eleanor Roosevelt as a child in the 1940s.²⁰⁰ Mary Dorsett's memories of staying at Val Kill evoke a lifestyle that was both regimented and relaxed. 'Most of the summer and most of thanksgiving was just a relaxed, fun time. You can imagine a ten year old having that much acreage to run around on,' she reminisced. But nevertheless, 'A great deal was expected of you.... We had to ride, we had to swim, we had to perform publicly.' It was impressed upon Diana Hopkins and her friend Mary Dorsett that they were 'representatives of the United States' and must act as such whenever they met any of the foreign dignitaries or political elite that passed through the Hyde Park gates. These regulations demonstrate that the Roosevelts had become accustomed to mixing duty with pleasure. Later, Grace Tully would remark on the Roosevelt's 'God-given gift of sociability' which made even the most diplomatic occasions 'more fun than work.'²⁰¹

Community men

Hyde Park and Chartwell were ensconced in local communities which Roosevelt and Churchill both viewed fondly. Members of the community – villagers, farmers, business-owners and contractors – frequently interacted with Roosevelt and Churchill in various capacities. Winston Churchill viewed the surrounding community with detached romanticism, while Franklin Roosevelt prided himself on being entrenched in their struggles and experiences.

One integral member of the Hyde Park community was the farmer Moses Smith. Later described by Eleanor Roosevelt as 'an old-time friend of my husband and one of the best-loved citizens in the Hyde Park township,' Smith rented land (an area called

¹⁹⁹ Roosevelt, *Upstairs at the Roosevelts*, 11.

²⁰⁰ Mary Susan Dorsett, interviewed by Sue Ellen, National Park Service, July 22, 1982, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association>.

²⁰¹ Tully, *F.D.R., My Boss*, 310.

Woodlawns) from Roosevelt from 1920 until 1946.²⁰² Here, Moses ran a dairy and general farm for a quarter of a century, while Roosevelt kept the nearby woodland for tree planting.²⁰³ Franklin Roosevelt would regularly stop his car and pull aside to speak with Smith when he spotted him working by the road. According to Grace Tully they would frequently speak for half an hour ‘about the affairs of the world, ranging upward from the furrow of earth Moses was plowing to the strategy for global war.’ Driving away, FDR would remark, ‘Old Moses has some pretty good ideas.’²⁰⁴

Roosevelt valued Moses as ‘salt of the earth’ and used him to stay in touch with the lives of the voting public. Nelson Brown has described Smith as ‘probably the most frank and out-spoken close personal friend of F.D.R’ who ‘had no hesitancy in using language to which he was accustomed – and this wasn’t always language that was commonly heard around official circles of the regular or summer White House.’²⁰⁵ Moses Smith himself later recorded an oral history with the National Park Service, describing Roosevelt’s tendency to drop in on him. ‘Frequently he’d ride over on horseback or drive over with his car,’ recalled Smith ‘and naturally stop and have a bit of conversation with me which I enjoyed, and I believe he did.’²⁰⁶

Moses Smith was also part of the FDR Home Club, organised in 1929 by a group of local citizens. The Home Club arranged birthday parties for Roosevelt and held an annual Homecoming celebration. A typical Homecoming party was an afternoon affair held at Moses Smith’s home, open only to members of the Home Club. ‘The setting with the house gaily decorated is charming,’ wrote Eleanor Roosevelt in 1938 ‘and Mr. and Mrs. Smith are good hosts.’²⁰⁷ The Home Club celebration included entertainment, a military band, celebrity attendees and an informal speech from FDR. According to Smith, Roosevelt enjoyed ‘being back in Dutchess county with his friends,’ and delighted in being able to ‘call himself as one

²⁰² Moses Smith, interviewed by George A. Palmer, National Park Service, January 15, 1948, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association> .

²⁰³ John F. Sears, *FDR and the Land*, 156.

²⁰⁴ Tully, *F.D.R., My Boss*, 66.

²⁰⁵ Nelson C. Brown, *Reminiscences, 1929-1945*, Box 1, Small Collections: Reminiscences by Contemporaries, Roosevelt Presidential Library, 15.

²⁰⁶ Moses Smith, interviewed by George A. Palmer, National Park Service, January 15, 1948, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association> .

²⁰⁷ Eleanor Roosevelt, “My Day, August 29, 1938,” *The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Digital Edition* (2017), accessed March 12, 2020, <https://erpapers.columbian.gwu.edu/my-day> .

of their neighbors.²⁰⁸ Others have noted that Roosevelt used the Home Club as a sounding board for his upcoming policy ideas or appointments. In 1940 FDR announced his appointment of Frank Walker as Postmaster General during one such Homecoming event.

Another notable local occasion was election night, when the people of Hyde Park gathered together for a special torchlight parade. Led by a drum corps, and carrying kerosene torches, large numbers of townspeople would march from the village and descend on Springwood. Roosevelt would appear standing on the front porch, leaning on his secret service staff, to greet the visitors.²⁰⁹ One townspeople fondly recalled lining up, aged nine, to shake hands with the newly elected President.²¹⁰ Local children were often given special attention by Roosevelt, who would slow his car down and wave whenever they spotted him driving around the major roads in Hyde Park.²¹¹

Overall, the Roosevelts were remembered keenly by the Hyde Park locals as hospitable, generous and warm members of the community. One oral history recalls that during the entire Christmas period, FDR would open his property for visitors to cut down and take away Christmas trees for the price of only a dollar.²¹² Local families like the Smiths, and others, such as the Plogs, retained close ties to the Roosevelt family for generations to come²¹³. These memories are patchwork in the ingrained local lore of Franklin Roosevelt's community values. 'FDR was very fond of his many neighbors,' insisted Nelson Brown, 'He liked to ask how the children or grandchildren were coming along – how the cider or potato crop was that Fall – or how the new well or grange was coming along; and to recall the birthdays or wedding anniversaries of some of his favorite neighbors.'²¹⁴

²⁰⁸ Moses Smith, *ibid*.

²⁰⁹ Alex Knauss, interviewed by Frederick Rath, National Park Service, November 29, 1947, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association>.

²¹⁰ James Traudt, , interviewed by Frederick Rath, National Park Service, November 29, 1947, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association>.

²¹¹ Willis Draiss, interviewed by Susan Brown, National Park Service, September 11, 1981, *Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association*, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://nyheritage.org/contributors/roosevelt-vanderbilt-historical-association>.

²¹² Willis Draiss, *ibid*.

²¹³ William Plog, the head gardener and superintendent at Springwood, was another of Franklin Roosevelt's neighbours. Plog was first employed by Sara Roosevelt from 1898 and knew FDR from when he was just boy. Later Roosevelt worked with Plog to establish new tree plantings at Hyde Park and during his early battle with Polio, Mrs Josephine Plog helped to care for him at Hyde Park.

²¹⁴ Nelson C. Brown, *Reminiscences, 1929-1945*, Box 1, Small Collections: *Reminiscences by Contemporaries*, Roosevelt Presidential Library, 15.

Winston Churchill was also sympathetic to the needs and desires of the Sevenoaks community, particularly the people of Westerham, the nearest town. Even as his renown and the reputation of Chartwell grew, he was happy to keep the gates at the front of the house open. 'If he saw people standing there he would call them in,' remembered Grace Hamblin, 'and say "do come and look at my Golden Orf", or "do come and see the garden."' ²¹⁵ Once, when his car broke down nearby, a local 'chap' found him and drove him home, only to be treated to an afternoon whisky with Churchill. ²¹⁶ One year at Westerham's annual gala day, Churchill was invited to crown the Queen of May. Hamblin recalled him being 'very pleased' about this honour, 'As he left the house [for the gala day] he was very jolly about it all.' ²¹⁷

Another story from this period involves a local 'gypsy' family that was living off the land nearby. According to Hamblin, Churchill had always viewed this lifestyle romantically, 'he thought it was wonderful.' ²¹⁸ On the occasion of the gypsy husband's death ('Donkey Jack,' as he was known), his widow ('Mrs Donkey Jack') was issued an eviction notice from the council. ²¹⁹ Shocked, Churchill paid for the husband's funeral and then invited the widow to live on the outskirts of his woods in an old gazebo cottage. ²²⁰ She took up this offer for the remainder of her life. Churchill was very pleased that he could provide this abode for her and that she could continue in her ways.

In their position at the top of their social and familial hierarchies, Roosevelt and Churchill reaped the benefits of widespread loyalty, devotion and, oftentimes, adoration. Hyde Park and Chartwell functioned as almost entirely self-sufficient communities full of individuals ready to provide everything for the man of the house – satisfying their administrative needs, as well as their physical and emotional ones. The sacrifices made on behalf of these men were great. Furthermore, Roosevelt and Churchill held weighty expectations of what those

²¹⁵ Grace Hamblin, Address at Inner Wheel Club, Westerham, October 24, 1974, HAMB 1/1, Churchill Archives Centre.

²¹⁶ Grace Hamblin, *ibid.*

²¹⁷ Grace Hamblin, Address at The Adolphus, Dallas, Texas, October 30, 1987, HAMB 1/2, Churchill Archives Centre.

²¹⁸ Grace Hamblin, *ibid.*

²¹⁹ National Trust, "Donkey Jack's Caravan at Chartwell," *Chartwell Features*, National Trust, Accessed from <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell/features/donkey-jacks-caravan-at-chartwell>.

²²⁰ Roberts, *Churchill*.

around them ought to be contributing, and conveyed as much through their charismatic personas. This leaves the impression that some individuals were tied in service to them more from compulsion than pleasure. In the communal atmosphere of these houses, friends, too, were often swept up in the action and ambition of Roosevelt and Churchill, readily committing themselves to the great man's vision. For the communities of Hyde Park and Westerham, Roosevelt and Churchill loomed as local heroes, independent of how 'community-minded' they truly were.

The lifestyles that Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill enjoyed in their homes was enabled solely by the physical and emotional labour of hundreds of others. Hidden behind these men's great literary and political achievements stood a complicated network of employees, friends, family and associates. Whether in the context of paid work, voluntary assistance or obligatory duty-bound relationships, their labour went on often unrealised by the outside world.

PART II
Hyde Park and Chartwell in Heritage

Chapter Four:
The Contested Home

On a crisp day in March 1946, Winston Churchill arrived at Hyde Park, New York to pay his respects to the late Franklin D. Roosevelt. ‘Solemnly and without words, Winston Churchill walked through a century-old hemlock hedge today and into a rose garden where he placed a wreath on the grave of Franklin D. Roosevelt,’ narrated the *New York Times*, ‘the man who had shared his heaviest burdens during one of the supreme periods of history.’¹ Churchill was accompanied on this trip by his wife Clementine and their daughter Sarah. The group disembarked at Hyde Park just after twelve noon, and were greeted upon arrival by Eleanor Roosevelt, her son Elliott Roosevelt and his wife, Faye Emerson.² But video footage of the encounter shows the presence of a third group, conspicuously standing beside these eminent families – staff from the National Park Service. These men, representing the Department of the Interior, were the new guardians of FDR’s ancestral estate. As the Roosevelts and Churchills approached the grave to pay their respects, Superintendent George Palmer and his second-in-command, Frederick Rath, trailed behind them.³

The Churchills’ visit to Hyde Park was not complete without an inspection of the Springwood home.⁴ It was a familiar building for Churchill, who had come to stay on several occasions, most recently in the wake of the second Quebec Conference in August 1944. But now under the direction of the National Park Service the home was being transformed into a national shrine, and was only a month away from opening to the public for the first time. Frederick Rath, Park Service historian, made notes about the event in his daily diary. He described the chaos of the press and photographers crowding Hyde Park all morning. ‘Soon the Churchills arrived,’ he reported, and immediately, ‘went to the grave and laid a wreath. Then to the Home and they looked a while. Fortunately they liked it.’⁵

The Churchill visit to Hyde Park was a diplomatic success. And, for Churchill, it became an inspiration. Within five months, Winston Churchill, back in Britain, found himself

¹ “Winston Churchill Honors Franklin D. Roosevelt,” *New York Times* Mar 13, 1946, 1.

² “Winston Churchill Honors Franklin D. Roosevelt,” *New York Times* Mar 13, 1946, 1.

³ “Churchill Visits Roosevelt’s Grave 1946,” British Pathé, video accessed April 4, 2019 from <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/churchill-visits-roosevelts-grave/query/churchill+roosevelt+grave>.

⁴ “Winston Churchill Honors Franklin D. Roosevelt,” *New York Times* Mar 13, 1946, 1.

⁵ Frederick Rath Diary, March 12, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

agreeing to donate *his own* home to the nation. This chapter will explore Springwood and Chartwell in their transition from family homes to heritage sites as coordinated by the National Park Service and the National Trust. Each administration was intent on making these homes into reputable house museums, a process was going to take some time and involve disputes over historic interpretation (as Chapter Five will show). But it took no time at all for each house to take on the characteristic of a shrine. As families grieved the loss of a beloved husband and father, and nations sought to honour their heroes, these homes became epicentres of passionate pilgrimage. This chapter considers the process of shrine-building at each site. There were similarities, of course, but also interesting differences. At Hyde Park, the National Park Service made most of the key decisions, with little input from the family. At Chartwell, the family was much more deeply involved, and the National Trust far more attentive to family wishes. While the Americans were willing to give power over the shrine to a government agency, the British reserved such power for private institutions and individuals.

Yet, the managing bodies at both sites faced similar dilemmas: The act of taking private buildings and turning them into public sites, thereby bringing anonymous visitors into intimate family spaces, was never simple. This transformation was not possible without discomfort, whether on the part surviving family pushed to relinquish their hold on the home, or the visiting public, perhaps paying to visit a site that was not designed for their edification or amusement. The balancing of family and public played out differently at Hyde Park and Chartwell, resulting in what looked like a public shrine on the one hand, and a family sanctuary on the other.

Patriotic preservation in Britain and America

Patriotism was the main motivation behind early preservation activity in both the United States and the United Kingdom. The process of protecting special sites, both buildings and landscapes, has often been synonymous with enshrining them for the national good. Although preservation efforts unfolded in different ways, urges to protect sites of natural beauty and historic interest took hold in the middle of the nineteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic as a response to the threat of industrialisation. Yet Britain developed a powerful and centralised private organization (the National Trust) to act as the protector for national heritage long before such a group emerged in the US. Large-scale efforts at preservation in the United States did not gather momentum until federal agencies such as the National Park Service got involved in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Whatever preservation occurred before then was managed by private organisations, often working locally.

Certain locations and structures have had a tendency to become sacred symbols of a national past. Some of the earliest preservation attempts in the US involved the veneration of the founding fathers.⁶ Individual campaigns to protect sites like Mount Vernon, Andrew Jackson's home (the Hermitage) and Washington's headquarters (Hasbrouk House) during the 1850s and 1860s were spearheaded by patriotic Americans, such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, who recognised the power of these sites to inspire future generations.⁷ This was not unrelated to the emerging nativist sentiment that appeared in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. The DAR thought that preserving historic sites, in the words of Patrick Butler, would 'defend traditional values in their own children' as well as inculcate them in the immigrants coming to American shores.⁸

In Britain, the age of imperialism had likewise imbued the preservation movement with patriotic sentiment. The British landscape became the locus of national pride, worthy of protecting.⁹ Scholars have explored the phenomenon of the landscape as emblematic of collective British heritage.¹⁰ Roman and Viking invasions and monasteries and churches all left their mark on British geography.¹¹ In time, special buildings and houses, too, were added to the ranks of worthy national heritage. The very English pattern of *literary* enshrinement surged through the 1880s and 1890s and peaked in the early decades of the twentieth century. Today, writers' houses comprise sixty percent of all 'heroes houses' preserved in Britain.¹² The homes of Shakespeare, Austen, Byron, Dickens and many other literary figures were saved from destruction and are now scattered across the landscape.

In the United States, the preservation movement was for a long time a local enterprise. Many house museums were ad-hoc and volunteer-run, reliant upon community donations and passionate individual curators. Estimates suggest that in 2010 there were

⁶ Robert E. Stipe and Antoinette Josephine Lee, *The American Mosaic: Preserving a Nation's Heritage* (U.S. Committee, International Council on Monuments and Sites, 1988); John T. Faris, *Historic Shrines of America: Being the Story of One Hundred and Twenty Historic Buildings and the Pioneers Who Made Them Notable* (Glasgow: Good Press, 1918).

⁷ Diane Barthel, "Historic Preservation: A Comparative Analyses," *Sociological Forum* 4, no. 1 (1989): 92.

⁸ Butler, "Past, Present and Future: The Place of the House Museum in the Museum Community," 25.

⁹ Paul Readman, *Storied Ground: Landscape and the Shaping of English National Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 127.

¹⁰ See Readman, *Storied Ground*; Raphael Samuel, *Routledge Revivals: Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity (1989): Volume I: History and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2016); Olwig, *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic*.

¹¹ Readman, *Storied Ground*, 135.

¹² Young, "Literature, Museums, and National Identity; or, Why Are There So Many Writers' House Museums in Britain?"

15,000 historic house museums across the United States.¹³ Amy Levin argues that the diverse local museum scene in America can be traced to the ‘cult of individualism’ that gives value to even the most idiosyncratic heritage collections, and the historic development of the highway system that rendered every town a possible tourist location.¹⁴ These local forays into material preservation were heterogeneous and had a relatively low impact on the historical imagination of the general public outside of special interest groups.

The most comprehensive and impactful attempts at national preservation in the United States depended on federal government involvement. During the mid-nineteenth century the central state made timely efforts to protect significant natural spaces in the West (later known as ‘National Parks’) from economic development during industrialisation. Great swathes of the West were informally patrolled by the U.S. Army, despite the ongoing ownership claims of Native Americans.¹⁵ Yosemite (1864) and Yellowstone (1886) were some of the first National Parks reserved by Congress ‘as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.’¹⁶ The administration of these sites was inconsistent, however, split between the War Department, Agriculture Department and the Interior. In 1916, Theodore Roosevelt established a separate agency – the National Park Service – to administer National Parks and Monuments for public education and recreation.¹⁷

The purview of the National Park Service evolved over time from administering only national parks into caring for historic buildings and monuments, too. The first two directors of the Park Service designed key facets of its policy. Stephen T. Mather (director from 1917 to 1929) shaped the Park Service into a public-serving operation by accommodating for the growing number of domestic tourists and adding economic incentives for conservation.¹⁸

¹³ The Pew Charitable Trust. "What to Do With These Old Houses." Trust Magazine, Spring 2008, Accessed May 21, 2020. Available from <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2008/04/30/what-to-do-with-these-old-houses-spring-2008-trust-magazine-briefing>.

¹⁴ Amy K. Levin, *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America's Changing Communities* (New York: Rowman Altamira, 2007), 9.

¹⁵ Robert H. Keller and Michael F. Turek, *American Indians and National Parks* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1999).

¹⁶ Barry Mackintosh, ‘The National Park Service: A Brief History,’ 1999, *History eLibrary*, National Park Service, accessed May 21, 2020. Available from http://npshistory.com/publications/brief_history/index.htm.

¹⁷ Rachel Hartigan Shea, ‘How good old American Marketing saved the National Parks,’ *National Geographic*, March 24, 2015, accessed May 21, 2020. Available from <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2015/03/150324-national-park-service-history-yellowstone-california-united-states/>.

¹⁸ William C. Everhart, *The National Park Service*, Westview Library of Federal Departments, Agencies, and Systems (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1983), 18. Stephen T. Mather, ‘Introduction,’ from *Oh! Ranger* (1928, 1929, 1934, 1972), National Park Service, accessed May 21, 2020. Available from https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/albright3/introduction.htm.

Under Mather, roads, hotels and restaurants were built throughout a number of National Parks, causing them to become ‘true playgrounds of the people,’ recognised by Congress as a vital part of the American ecosystem.¹⁹ Horace Albright, the second director (1929 to 1933) reoriented the Park Service’s priorities, bringing in sites of *historic* significance alongside the existing parks of natural beauty.²⁰ In 1933 he was able to convince President Roosevelt that Civil War battle sites and parts of the Capitol ought to be transferred from the War Department and become the responsibility of the Park Service.²¹ A few months later, by Roosevelt’s Executive Order, the National Park Service began overseeing sixty historic sites, with more to be added.²² Due to Mather and Albright, the federal government became responsible for protecting places of scenic enjoyment and also preserving historic sites for the purpose of cultural education.

Preservation in Britain, meanwhile, remained true to its roots in private enterprise and voluntary organisations. Small preservation societies first began to emerge amongst writers and artists during the 1860s and 1870s as part of the Romantic Movement. The Commons Preservation Society and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Monuments were two such groups.²³ The culmination of these efforts, a mammoth in the world of preservation societies, was the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty. The Trust was born in 1895 from the thinking of Robert Hunter, Octavia Hill and Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley who came together on the platform for protecting the Lake District ‘as a land of exceptional national beauty with an almost spiritual dimension.’²⁴ The early influences on the Trust arose out of social progressivism (Hill had fought to provide open spaces to the poor for their betterment), common land rights (Hunter wrote extensively about the medieval laws for collective urban access to land) and preservationist beliefs (Rawnsley conducted a long battle

¹⁹ Rachel Hartigan Shea, ‘How good old American Marketing saved the National Parks,’ *National Geographic*, March 24, 2015, accessed May 21, 2020. Available from <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2015/03/150324-national-park-service-history-yellowstone-california-united-states/>

²⁰ Horace M. Albright, *Origins of National Park Service Administration of Historic Sites*, (Philadelphia: Eastern National Park & Monument Association, 1971), accessed May 21, 2020. Available from <http://npshistory.com/publications/origins-albright.pdf>.

²¹ Richard West Sellars, “The National Park System and the Historic American Past: A Brief Overview and Reflection,” *The George Wright Forum* 24, no. 1 (2007): 10.

²² Executive Order 6166, June 10 1933, Sellars, 12.

²³ Barthel, “Historic Preservation,” 90.

²⁴ Barthel, 91.

against railway development in the Lakes region).²⁵ The National Trust was incorporated as a public charity. It had enrolled 250 members by 1900, and counted over 8,000 in its ranks by the 1930s.²⁶

Heritage houses have always held a place in the National Trust's portfolio. By the turn of the twentieth century the Trust had already saved several homes from destruction due to their archetypal architectural features.²⁷ Chartwell was one of a number of politically significant houses that the National Trust acquired in the post-war period. Houses with special connections to individuals were collected at a rate of about one per year from 1936 to 1950.²⁸ Chartwell was one of them. A Labour government facilitated this process in 1946 by setting aside 50 million pounds for spending on culturally significant land and property.²⁹ The government handed over the majority of its acquisitions to the National Trust. Owners of significant holdings also were able to donate their homes upon their death, which relieved their homes of crushing estate taxes whilst allowing the owners to continue living in these dwellings until they died. This programme thus became a mechanism for 'ensuring the future of their property and meeting their estate duty liabilities at the same time.'³⁰ David Cannadine has described the Trust in this period as 'essentially oligarchic' with a small elite leadership team that held 'a general presumption that the few knew what was best for the many.'³¹ This elitism was seen clearly in the Country House Committee which was chaired by a viscount and whose secretary was the son of a squire.³²

Enshrining Hyde Park and Chartwell

The genesis of Hyde Park and Chartwell's as heritage sites can be traced to the wishes of Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. Each man knowingly committed his house to preservation enterprises before his own death, eagerly preparing the site for its role as a national shrine. The organisation that each man chose to be their home's caretakers had far-

²⁵ John Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape: A History of the National Trust* (London: Barrie & Jenkins in association with the National Trust, 1988).

²⁶ Barthel, "Historic Preservation," 91.

²⁷ Dr Margaret Ponsonby, *Stories from Home: English Domestic Interiors, 1750–1850* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2013), 161.

²⁸ Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape*, 158.

²⁹ Gaze, 146.

³⁰ Gaze, 147.

³¹ Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow*, 243.

³² Cannadine, 234.

reaching consequences for the sorts of house museums that would eventually emerge on each site.

Like Teddy Roosevelt before him, Franklin D. Roosevelt was a huge proponent of America's National Parks. He declared 1934 to be 'National Parks Year,' and spent the month of August visiting various Western parks alongside the Secretary of the Interior.³³ Roosevelt's passion was instrumental in expanding the capacity of the National Park Service. He pushed Congress to add forty-seven new parks over the twelve years of his presidency.³⁴ It should not surprise, then, that the idea of transforming Roosevelt's Springwood estate into a National Historic Site (a type of National Park) came from Roosevelt himself. In the late 1930s, when building his Presidential Library, FDR engineered the passage of a joint resolution through Congress that enabled him to donate a portion of his estate to the Federal Government. This legislation opened a way for Roosevelt to donate the house itself to the National Park Service, which he did in December 1943.³⁵ Roosevelt deeded the land to the government but retained the right for he, his wife and children, to occupy the estate for the rest of their lives.³⁶ This was not the first US Presidential home to be enshrined as a house museum. Mount Vernon and Monticello, homes of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, had been passed down the generations and were open for public viewing in FDR's day. However, these houses were operated by private foundations and set up by family and kin.³⁷ FDR's self-conscious decision to donate his home to the government – and to establish the legal framework for its administration by the Park Service before his own death had occurred – triggered a unique event in historic preservation in the US.

Churchill's decision to donate his home to the nation came about less from years of planning and more through a convergence of circumstance. From the 1920s, Winston Churchill's investment into rebuilding Chartwell had been financially perilous and, at several points during his ownership of the house, the upkeep expenses alone had caused Churchill to consider selling.³⁸ In November 1945, having recently lost the post-war general election,

³³ Woolner and Henderson, *FDR and the Environment*, 210.

³⁴ Woolner and Henderson, 210.

³⁵ John F. Sears, *FDR and the Land*, 110.

³⁶ "Roosevelts Deed Their Hyde Park Home To Government as National Historic Site," *New York Times*, Jan 4, 1944, 19.

³⁷ "Roosevelts Deed Their Hyde Park Home To Government as National Historic Site," *New York Times*, January 4, 1944, 19.

³⁸ In 1938 he very nearly did so, before Sir Henry Strakosch bailed him out of his debts. Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. VIII "Never Despair" 1945-1965 (London: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), 255.

Winston shared his financial difficulties with a friend, Lord Camrose.³⁹ Camrose, a wealthy man who published the *Daily Telegraph*, provided not just sympathy, but a brilliant solution to Churchill's plight. According to biographer Martin Gilbert, 'Camrose, amazed that Churchill should contemplate selling his beloved Chartwell, proposed that it should be bought 'privately' by friends who would then let him stay in it for the rest of his life, after which it could be maintained as a memorial to him.'⁴⁰

The circumstances of the acquisition remained shrouded in secrecy for a number of years. Publicly, the purchase was attributed to an anonymous group of 'well-wishers'.⁴¹ Camrose had, in fact, set the National Trust method of operation into action. He approached sixteen potential donors, each of whom donated approximately £5,000.⁴² A sum of £50,000 was required for the purchase of the house, and an extra £35,000 was needed to establish a National Trust endowment that would fund future maintenance.⁴³ Churchill and his family were granted a 50-year lease at £350 per year, until such a time when Winston or his dependents terminated their residency at Chartwell. This 'stroke of genius' satisfied the present needs of Winston and Clementine whilst ensuring the home was safe as a permanent memorial to their life and works.⁴⁴ Once the idea took hold, Churchill was particularly enamoured by the notion of ensuring Chartwell's posterity. He wrote to Camrose in December 1945 to thank him 'for all your kindness.' 'You may be sure,' he wrote, 'that Clemmie and I will do our utmost to invest the house and gardens with every characteristic and trophy that will make it of interest in the future.'⁴⁵ According to Martin Gilbert, his official biographer, Winston even contemplated being buried in the grounds at Chartwell.⁴⁶ In this matter one can speculate that his earlier visit to FDR's grave and family home was on his mind.

³⁹ Lord Camrose' full name was William Ewart Berry.

⁴⁰ Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, 1988, VIII "Never Despair" 1945-1965:256.

⁴¹ Robbin Fedden to C. Ponter Esq., February 7, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

⁴² The donors were (alphabetically) Lord Bearsted, Lord Bicester, Sir James Caird, Sir Hugo Cunliffe-Owen, Lord Catto, Lord Camrose, Lord Glendyne, Lord Kenilworth, Lord Leathers, Sir James Lithgow, Colonel Sir Edward Mountain, Lord Nuffield, Sir Edward Peacock, Lord Portal, Mr. James de Rothschild, Lord Rank and Sir Frederick Stewart. List of Donors, May 9, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

⁴³ Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, 1988, VIII "Never Despair" 1945-1965:256.

⁴⁴ Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape*, 162.

⁴⁵ WSC to Lord Camrose (William Berry), December 29, 1945, MCHL 5/1/128, Churchill Archives.

⁴⁶ Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, 1988, VIII "Never Despair" 1945-1965:256.

Upon Franklin Roosevelt's death in 1945 and Winston's Churchill's death twenty years later, each home was officially transferred to the guardianship of their new owners. Both the National Park Service and the National Trust spent twelve months investing in preparations to ready the homes for public visitors. Once opened, Hyde Park and Chartwell were quickly received into the national consciousness as political shrines. On the surface they may have been heritage houses, but newspaper and archival material reveals that during their first years of operation, these sites functioned more like sacred or religious centres. Yet the religion they espoused was a secular one.

According to Robert Bellah, many societies propagate a 'civil religion,' consisting of a series of cultural traditions, ceremonies and myths. This religion functions to build social unity through the affirmation of a nation's past.⁴⁷ In this framework, Hyde Park and Chartwell were elevated as consecrated locations that promised to connect faithful pilgrims to revered political leaders. 'As physical reminders of the revolutionary hero's life [these houses] were relics,' argues Charlotte Smith, bringing one as close as possible to accessing the Great Man's 'mortal remains.'⁴⁸ 'Chartwell [is] one of the two most evocative political shrines in the Western world,' wrote Roy Jenkins in 2001, 'It's only rival is Hyde Park, the Hudson Valley family house of Franklin Roosevelt.'⁴⁹ Jenkins attributes this quality of 'shrineness' to the sense, provided at both homes, of communing with their previous owners. 'In both of them it is easy to imagine, *almost to feel*, the physical presence of the authors of their fame.'⁵⁰ The physical presence of Franklin Roosevelt was perhaps perceived even more keenly at Hyde Park, at the site where he is also buried, along with Eleanor Roosevelt and their dog, Fala.

Administering a national shrine

Sacred spaces are not easily managed. The National Park Service and the National Trust administrations had to balance practical heritage demands on the one hand with ensuring due reverence for the object of national homage on the other. Though they shared a weight of responsibility, where exactly on this spectrum each administering body settled their site

⁴⁷ Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁴⁸ Charlotte Smith, "Civic Consciousness and House Museums: The Instructional Role of Interpretive Narratives," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 21, no. 1 (2002): 76.

⁴⁹ Jenkins, *Churchill*, 359.

⁵⁰ Jenkins, 359.

depended a huge amount on their management structure. The fastidiously managed bureaucratic Park Service stands in sharp contrast to the pragmatic make-do style of the National Trust.

From the outset, the National Park Service staff upheld a duty of care for the home that was both legally mandated and professionally encouraged. Their reverence for the historicity and national significance of the site had been drilled into them by the culture of the Park Service. The staff was closely managed, their activities monitored by weekly staff memoranda and monthly superintendent reports that tracked staff compliance with detailed codes of practice ensuring everything was done 'by the book.'⁵¹ When the Home of FDR was adopted into the Park Service, a new Superintendent, George A. Palmer, was hired. Palmer was efficient and well-regarded within the Park Service, having previously been Superintendent at the Statue of Liberty site.⁵² Second-in-command was Frederick J. Rath, a long-time Parks associate who was returning from wartime service and took employment at the site as resident historian.⁵³

The National Trust lacked these professional foundations or expectations. In the nineteenth century, the organisation had begun as a collection of social reformers and intellectuals who shared a hobby interest in aesthetics. Slowly, this group had gained expertise as skilled land managers. Yet in the 1960s, National Trust management still comprised upper-class gentlemen with pathways into the British aristocracy.⁵⁴ Many in the National Trust Committee were members of the House of Lords, or otherwise well-connected individuals.⁵⁵ A key figure at Chartwell was Robin Romilly Fedden, the Historic Buildings Secretary, who went on to become Deputy Director General of the Trust in 1973.⁵⁶ Fedden

⁵¹ See Superintendent's Monthly Reports 1946-1949, Box 2622, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

⁵² Jannelle Warren-Findley, "Chapter 2: Opening the Home of FDR, 1945-1948" *Administrative History of Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historic Site*, Unpublished transcript, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives, 50.

⁵³ Jannelle Warren-Findley, "Chapter 2: Opening the Home of FDR, 1945-1948" *Administrative History of Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historic Site*, Unpublished transcript, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives, 55.

⁵⁴ Fedden was described by one of his colleagues in these lively terms: "Robin Fedden blended scholarship with activity. Physically he was spare of frame and capable of considerable endurance. He had great charm and a positively delightful stammer in private conversation, which miraculously disappeared when he spoke in public. He had the sort of temper which, although it could be quite violent, was never out of control. It was principally provoked by bad service either from people or machines." (Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape*, 143.)

⁵⁵ John Lansley, "Membership Participation and Ideology in Large Voluntary Organisations: The Case of the National Trust," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 7, no. 3 (1996): 228.

⁵⁶ Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape*, 143.

took a hearty interest in the history of Chartwell and developed a relationship with Mary Soames (Winston and Clementine's daughter), with whom he regularly met to discuss developments at her parents' home. He went on to publish several books, one about Chartwell and another on the administration of the National Trust more generally.⁵⁷

The differences in management style between a professional government body and a chummy charitable organisation played out in big and small ways. Each had an administrative structure that caused significant delays in the remaking of the homes. The National Trust lacked structural protocol and often relied upon individual discretion when it came to decisions on the ground. In the early years, the Trust contracted external land agency firms as caretakers for its properties. But by the end of the Second World War it was deemed necessary to appoint a staff of land agents as fulltime employees. By 1967 there were twenty-four agents who, between them, oversaw eighteen areas of the country.⁵⁸ Area Agents, who traditionally managed property fees and rent were soon supplemented by Regional Representatives, who took care of the architecture and artistic collections.⁵⁹ These were distinct administrative structures that sometimes came into conflict with each other, without an easy way to resolve disputes. Such fragmented administration was typical of the National Trust in the mid-twentieth century, a 'system without unified chain of command, and one in which spheres of responsibility were so loosely defined.'⁶⁰ Some confessed that it was a wonder anything got done.

This style of management is etched into the archival documents. Decisions were often arrived at through informal meetings rather than official correspondence. Gaps in the documents demonstrate relatively low regard for record-keeping. Yet this did not equate to haphazard dealings with clients. Indeed, a show of faithfulness and reliability was crucial when it came to dealing with prominent members or with donors and their families. As John Lasley wrote, '[the Trust] is anxious to reassure these property owners, who are, by definition, among the wealthy members of society, that it will sustain traditions of land management and relations with surrounding landowners will continue to reflect existing

⁵⁷ See Robin Fedden, *The Continuing Purpose: A History of the National Trust, Its Aims and Work* (Longmans, 1968); Fedden, *Churchill and Chartwell*.

⁵⁸ Fedden, *The Continuing Purpose*, 34.

⁵⁹ Fedden, 51.

⁶⁰ Fedden, 51.

social patterns.’⁶¹ To this end, National Trust staff sought to cause as little stir as possible, keeping the peace and approval among those who funded and donated to its cause.

The Park Service had the opposite problem, as training, protocol and proper documentation were held in high regard. The Park Service also had an ingrained hierarchical management structure, running from the Secretary of the Interior who oversaw the Director of the Park Service, who managed the Regional Directors, who managed the Superintendents, who had their own teams at each site. The staff at Hyde Park, in particular, was extensive, including twenty-three full-time employees. This included thirteen guards, seven caretaking staff (gardeners, cleaners and a maintenance supervisor), a fireman, historical advisor, and a clerk-stenographer.⁶² The Guards formed the core of the staff, trained in both first aid and fire protection on the one hand and on visitor interaction and assistance on the other. Across the United States, every National Park and their Superintendent was monitored by the relevant regional managers, who reported any problems to their seniors.

Central to the contrasting management of Hyde Park and Chartwell was the different legal responsibility that each organisation carried. The extent of the National Park Service and the National Trust’s ownership at each heritage site differed. The Park Service received full ownership yet found itself bound by legislation that strictly limited its ability to remake or adjust the Roosevelt Home. The main dictate was the deed of conveyance which transferred ownership of Hyde Park from the Roosevelt family to the United States government. It stipulated that the estate ‘shall be maintained as a National Historic Site and in a condition as nearly as possible approximating the condition... at the expiration of the life estate of Franklin D. Roosevelt’. The National Park Service was thus obligated to avoid any ‘change, modification, alteration or improvement,’ except that which would serve to ‘protect and preserve’ the house.⁶³ There was no such legislation at Chartwell. Although the Trust owned the land at Chartwell, they had received many, but not all, of the contents of the home only on extended loan. ‘Cartoons and letters, medals and chains, Freedoms, galley proofs... All these belong to Randolph [Churchill],’ mused Regional Representative Lord Euston in February 1966.⁶⁴ The Trust was party to a comprehensive loan agreement with the Churchill

⁶¹ Lansley, “Membership Participation and Ideology in Large Voluntary Organisations,” 228.

⁶² See George A. Palmer and Frederick L. Rath, Two Year Summary and Analysis, June 1, 1948, Frederick Rath’s Papers, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives, 14-15.

⁶³ George A. Palmer and Frederick L. Rath, Two Year Summary and Analysis, June 1, 1948, Frederick Rath’s Papers, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives, 2.

⁶⁴ Lord Euston Memorandum to Robin Fedden, February 16, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

family, providing insurance for the objects under its care. This agreement guaranteed that ‘that the Churchill Collection shall in no way deteriorate or suffer injury.’⁶⁵ It stipulated that the objects should be kept in the house, except from time to time when specially requested by the owners. This constituted the official bounds around which the National Trust could operate. It gave the Churchill family assurance about ownership and the National Trust the autonomy to decide how to present and interpret the objects under its control.

These different structures of operation played out clearly on the ground through the actions of staff in the months before their official openings. Appropriate presentation, high levels of security, necessary funds and legal protection were the concerns of management bodies that had been handed the hefty responsibility of venerating Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. Inward-looking anxieties dominated the early years at each site, sidelining any thoughtful exploration of how each home could be interpreted for the public.

At Hyde Park, presentation was a high priority. The sense that the Home now stood as federal ground necessitated an excellent standard of appearance. What Park Historian Frederick Rath and Superintendent George Palmer did not expect was the extremely poor condition of the home which they had ‘inherited’. Cracked plaster, peeling paint, clogged gutters, broken shutters and torn porch screens were only the most obvious problems. The exterior of the home had last been painted in 1934, various sections of roof were leaking and in February 1946 two boilers cracked and broke. The Park Service staff were faced with a huge project to make the house presentable, let alone functional, for the hundreds of anticipated daily visitors. Writing two years later, Palmer and Rath reflected on their manifold concerns. They placed the blame squarely with President Roosevelt’s mother, Sara Roosevelt, whom they felt ‘apparently never considered that the place should be maintained.’⁶⁶ Palmer and Rath knew they would be under pressure to satisfy the visiting public, whose members ‘assumed that the President was a rich man and maintained an exclusive establishment’.⁶⁷ They also knew that poor presentation could land them in hot water with the Department of the Interior. To protect themselves they contracted Mr. Abbie Rowe (who went on to become a renowned White House photographer) to take pictorial

⁶⁵ Loan Agreement, date unknown, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

⁶⁶ George A. Palmer and Frederick L. Rath, Two Year Summary and Analysis, June 1, 1948, Frederick Rath’s Papers, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives, 23.

⁶⁷ George A. Palmer and Frederick L. Rath, Two Year Summary and Analysis, June 1, 1948, Frederick Rath’s Papers, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives, 23.

evidence of the decrepit state of the house. This evidence, they hoped, would give them insurance against future charges of complaints that they had not done their jobs.

The slowly-turning wheels of government bureaucracy further hampered Rath and Palmer in their work. The two men were eager to begin the task of cleaning and restoring the house and grounds in preparation for opening on April 12, 1946. Yet listing the home as a National Historic Site delayed even the most basic improvements. In order to repaint the exterior of the house, detailed specifications had to be sought to ensure historic continuity. An interview with John Clay, the Roosevelt family painter, was ordered to ascertain which paints he mixed to achieve his results. Then a staff shortage at the regional office pushed the matter back into late 1948. Even two years after opening, the National Park Service had not yet managed to repaint the Roosevelt home, even though the house badly needed such treatment.⁶⁸

Training, protocol and proper documentation took up a significant proportion of staff time. Hired as a Parks Service historian, Rath found the scope of his role continually expanding. He wished to dedicate himself to historical inquiry, but instead was frequently tied up in smaller administrative matters. His daily diary entries provide insight into the busy months of 1946 before the house was opened. He spent March working on the labels for each room and formatting a public information pamphlet. April was consumed with writing up a manual for the guards to be distributed for their training.⁶⁹ Frustrated by his inability to work on historical interpretation, Rath lamented, 'It's not that we don't know what to do or how to make a nice-sounding program for historical research,' he complained. 'It's simply that one man can't handle the job.'⁷⁰

One upside to the bureaucratic engine of the Park Service was its access to professional expertise. In late January 1946, Ned Burns (Chief of the National Park Service Museum Division) was called in to Hyde Park to assist Rath and Palmer with technical matters of restoration and conservation. While Burns was on-site, he gave emergency attention to the deteriorating collection of stuffed and mounted birds that FDR had taxidermied as a child. He also provided recommendations of best preservation practice for FDR's clothing and suggested how preliminary barriers might be installed in the doorways of

⁶⁸ George A. Palmer and Frederick L. Rath, Two Year Summary and Analysis, June 1, 1948, Frederick Rath's Papers, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives, 24.

⁶⁹ Frederick Rath Diary, April 4, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

⁷⁰ Frederick Rath Diary, March 5, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

each room.⁷¹ During his crucial visit, Burns conducted long discussions with Rath and Palmer, training them in cataloguing historical artefacts and addressing their various questions ‘with sage advice based on long museum experience’.⁷² To Rath’s relief, Burns sympathized with their difficult situation, joining them in criticising the Park Service’s ‘unseemly haste to open the Home’ despite their lack of readiness.⁷³

Yet, both Rath and Palmer understood that their role at Hyde Park was part of a broader responsibility to uphold the life and values of Franklin D. Roosevelt. In January 1946 the site of the grave was opened to select visitors to commemorate FDR’s birthday (30 January, 1882). In a memorandum to his director, Palmer reported the poignancy of the graveside commemoration. ‘From it all, I came away feeling that the National Park Service has a different kind of responsibility in this area than in any area I know. It borders on a responsibility for a man’s spirit... To me it was a moving experience.’⁷⁴ Likewise, a month before its official opening, Rath spent an afternoon in contemplation of the Home and grounds, ‘I took a walk thro’ the woods down to the River, where it was easy to imagine the spirit of FDR still abroad.’⁷⁵ Respect and diligence were tightly held Park Service values that saturated the priorities of its staff.

At Chartwell, ground staff were not faced with the same fastidious management processes. Rather, oftentimes the proper procedure was unclear, or it became apparent that private ‘gentleman’s agreements’ were able to trump National Trust protocol. Yet the nature of being a large charitable institution also came with a significant burden to ensure that arrangements, such as loan agreements, were satisfactory for all parties involved.

The primary obstacle for readying Chartwell was the matter of securing funds. Financial concerns dominated the National Trust’s decisions in 1965. Managers at Chartwell were reliant upon the funds allocated to them by the General Purposes Committee. Controlling expense and profit at Chartwell was problematic due to the desire to open the home to the public as soon as feasible. At this time, most National Trust houses were only open to visitors for a matter of a few hours per week due to budget constraints. At Chartwell,

⁷¹ Burns specifically recommended keeping woollen clothing items in moth proof boxes and doused in paradichlorobenzol. Ned J. Burns, Report on Protective Measures, February 6, 1946, 0-36 Proposed National Historic Sites (Part 3), 2620, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

⁷² Frederick Rath Diary, January 25, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

⁷³ Frederick Rath Diary, January 25, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

⁷⁴ January 31, 1946, 0-36 Proposed National Historical Sites (Part 3), Box 2620, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

⁷⁵ Frederick Rath Diary, March 9, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

a steady flow of visitors was anticipated. The initial plans to develop the site for the visiting public were presented to the National Trust General Purposes Committee in September 1965.⁷⁶ The projected cost was £20,000. These funds were allocated for house alterations, increasing security, and implementing repairs. This sum also included a modest allowance for purchasing new showcases for the museum section, and protecting valuable objects (like antique books) in the home. But in early 1966, after being urged by Mary Soames to consider refurbishing certain rooms completely, it became clear that the proposed budget was insufficient.⁷⁷ So in February 1966, Fedden returned to the General Purposes Committee to seek authority for an extra £3,000 in expenditures.⁷⁸

Once these funds had been allocated, the National Trust management told its staff to guarantee the security and safety of the site. The Chartwell Area Agent, Ivan Hills, met with the local Fire Brigade in February 1966 to receive recommendations for protective measures at the home. The brigade's advice was comprehensive and included hanging roller steel shutters, implementing fire escape plans, buying a new alarmed smoke detector system, positioning bells outside to alert garden staff, and installing additional fire extinguishers throughout the home.⁷⁹ Although Hills accepted most recommendations, he was able to skip over those which he found prohibitively expensive or deemed 'unsightly' (such as steel shutters dividing each floor of the house).⁸⁰ Even in this decision, the exact location of the National Trust authority remained elusive. Area Agent Hills found himself puzzled about to whom he should confirm these arrangements, and deferred to Robin Fedden. 'There is an instruction that the concurrence of one of the committee (is it the Historic Buildings?) must be obtained,' he wrote to Fedden, 'Please obtain such authority.'⁸¹

The National Trust was eager to establish an agreement with the Churchill family in regards to the 'Churchill Collection' of objects at Chartwell. In 1965 there was some confusion about who exactly owned the artefacts, as they were still in Clementine's name,

⁷⁶ Minutes, General Purposes Committee, September 23, 1965, Chartwell Manor (F. St. J Gore's File), 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

⁷⁷ Memorandum I.E. Hills to R. R. Fedden, January 31, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

⁷⁸ Minutes, General Purposes Committee, February 10, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

⁷⁹ Memorandum from I. E. Hills to Robin Fedden, February 23, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

⁸⁰ Memorandum from I. E. Hills to Robin Fedden, February 23, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives

⁸¹ Memorandum from I. E. Hills to Robin Fedden, February 23, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives

though she had informally promised them all to her eldest son, Randolph, upon her death. Clementine's promise, however, was made behind closed doors and without a codicil to her will, causing anxiety for the Trust. In late 1965, Randolph Churchill had apparently told his sister, Mary Soames, that he intended to transfer most of these objects on permanent loan to the National Trust.⁸² Lord Euston was eager to 'obtain an assurance from [Randolph] to the same effect.'⁸³ The first step was to create a written inventory of all the objects within the house. This process proved more arduous than expected, when it became apparent that the National Trust had moved and relocated a number of items in its redecorating endeavours.⁸⁴ But by May 1966, Clementine Churchill had reached agreement with the Treasury to loan most of the home's contents to the National Trust in lieu of estate duty.⁸⁵

The National Trust was much more pragmatic than the Park Service in its approach to managing a monumental site like Chartwell. This project seemed to have been envisioned as a private enterprise more than a national project. Yet the National Trust had a proper sense of reverence for the memory of Chartwell's past owners. For the Trust, this reverence was strongly connected to the active involvement of Churchill's friends and family, who took on an aura of their own. Writing to Clementine Churchill in 1968, Buildings Secretary St John 'Bobby' Gore described the family's active involvement in this way

'Your interest means everything to us, and because of this, and because of all the help we have had from Mary [Soames], and our good fortune in having Miss Hamblin in the house, Chartwell provides a charm and atmosphere, and to me a very moving quality, which the Trust could never have conceivably achieved on their own. For this I am so very grateful.'⁸⁶

This 'very moving quality' echoes the sense of awe that Park Service employees described experiencing at Hyde Park, especially when attending FDR's Grave Site. Far from worshipping at the site of a tombstone, the National Trust frequently directed their reverence towards surviving Churchill associates, resulting in a home that was angled towards their desires more than the desires of the nation at large.

⁸² Robin Fedden to the Earl of Antrim, November 19, 1965, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

⁸³ Robin Fedden to the Earl of Antrim, November 19, 1965, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

⁸⁴ J. F. Turing to Robin Fedden, July 27, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

⁸⁵ Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape*, 163.

⁸⁶ St John Gore to Clementine Spencer-Churchill, February 27, 1968, Chartwell Manor (F. St. J Gore's File), 110:19:00, National Trust Archive.

The family shrine

The staff of the National Park Service and the National Trust, though rooted in their own style and strategies, were not left to convert these sites alone. There was a looming presence of other stakeholders who sought to shape the homes according to their wishes. Throughout the preparations at Hyde Park and Chartwell, it was necessary for upper management to seek approval, and sometimes permission, from those who had personally known and loved Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, or were closely acquainted with their homes. Foremost amongst these individuals were surviving family. However, the residual power and ongoing involvement of these groups was different in each site. Where Chartwell was a continuing Churchill family project in consultation with the National Trust, Hyde Park was effectively handed over to the National Park Service as a democratic exercise and extensive Roosevelt family consultation was forsaken.

From the first, the program at Chartwell was dictated by the Churchill family, and the National Trust even had Mary Soames, Churchill's youngest daughter, on board at major executive meetings. Although her services were voluntary, she made her opinions known and often acted as the mouthpiece for the wishes of her mother, too. In Spring 1965, Clementine Churchill stipulated to Robin Fedden and Ivan Hills that the house should be seen as it was in its zenith, the 1920s and 1930s.⁸⁷ This era corresponds to when Chartwell was used as a 'family home' and when Churchill spent his most sustained and concentrated time there. Many of the rooms had changed purpose since the war years, so this mission would require reverting and restoring large sections of the home.

Although Soames provided invaluable insight into how the home appeared during these years (having herself lived there as a child) her involvement proved financially troublesome for the National Trust. Soames insisted that the dining room and principal bedroom should be refurnished, including restoring the Churchill's antique bedframe, for historical accuracy. These alterations were undertaken with the assistance of a designer whom Soames sourced from nearby Tunbridge Wells.⁸⁸ It was an expensive endeavour, but not one to which the National Trust could easily object. Writing in June 1966, Ivan Hills confessed to his Area Agent the difficult financial straits that Soames had landed them in. 'I

⁸⁷ Soames, *Clementine Churchill*, 500.

⁸⁸ Memorandum I.E. Hills to Robbin Fedden, January 31, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

think you should know that I have been totally unable to keep budgetary control on the Chartwell expenditure,' lamented Hills, 'A number of unforeseen items of expenditure have become apparent: Mrs. Soames and Hugh arranged for the furnishings of the bedroom and dining room to be specially made in Tunbridge wells... I am not trying to pass the buck on anyone as I accept that the Committee will hold me responsible, although I am totally unable to control the situation!'⁸⁹

A lack of National Trust control over decision-making extended to security measures. Protecting the home was of particular concern to the Churchill family. After the opening luncheon, Churchill's eldest grandson, Winston Spencer-Churchill raised his concerns with the National Trust staff. Upon his urging, the National Trust installed with an advanced electronic security system, in consultation with the Chief Constable of Kent.⁹⁰ Spencer-Churchill also pointed out that the practice of closing the home for an hour over lunch was problematic for ongoing surveillance. Although the opening hours had already been advertised in publicity material, Robin Fedden assured Spencer-Churchill that 'we welcome your suggestions and will put them into operation next year.'⁹¹

Accommodating for the views of the Churchill family was not only cumbersome for the National Trust but also appears to have been intimidating and anxiety-producing. At one point in the preparations, it became necessary to implore Randolph Churchill, Winston and Clementine's eldest son for assistance. It was hoped by Fedden and others that he could be convinced to pen an introduction for the guide books.⁹² The matter of soliciting Randolph Churchill for this four-thousand-word piece on 'Churchill and Chartwell,' and reminding him to produce it in time, was an issue of much discussion in management ranks. Fedden, who had been assured by Lord Antrim of Randolph's willingness to write a preface, put off speaking to him all through the early months of 1966. In late April, when time had nearly run out, Fedden finally enquired of Randolph. 'We should like if possible to get the text of a guidebook to the printer within the next couple of weeks,' he wrote, 'If you could write us a preface we should immensely appreciate it.'⁹³ This deference to Churchill's nearest and

⁸⁹ Memorandum I.E. Hills to Area Agent, June 6, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

⁹⁰ Robbin Fedden to Winston S. Churchill Esq., May 20, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

⁹¹ Robbin Fedden to Winston S. Churchill Esq., May 20, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

⁹² Robin Fedden to the Earl of Antrim, November 19, 1965, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

⁹³ Robin Fedden to Randolph Churchill, April 4, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

dearest characterized the attitude of the National Trust throughout the preparation of Chartwell.

The National Trust actively sought advice from the Churchills but the spirit of the Churchill family also resided on site – literally – with the live-in administrator, Grace Hamblin. As discussed in Chapter Three, Hamblin had previously been employed as a secretary. Hamblin began her career under Churchill in 1932, when she was called in from a local village to provide temporary secretarial assistance at Chartwell.⁹⁴ At the age of twenty-four, Hamblin became a central asset in the Churchill home, esteemed for her discretion, loyalty and unfussy manner.⁹⁵ She was a long-serving secretary for Winston Churchill, and after 1939, became the private secretary for Clementine at Downing Street. Her lifelong connection to Chartwell was unique among non-family members, and in 1965 she was regarded as a fitting administrator for the home when the National Trust took over management.⁹⁶

Hamblin acted as a chief of staff, and as a matriarch. The sections of Chartwell not opened to public viewing were divided in separate living quarters. Hamblin occupied the second-floor apartment.⁹⁷ In early 1966 the search was underway for additional live-in caretakers to assist her. In March the position of ‘Chartwell custodians’, preferably a married couple, was advertised in the Daily Mail.⁹⁸ Despite a mass of replies, Hamblin was surprised by the responses she received. ‘One couple have already turned us down saying the flat is not large enough!!’ she wrote on March 17, and ‘Another couple said they would want much more money!’⁹⁹ The responsibilities given to Hamblin and her staff were extensive. They were the first port of call for receiving and showing guests around the house.¹⁰⁰ Hamblin’s other responsibilities included ticketing, press and public relations. Besides Grace Hamblin, the Churchill’s previous Head Gardener, Victor Vincent, was also retained in his position. Hamblin and Victor, along with Mary Soames, were key players in the choices made at

⁹⁴ “Grace Hamblin,” Obituaries, October 18, 2002, *The Telegraph*, Accessed April 1, 2019 from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1410497/Grace-Hamblin.html>.

⁹⁵ Richard M. Langworth, “Remembering Grace Hamblin 1908-2002,” *Finest Hour* 177, Winter 2002, 18, Accessed April 1, 2019 from <https://winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour/finest-hour-117/remembering-grace-hamblin-1908-2002/>.

⁹⁶ “Chartwell: The National Trust Story,” *The National Trust*, Accessed April 1, 2019 from <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell/features/chartwell-the-national-trust-story>.

⁹⁷ Memorandum from I. E. Hills to Robin Fedden, February 23, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, NT.

⁹⁸ Miss Wigram to Grace Hamblin, March 16, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

⁹⁹ Miss Wigram to Grace Hamblin, March 16, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁰⁰ Spring 1966, National Trust, Historic Newsletters, National Trust Archives.

Chartwell, blurring the lines of authority between the National Trust and Churchillian friends and family.

Family involvement at Chartwell was not limited to the early years, but was ongoing. Archival evidence from the 1990s demonstrates that family members continued to hold sway, even twenty-five years on. When a proposal to install a life-size Oscar Nemon statue of Winston and Clementine at Chartwell was raised in January 1990, the resolution of the National Trust was tested. The idea was originally dismissed by the Historic Buildings Secretary as in conflict with the main desire to preserve Chartwell exactly as it stood when the Churchill's lived there, 'not as a museum'.¹⁰¹ There was concern amongst upper management that the installation of a statue of this sort would give the impression of Chartwell being a 'public park.' Nevertheless, once the idea had passed through Mary Soames and Winston S. Churchill, it became clear that the family in fact strongly wished the statue to be installed.¹⁰² By March, the Director General of the Trust had sent a remorseful letter to Winston S. Churchill to apologise for their initial hesitation. 'We are anxious to be guided by you and Mary Soames,' he wrote, 'I hope you will forgive our original caution.'¹⁰³ So on November 13, 1990, the statue was unveiled with much pomp at a large ceremony, with the Queen Mother in attendance.¹⁰⁴ In this situation and many others, the National Trust has been willing to be 'guided' by the views of the family, even against its own wishes or opinions.¹⁰⁵

These circumstances were not mirrored at Hyde Park. A democratic spirit outshone the aura of the surviving Roosevelt family. It was not for lack of their presence; Roosevelt children and grandchildren would come and go over the years and Eleanor Roosevelt herself resided only three-miles away, at Val Kill. Nevertheless Eleanor's contact with the National Park Service was infrequent. During 1945 and 1946 Eleanor Roosevelt occasionally appeared unannounced at the Home. She would sometimes drive over and bring her guests to see the

¹⁰¹ Martin Drury to Mary Soames, February 27, 1990, Chartwell: Churchill's Statue, 106:57:00, National Trust Archive.

¹⁰² Winston S. Churchill to Angus Stirling, March 15, 1990, Chartwell: Churchill's Statue, 106:57:00, National Trust Archive.

¹⁰³ Angus Stirling to Winston S. Churchill, March 23, 1990, Chartwell: Churchill's Statue, 106:57:00, National Trust Archive.

¹⁰⁴ Jennifer Jenkins to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, November 19, 1990, Chartwell: Churchill's Statue, 106:57:00, National Trust Archive.

¹⁰⁵ Martin Drury to Angus Stirling, January 29, 1990, Chartwell: Churchill's Statue, 106:57:00, National Trust Archive.

old Big House.¹⁰⁶ Her imposing presence at Hyde Park was always duly noted down in Rath's diaries. Yet she made a point of avoiding any special treatment. This is evidenced in a conversation that Rath recorded in his diary in June 1946:

‘[Eleanor Roosevelt] was on the point of leaving when she turned back and said, “Mr Rath, I’ve been meaning to speak to Mr Palmer about this, but I’ve forgotten. You’ll have an entrance fee here, I know, and I’ll probably want to pop over from time to time and even bring guests. I wonder if it would be possible for me to buy a book of season tickets or something similar?” I just laughed and promptly assured her that she (or members of her family) would never have trouble getting in.’¹⁰⁷

When Eleanor was on-site, she disliked bringing attention to herself. Her guests were often ‘wafted in past the old kitchen’ to see the interior. But eventually ‘Mrs Eleanor gave up visiting the *inside* of the Home,’ recalled Rath, ‘She learned to come in without disturbing anyone, but she never failed to be gracious with the people who spied her.’¹⁰⁸

The strongest opinions about ‘how things should be done’ at Hyde Park came not from the Roosevelt family but from the previous staff and caretakers who had stayed on at Springwood. Remarkably, six of these staff were previous employees at the Hyde Park estate for the Roosevelt Family. An Executive Order in February 1946 ensured their continued employment under the National Park Service’s administration.¹⁰⁹ Most significant among them were William A. Plog, the maintenance supervisor, and Robert McGaughey, a previous butler who was now employed as an historical aide. Early reports indicate that the elderly Plog often engaged George Palmer in long and persuasive conversations about the state of the gardens, which he had managed since FDR was a boy.¹¹⁰ Plog’s chief concerns for maintaining the exact rose varieties (that he had been using his own cuttings to sustain since Sara Roosevelt’s death) required the National Park Service to purchase 400 new plants for the greenhouse alone. Rath also noticed Plog’s diligent attitude and watchful eye at Hyde Park. ‘How fond he is of this place,’ remarked Rath, after hearing that Plog was consistently reporting for work at 7:00am each day.¹¹¹ Robert McGaughey was also regarded as an

¹⁰⁶ See Frederick Rath Diary, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

¹⁰⁷ Frederick Rath Diary, July 29, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

¹⁰⁸ Frederick Rath Diary, July 31-September 5, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

¹⁰⁹ Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region One, 1946, 0-36 Proposed National Historic Sites (Part 3), 2620, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹¹⁰ Memorandum from George Palmer, February 15, 1946, 0-36 Proposed National Historic Sites (Part 3), National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, 2620, NARA II.

¹¹¹ Frederick Rath Diary, May 23, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

invaluable continuing associate. His depth of insight into the Roosevelt lives was put to good use, as he was stationed in the Home to answer visitor questions. These men, along with the other staff that the Park Service retained at Hyde Park, served as a living reminder of Springwood's past.

As federal employees, members of the Park Service were schooled in showing deference and respect towards the presidential family, their previous staff, and especially Eleanor. The Park Service learned to handle Eleanor's unexpected appearances at Hyde Park with good humour (once spotted, she 'created a magnificent stir in the crowd,' recalled Rath).¹¹² Yet Eleanor Roosevelt and other family members allowed National Park employees to get on with their job without undue interference, seeming to recognise that the home now belonged to the American people.

Something of the difference between how the Churchills and the Roosevelts handled the transition of their homes into public shrines came about as a result of their own emotions about the site. The surviving family members of the Churchill family felt a degree of ownership over Chartwell that was not echoed on the other side of the Atlantic. In her speech at the opening of Chartwell, Mary Soames repeatedly used the inclusive pronoun: '*We* are most anxious to point out that Chartwell is not, even now, a 'finished' product... *we* plan to... *we* hope to...'¹¹³ Soames positioned herself and her mother as the ongoing guardians of the home, in partnership with the National Trust. 'But whatever changes and additions are made, the object is to show Chartwell as a home,' she stated, reiterating the house as essentially a familial site. From the 'Marycot' play cottage in the garden, to the golden rose walk which was gifted by the children at their parents' wedding anniversary, the house testified to the enjoyment of generations of the Churchill family. At the time of Winston's death, his wife, three children and four grandchildren survived him. Apart from a brief interlude during the war years, this house had been the nucleus of Churchill family events and celebrations for forty years.

The Springwood 'Big House' held a different place in the Rooseveltian familial culture. It had always been associated with the dignified and strong-willed character of Sara Roosevelt, Franklin's mother, who lived and held the fort at Hyde Park until 1941. In Eleanor's speech at the dedication of Hyde Park, she emphasized it as a place for the public

¹¹² Frederick Rath Diary, June 9, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

¹¹³ Italics are added. Rough Notes of Speech Made at Chartwell Press Conference, May 19, 1965, 5/1/297, MCHL, Churchill Archives.

to enjoy the ‘privilege of learning about my husband *and his mother*,’ conspicuously excluding herself and her children from the picture.¹¹⁴ Unlike Winston and Clementine, who had been equals in buying and developing Chartwell, Eleanor Roosevelt never felt part of the operations at Springwood, as she had been relegated to the side-lines by her mother-in-law. By 1924 a separate cottage, Val Kill, had been built for Eleanor Roosevelt and her friends, and in 1939 another house, Top Cottage was built as Franklin Roosevelt’s retreat. In the Hyde Park estate, separation between family members found material expression in separated dwellings. As a consequence, when Springwood was opened to the public, though it held fond memories for children and grandchildren, it had already become a relic of the past. With the death of Sara Roosevelt five years previously, perhaps the living spirit of the home had also passed. In Eleanor’s speech at the Dedication of the home in April 1946 she relinquished any responsibility for the home. ‘I now turn over the full possession of the land, the house with its contents, and the other things which my husband willed to the people of the United States,’ Eleanor Roosevelt declared.¹¹⁵

Ultimately, the nature of the administering body dictated the extent to which family members were given a platform. Even if Eleanor Roosevelt had strong opinions about Hyde Park, it is not clear that her views would have held sway. The Park Service that managed Springwood was a government institution and obligated as such to operate by formal bureaucratic rules which tied them towards service to the American people. Many of its policies overruled the scope for individual judgments, even if those judgments came from the Roosevelt family. The National Trust, conversely, was a private charity operated by likeminded individuals who shared the same social circles as the Churchills, and were answerable to few. Although the National Trust was in the process of professionalising, many of its staff had still come to the job as hobbyists, and they displayed a higher regard for chummy know-how and connections than bureaucratic consistency. The valuing of social prestige over trained professionalism allowed members of the highly regarded Churchill family, like Mary Soames, to integrate themselves into the National Trust’s upper echelon. The National Park Service was a government body and so it took legal control of the Hyde Park estate in a more comprehensive manner than the National Trust, which technically only received the contents of the Springwood house on extended loan. Eleanor Roosevelt could advise the National Park Service but the latter was not required to get her consent to changes.

¹¹⁴ Italics are added. “Addresses at the Roosevelt Shrine Dedication,” *New York Times*, April 13, 1946, 2.

¹¹⁵ “Addresses at the Roosevelt Shrine Dedication,” *New York Times*, April 13, 1946, 2.

The National Trust, conversely, could make only limited physical changes to the site without the Churchill family's permission. This encouraged the National Trust to build positive relationships with the Churchills and include them in all the preparations, while the Roosevelts took a back seat to the National Park Service.

The Public Shrine

Beyond the surviving family and associates, a much broader audience was eager to visit Hyde Park and Chartwell to pay their respects. In July 1966 the *Washington Post* reported that Chartwell 'has had 50,000 visitors since it was opened as a shrine five weeks ago.'¹¹⁶ Likewise, Hyde Park had a steady flow of visitors – even before the Home was opened – as federal guards lined the nearby rose garden gravesite, letting mourners inside to acknowledge their loss.¹¹⁷ As the primary audience and source of income, the visiting public held significant sway. Public appetite was dominated by a desire for convenience at each site, as well as an appropriate environment in which to pay homage. Staff were eager to meet these requests with as little disruption to their finances, and to the historic site, as possible. Reluctance and delay have frequently been the first response on the part of the keepers of the sites. Nevertheless, the Park Service was fashioned more towards democratic public service than the National Trust, who instead attempted to channel their audience into lucrative gains.

From the beginning, staff at Hyde Park and Chartwell sought ways to publicise their sites to prospective visitors. Attracting customers had always been at the heart of the task to transform these houses in order to make their management sustainable. To get the word out about the opening of Hyde Park, Park Service sponsored adverts on many local and regional syndicated radio stations and in syndicated newspapers. The Park Service's biggest opportunity came when they were approached by *LIFE* magazine in early 1946.¹¹⁸ Rath committed considerable time and worked hard to ingratiate himself with the *LIFE* journalists, then writers for America's largest weekly newsmagazine. He lunched with them, showed photographers around the house, fielded fact-checking calls and worked late into the

¹¹⁶ *The Washington Post*, Times Herald, (Washington, D.C.), 31 July 1966, A4.

117

H. I. Brock, "Hyde Park: A New Shrine: Visitors come to President Roosevelt's old home as to a place of pilgrimage," *New York Times*, (New York, NY), 11 November 1945, 79.

¹¹⁸ Life Magazine Article, Dedication, Box 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

evening throughout February and March.¹¹⁹ His efforts to get ‘the very best possible break in the mag’¹²⁰ were largely successful, as the four-page spread published in *LIFE* on April 15, 1946, attests. Despite reporting on the unexpected modesty and style of the home (‘Hyde Park is a comfortable architectural hodgepodge’), the accompanying photos and captions provide a stirring glimpse into the inner world of Roosevelt’s disability, hobbies and family life.¹²¹

National Trust staff also yearned for public appeal. The biggest break given to Chartwell came in the form of a special twenty-page inset in the *Illustrated London News*.¹²² This collector’s edition booklet included an article written by Anthony Montague Browne, previously Winston Churchill’s private secretary. ‘Even though Chartwell is now a museum,’ wrote Browne, ‘it has been converted with love and taste and there is nothing there of echoing emptiness and dead memories.’¹²³ With a map and a guide to the house included, this inset was designed to prime the public for visiting Chartwell. During the 1960s, the *Illustrated London News* had circulation of over 50,000 readers, an audience the National Trust was pleased to reach.¹²⁴

After generating sufficient publicity, the next step for site staff was to provide visitor amenities. Toilets, cafes and other conveniences would be required, especially as visitation grew. Until the reconfiguration of visitor experience in the 1990s, with the advent of the Experience Economy (as will be discussed in Chapter Five), both the National Trust and the National Park Service sought to satisfy visitor needs at the lowest cost possible. Yet questions of visitor consumption highlighted the internal contradiction at the heart of the Park Service, that was torn between providing first-class public service and ensuring impeccable caretaking of the site which staff felt must *not* involve any disruption to its authenticity.

When the National Park Service opened the Home of FDR to the public, they were not starting the site from scratch. The adjacent Presidential Library was already accommodating a large visitor base, and it was thus equipped with the essential amenities,

¹¹⁹ See Frederick Rath Diaries February 18, March 14 and 15, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

¹²⁰ Frederick Rath Diary, March 1, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

¹²¹ Life Magazine Article, Dedication, Box 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹²² *Illustrated London News*, 1966, Chartwell: Gardens, CIR 621, National Trust Archive.

¹²³ *Illustrated London News*, 1966, Chartwell: Gardens, CIR 621, National Trust Archive.

¹²⁴ Edward B. Orme, ‘A History of the *Illustrated London News*,’ 1986, *Illustrated London News*, accessed May 21, 2020. Available from https://www.iln.org.uk/iln_years/historyofiln.htm.

which the National Park Service was able to use for the Springwood home as well. Visitors to the home were encouraged to use restrooms in the Library's basement. For the first few years, the staff at the Library even handled the Home's ticket sales. This was an expedient solution as the Park Service scrambled to make Hyde Park ready for visitors, but it could not be a permanent one. During the heavy summer season, the Library's basement became overcrowded with visitors waiting long in line for the restrooms.¹²⁵

Yet there was considerable reluctance on the part of the Park Service to build their own facilities. This hesitation does not appear to be entirely financial. Instead, the Park Service staff felt strongly that it was not appropriate to build excessive comfort or recreational facilities in deference to the serious and historic nature of the home. 'The desire to preserve an atmosphere of reverence and serious contemplation in the immediate vicinity of the dwelling and grave exclude picnic areas and refreshment stands from our plans for development,' wrote the Acting Director in 1946.¹²⁶ The National Park Service spent much of 1946-1947 considering erecting a temporary restroom facility beside the house, but they were anxious not to disrupt the original appearance of the site. Eventually a nearby barn (an existing historic building) was delicately converting for these purposes.¹²⁷

The Park Service was remarkably slow to interfere with the authenticity of the site in any way. It was not due to a lack of regard for visitor experience. In fact, a permanent contact station, where restrooms, a concessionary stall and ticket booths could all be located, had long been an ambition of the National Park Staff. As early as 1961, discussions had emerged at Hyde Park about the possibility of building a 'badly needed' orientation centre.¹²⁸ In 1963, John W. Bond developed an interpretive prospectus for the proposed 'Visitor Entrance Facility'. In his prospectus, Bond suggested that the facility include an auditorium to be used to display a professionally produced 16mm movie as well as a general orientation exhibit about 'FDR the man, with special emphasis upon FDR's associations with the Roosevelt

¹²⁵ Nathan Fendrick to United States Department of the Interior, October 28, 1946, Washington Liaison Office, 1946, Box 2620, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹²⁶ Hillory A. Tolson to Nathan Fendrick, November 7, 1946, Washington Liaison Office, 1946, Box 2620, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹²⁷ Memorandum, Elbert Cox (Acting Regional Director), December 12, 1946, Washington Liaison Office, 1946, Box 2620, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹²⁸ Charles R. Rinaldi, Information and Interpretive Services Report, January 29, 1961., Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

Hyde Park Estate.’¹²⁹ Bond also envisaged it as a place for literature to be on sale, tickets to be sold and comfort facilities made available.¹³⁰

Such a building, the Park Service foresaw, must be built beside the Presidential Library. Only here could it be sure not to disrupt the Home’s historic setting. Attempts to work towards an orientation centre through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were blocked by the National Archives and Records Administration, a separate government department that ran portions of the Presidential Library. The dream of an interactive visitor orientation building would not be realised until the Wallace Center was constructed in 2003, over forty years later.

At Chartwell, there was initially a similar delay in getting visitor amenities off the ground. From the moment of opening, visitor demand for refreshments was high. The National Trust was limited by a very small budget. At first, a coffee stall in the car park was floated as a possible solution.¹³¹ The need for visitors to be able to buy ‘a restorative cup of tea’ was recognised by management, but concerns prevailed about how to achieve this in a tasteful way.¹³² It was felt by I.F. Blomfield that ‘if we are going to provide teas at Chartwell these should be done well... A mobile canteen even in the carpark wouldn’t be in keeping with the atmosphere we have tried to create.’¹³³ Another possible solution, the installation of vending machines inside Orchard Cottage, was deemed similarly out of step with the style of the home.¹³⁴ Finally, in 1970 the first tearoom building, in a dark and modern style, was constructed in the car park.¹³⁵ Despite attempts to insure the tearoom was suitable and subtle, it was not unanimously well-received. The style of the building and the poor management of the restaurant (which was then operated by an external catering company) caused the

¹²⁹ John W. Bond, *Interpretive Prospectus*, 1963, *Interpretive Prospectus Visitor Entrance Facility*, Box 12, Roosevelt Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

¹³⁰ John W. Bond, *Interpretive Prospectus*, 1963, *Interpretive Prospectus Visitor Entrance Facility*, Box 12, Roosevelt Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

¹³¹ Grace Hamblin to E. P. Ryan, July 12, 1967, *Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977*, 134:46:00, National Trust Archive.

¹³² E. P. Ryan to St John Gore, July 14, 1967, *Chartwell Manor (F. St. J Gore's File)*, 110:19:00, National Trust Archive.

¹³³ I.F. Blomfield to E.P. Ryan, July 26, 1967, *Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977*, 134:46:00, National Trust Archive.

¹³⁴ St John Gore to T. P. Burr, November 30, 1967, *Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977*, 134:46:00, National Trust Archive.

¹³⁵ T. L. Jose to Secretary General, June 13, 1974, *Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977*, 134:46:00, National Trust Archive

Director-General to lament in 1978, '[the Chartwell restaurant] seems to attract more than its share of criticism.'¹³⁶

Yet this criticism seems to have pushed the National Trust more rapidly towards visitor reforms. Unlike the Park Service who felt unable to make any major structural changes as the caretakers of the site, the Trust prioritised visitor feedback. In late 1986, after considerable discussion amongst the National Trust architectural panel, the restaurant at Chartwell was renovated and enlarged.¹³⁷ The Historic Buildings Secretary Martin Drury described it as 'a huge improvement on the original building' when it was completed in January 1989.¹³⁸ Then in 1992 a shop was added to the side of the restaurant. Previously, the downstairs kitchen inside the home had been used as the shop space, so with the new building this interior area at Chartwell was restored and furnished 'to convey its character when it was originally in use.'¹³⁹ Finally in 1996 the modern ticket office building was constructed.¹⁴⁰

In the first thirty to forty years of operation, the National Trust was much more responsive to customer feedback and adaptable in their site management than the National Park Service. At Hyde Park, both bureaucratic barriers as well as a desire to protect the atmosphere of 'reverence and serious contemplation' limited the possibilities for shopping and amusements at the site. Traditionally, many have viewed the project of national enshrinement as at odds with capitalistic consumerism. Scholars who have written about the Gettysburg site, for example, bemoaned the gulf between the 'commercial exploiters' and the true 'memorializers.'¹⁴¹ Jim Weeks, however, argues that this dichotomy amounts to unhelpful moralising that neglects to understand the interrelationship between consumption and memory-making. 'Shrines require pilgrims and pilgrims in modern societies are consumers of images and services,' he writes. 'Gettysburg has been part of a cultural marketplace ever since the shooting stopped, and its memory has spread with the growth of consumer culture'.¹⁴²

¹³⁶ Director-General to Kenneth Why, April 3, 1978, Chartwell Manor: General, 106:65, National Trust Archive.

¹³⁷ Assistant Historic Buildings Secretary to Martin Drury, February 6, 1986, Chartwell: Management (1983-1987), 112:68, National Trust Archive.

¹³⁸ Martin Drury to D. E. Bourn, January 27, 1989, Chartwell: Management (1983-1987), 112:68, National Trust Archive.

¹³⁹ Chartwell Management Plan 1998-2002, January 1998, Chartwell Reports, CIR 612, National Trust Archive.

¹⁴⁰ Chartwell Management Plan 1998-2002, January 1998, Chartwell Reports, CIR 612, National Trust Archive.

¹⁴¹ Jim Weeks, *Gettysburg: Memory, Market, and an American Shrine* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009), 6.

¹⁴² Weeks, 6.

The integration of consumerism with memorialization was certainly well advanced at Chartwell, where monetising visitors has always been integrated into customer-facing operations. Profits were a major concern amongst National Trust staff in the early years. In particular, the sale of souvenirs was regarded as a possibly lucrative endeavour that should be carefully considered. The downstairs pantry at Chartwell was to be converted into a small gift shop, and the contents of this shop were extensively discussed by National Trust staff. As early as February 1966, Fedden attended a Souvenir Exhibition at the Council of Industrial Design to see what might be possible.¹⁴³ By the end of the month, Fedden had settled on the possibility of a Crown Staffordshire China coaster-sized ashtray, showing a gold coin design which would read ‘Winston Churchill 1874-1965’.¹⁴⁴ A meeting of senior staff in early March 1966 decided that the minimum order of 1,000 ashtrays would be requested from the supplier (Lord Queensbury) for exclusive sale at Chartwell. A second type of ashtray, this time showing a view of the Chartwell house, would also be ordered. Furthermore, two dozen hand-painted plates from a local potter were acquired, and the possibility of a Wedgewood jug was explored.¹⁴⁵ Another souvenir project at Chartwell was to be found in the commemorative coins minted by the Royal Mint in 1965. The ‘Churchill Crowns’ as they were known, depicted a bust of Winston Churchill and were notable as the first British commemorative coin to feature an individual outside of the Royal Family. In May 1966 it was agreed by the senior staff that ‘Churchill crowns should be available to visitors in the form of change when Chartwell opens.’¹⁴⁶ The local Westerham bank branch was eager to supply at least £500 worth of Churchill Crowns for use at Chartwell.¹⁴⁷ Later, it transpired that these crowns were not just being given as change, but sold as bona fide souvenirs themselves.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ He recommended to Lord Euston three of the finest options; a pottery ashtray which could be enscribed with the national trust insignia, a creamware jug decorated with a quotation from Churchill, and an enlarged coin paper-weight which would reproduce Churchill’s medal. Memorandum from Robbin Fedden to Lord Euston, February 7, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁴⁴ David Queensbury to Robin Fedden, February 25, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁴⁵ Minutes of meeting between Mrs. Soames, Lord Euston and Mr. Fedden, March 10, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁴⁶ Minutes of meeting between Mrs. Soames, Lord Euston and Mr. Fedden, March 10, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁴⁷ Mary Soames was responsible for contacting Westminster Bank and acquiring the necessary coins. K.P. de G. Duke to Mary Soames, April, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁴⁸ Robin Fedden to Grace Hamblin, April 1, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

Aside from souvenirs, books provided an avenue for profit. The National Trust guide-book was available to purchase upon entry, and other literature was sold at the small shop near the exit.¹⁴⁹ Not surprisingly, some of Churchill's own popular books were deemed suitable for sale.¹⁵⁰ National Trust staff were not the only individuals to recognize the commercial opportunities of a small gift shop ('this should bring us considerable profit', reflected Fedden in April 1966).¹⁵¹ The Sevenoaks Chronicle, a local newspaper publication, also intended to produce a small informative leaflet on 'Churchill at Home.'¹⁵² However, in order to sell external publications, the National Trust was required to register for a bookselling license through the Publishers' Association.¹⁵³ Chartwell was the first house in which this license was put to use; the selling of published literature soon became commonplace for National Trust sites.

The National Park Service did not view its visitors through the same consumerist lens. Instead, at Hyde Park, management sought to provide visitors with a controlled experience that would reflect the seriousness of the site and the full weight and presence of the federal government. The National Park Service closely managed the behaviour of their visitors for the public good. A recurring question in the opening years was about the scope and nature of signage, labels and information boards provided for the public. In 1946 Ned Burns recommended 'glass covered framed labels, affixed to the back of the hand rail in a slanting position' in the doorways of each room in the Home. Frederick Rath's early notes show the plans for seven labels, each corresponding with a room, plus one extra to be placed in front of FDR's bird case.¹⁵⁴ It was also decided that three or four regulatory signs like, 'No Picknicking' and 'Picking flowers or shrubbery is forbidden in all national parks' ought to be

¹⁴⁹ For example, copies of Isaiah Berlin's *Mr Churchill in 1940* were acquired. Memorandum from Robbin Fedden to J.D. Stuart, April 27, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives. I.E. Hills to Lord Euston, October 14, 1965, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁵⁰ In particular, Grace Hamblin ordered Churchill's *War Memoirs* and his *History of the English Speaking Peoples*. Grace Hamblin to Robbin Fedden, April 30, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives. I.E. Hills to Lord Euston, October 14, 1965, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁵¹ Memorandum from Robbin Fedden to J.D. Stuart, April 27, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁵² I.E. Hills to Lord Euston, October 14, 1965, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁵³ Memorandum from Robbin Fedden to J.D. Stuart, April 27, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁵⁴ Frederick Rath, *Historians Notes*, 1946, Frederick Rath's Papers, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

placed in the grounds. As a general rule, signage was to be brief and concise, following the Park Service guidelines issued from above. The Park Service had further stipulated that ‘Information regarding the house and its contents can be treated more appropriately in a printed leaflet’.¹⁵⁵ In February 1946 a preliminary three-page leaflet was prepared and sent off for printing in Chicago.¹⁵⁶ The Park Service field manual also provided guidance for public education, noting that historic leaflets should place ‘emphasis on specific things to be seen, not general information’.¹⁵⁷

The Park Service tried for many years to keep mass consumerism away from the site, as it was deemed tasteless and inappropriate for a place of such national prestige. Although the National Park Service operated a concession stand, it was a meagre affair. For many years, the souvenir shop was only a small eight-foot square frame booth located in the Library. This stand sold postcards and paintings but few trinkets.¹⁵⁸ This reluctance to embrace consumers was bolstered by pressure from the townspeople at Hyde Park, who wished to encourage visitors to invest in their local businesses instead of buying goods at the Home itself.¹⁵⁹

For the Park Service, creating a truly public and democratic space meant protecting it from the invasive pressures of capitalist profit-seeking. This decision becomes even more striking given that in the 1940s the Park Service was struggling with its finances. During the New Deal era the Park Service had grown exponentially, especially through FDR’s Civilian Conservation Corps work relief program.¹⁶⁰ But America’s entry into the Second World War had imposed austerity budgets on it. An explosion in visitor numbers after the war exposed existing funds and staffing as insufficient.¹⁶¹ George Palmer, Superintendent at Hyde Park, also managed the nearby Vanderbilt Mansion in order to economise on resources. Yet the Park Service was still averse to rectifying these losses by seeking customer profits.

¹⁵⁵ Ned J. Burns, Report on Protective Measures, February 6, 1946, 0-36 Proposed National Historic Sites (Part 3), 2620, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹⁵⁶ Frederick Rath Diary, February 27, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

¹⁵⁷ Frederick Rath, Historians Notes, 1946, Frederick Rath’s Papers, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

¹⁵⁸ George A. Palmer and Frederick L. Rath, Two Year Summary and Analysis, June 1, 1948, Frederick Rath’s Papers, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives, p.19.

¹⁵⁹ Jannelle Warren-Findley, “Chapter 3: The Administrative History of Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS, 1948-1962” *Administrative History of Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historic Site*, Unpublished transcript, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives, 112.

¹⁶⁰ Donald C. Swain, “The National Park Service and the New Deal, 1933-1940,” *Pacific Historical Review* 41, no. 3 (1972): 331, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3637861>.

¹⁶¹ Everhart, *The National Park Service*, 26.

Opening celebrations

On both sides of the Atlantic, the first year of preparations was ad-hoc and hectic. Growing anticipation for the opening of the homes weighed on the National Park Service and National Trust as they rushed to complete their renovations. Besides readying each home, the two authorities were also planning to execute their own special opening celebration events. The colour and character of each celebration highlights the different ways that the Trust and the Park Service came to terms with competing expectations from surviving family members as well as the visiting public. Unsurprisingly, at Hyde Park, the opening dedication was an egalitarian public service. At Chartwell, it was a secret, private family affair.

On April 12, 1946, the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site was officially dedicated and handed over to the American people. The Dedication of the home was a large-scale, internationally prestigious event –with Harry Truman, the President of United States in attendance. It was designed to appeal to the American masses, to whom this Home now belonged. This was no small matter for the National Park Service.

The push for an official commemoration came from the top levels of government. It was Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, who pronounced in December 1945 that the Home should be dedicated and opened to the public as a National Historic Site by the following Spring.¹⁶² In response, the Director of the Park Service, Newton B. Drury, began to form a preliminary outline of the event which he suggested should take place on the anniversary of FDR's death (12th April 1946), and which President Truman should attend.¹⁶³ After Ickes' decree, plans developed quickly. The ceremony was to be outdoors, on the front porch, to maximize attendance numbers. It would involve remarks from Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and the President, an acceptance speech from the Secretary of the Interior upon being given the Home, an invocation from the pastor of the local Hyde Park Church, benediction from the Poughkeepsie Rabbi and conclude with the singing of the National Anthem. Drury suggested inviting approximately 500 people, who would be free to visit the Home and Grave after the ceremony concluded.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² In the Spring of 1946, the long-serving Secretary Harold Ickes would be replaced by an Acting Secretary by the name of Oscar L. Chapman.

¹⁶³ Memorandum from Newton B. Drury for the Secretary, December 6, 1945, Dedication, 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹⁶⁴ Memorandum from Newton B. Drury for the Secretary, January 22, 1946, Dedication, 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

Behind the scenes there was a lot of conflict amongst the planners. Ickes rejected Drury's proposal to restrict attendance. Ickes insisted that it would not do to 'unduly restrict... the number of people who might want to attend,' leading to a decision to admit the general public, so long as they took standing room behind the 500 seated special guests.¹⁶⁵ Ickes' second requirement regarded the National Anthem, and he instructed Drury to invite the opera singer Marian Anderson to perform. By 1946, Marian Anderson was an iconic American figure and African-American artist, who had previously been endorsed and befriended by Eleanor Roosevelt.¹⁶⁶ Ickes appears to have held little confidence in the local Park Service staff. In March, Regional Director Thomas J. Allen was sent to visit George Palmer at Springwood in order audit his progress. Nevertheless, Allen was happy with what he found and reported to management that 'Superintendent Palmer is following through on everything and is doing an excellent job of securing cooperation of others and getting things done himself.'¹⁶⁷

The public was not aware of this internal wrangling at the Department of Interior. Instead, the commemoration ceremony proved to be remarkably collaborative. Many local organisations chipped in to supply the needs of the National Park Service. The Hyde Park post of the American Legion furnished an honour guard, the local Red Cross ladies provided a lunch and coffee station, the Barracks at Green Haven, NY, loaned 600 folding chairs, the Poughkeepsie Chamber of Commerce provided forty private cars and the Franklin D. Roosevelt High School lent the Park Service a speaker's stand.¹⁶⁸ Evidently, the Home of FDR was already being incorporated into the community at large and recognised as a vital addition to Dutchess County.

The Dedication was the only major event at Hyde Park which required the Park Service to call upon family involvement. As she was a speaker and distinguished guest, Eleanor Roosevelt's opinion counted. In February 1946, Acting Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman wrote to her regarding the plans. 'It is my desire that your wishes be

¹⁶⁵ Memorandum from A. E. Demaray for the Director, February 12, 1946, Dedication, 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹⁶⁶ In 1939, after being refused to perform at a meeting of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt had sponsored her performance at an open-air concert at the Lincoln Memorial, shooting her to international renown. Anderson had first performed for Eleanor Roosevelt in the White House in 1935, and after the events of the 1930s, they formed a lifelong friendship of mutual respect.

¹⁶⁷ Memorandum from Thomas J. Allen to A. E. Demaray, March 22, 1946, Dedication, 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹⁶⁸ Memorandum from Thomas J. Allen to A. E. Demaray, March 22, 1946 and Memorandum from George A. Palmer to Thomas J. Allen, March 22, 1946, Dedication, 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

carefully consulted regarding arrangements for the dedication,' he wrote, 'I will be glad to have your comments on these plans, and if you so desire, to have appropriate representatives of the National Park Service consult with you at your earliest convenience regarding them.'¹⁶⁹ Eleanor's requests were modest.¹⁷⁰ She asked that a Catholic Priest to join the Protestant pastor and Rabbi in the celebrations. She only wanted to control a fifth of the tickets for distribution to Roosevelt family and friends.¹⁷¹ At a moment when she could have seized her family privileges, Eleanor instead contributed towards the Parks Service's vision for a democratic celebration.

The experience of the general public was carefully considered by the Park Service. It was hoped that Americans across the country would tune in to the event. To this end, every means of broadcasting the event and reporting it to the American public was explored. Fifty chairs, along with some tables, were arranged at the front of the audience for a large press contingent, including a representative from the White House press corps. A month previous, the Home had been opened for the press to take still and motion picture footage of the interiors, which could be added to their recordings. The ceremony, which ran from half past two until three o'clock was specially designed to be short enough to broadcast on nationwide radio.¹⁷² It would then be translated into 23 foreign languages and broadcast internationally. In an early press release, the Secretary of the Interior predicted radio audiences that would exceed VE day.¹⁷³

The Dedication of the Home of FDR was widely lauded as a triumph. Journalists from the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Herald*, and the *Washington Times-Herald* eagerly reported the on President Truman's speech, Eleanor Roosevelt's dignified remarks, and the joyful presence of Fala, Roosevelt's beloved Scottish Terrier. Crowd presence was estimated at

¹⁶⁹ Oscar L. Chapman to Eleanor Roosevelt, February 1946, Dedication, 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹⁷⁰ Oscar L. Chapman to Eleanor Roosevelt, February 1946, Dedication, 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹⁷¹ He met with her on the 24th of February and discovered that her suggested guest list was expansive, including the chairman and minority members of the Senate and House Foreign Affairs Committees, Military Affairs Committees and Naval Affairs Committees. She also requested that some Republican friends and any special local associates of her late husband be invited. Memorandum from George A. Palmer to A. E. Demaray, February 25, 1946, Dedication, 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹⁷² Oscar L. Chapman to Eleanor Roosevelt, February 27, 1946, Dedication, 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹⁷³ Press Release, March 6, 1946, Dedication, 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

10,000 people, with over 2,100 cars and taxis arriving over the course of the day.¹⁷⁴ The *New York Times* remarked upon the breadth of these attendees, from the ‘plain people whose cause he made his own,’ to friends, relatives, diplomats and distinguished guests.¹⁷⁵ The Hooper survey reported 7,840,000 listeners in the United States, not including those who heard the additional listeners for the evening re-broadcast, or the foreign broadcast translations.¹⁷⁶

Satisfying the local community, visiting public, the family, and higher echelons of government made the opening of Hyde Park a success. In all these avenues, the Park Service acted with characteristic formality, bureaucracy and extensive planning. The Park Service was hailed for its planning, though expenditures exceeded available funds by \$3,000.¹⁷⁷

The National Trust’s opening of Chartwell was, contrastingly, a private affair. Rather than accommodate the general public, the Trust used this event to showcase their attachment and appreciation of the Churchill family, significant donors and other VIPs in London society.

As was proving typical at Chartwell, the incentive for an opening event came straight from the Churchill family. Plans began with Clementine Churchill suggesting that the Trust Staff throw a ‘small opening party at which the donors of Chartwell or their heirs should be the guests of honour.’¹⁷⁸ In January 1966, National Trust began to discuss the particulars. Eager though they were to satisfy Clementine’s wishes, Robbin Fedden expressed concern to Lord Euston that a party of survivors and heirs ‘might be a rather strange and macabre affair.’¹⁷⁹ Fedden’s desire was that an opening ceremony of some kind should be for a wider audience. As they mulled this over, Mary Soames intervened in February with a compromise by suggesting they hold a drinks and buffet supper event for about 100 or 120 attendees.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁴ Memorandum from George A. Palmer to A. E. Demaray, April 16, 1946, Dedication, 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹⁷⁵ Will Lissner, “Shrine is Honored by United Nations,” *New York Times*, April 13, 1946, 3.

¹⁷⁶ Willett Kempton to Newton B. Drury, April 17, 1946, Dedication, 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II,

¹⁷⁷ These funds, he argued, would also be used for the necessary fire-proofing to be carried out at the FDR site as well as the Vanderbilt Mansion. Memorandum from George A. Palmer to Newton B. Drury, April 17, 1946, Dedication, 2621, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹⁷⁸ Memorandum Robbin Fedden to Lord Euston, January 26, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁷⁹ Memorandum Robbin Fedden to Lord Euston, January 26, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁸⁰ Memorandum Lord Euston to Robin Fedden, February 16, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

This idea took hold and planning began. The early approximations included invitations for members of the family, the donors and surviving heirs, Executive Committee of the National Trust, special friends of Clementine, and some members of the press.¹⁸¹

The National Trust hoped that this opening event would impress the Churchill family and win the staff approval and social capital in reward for all their remaking efforts. Yet as plans continued to percolate, progress at Chartwell was proving to be slower than hoped. Grace Hamblin lamented the ‘chaos which had prevailed over the last three months’ of renovations. She admitted to trying to hide the shortcomings at Chartwell from Clementine Churchill.¹⁸² The state of the unfinished house prevented the National Trust from organising an interim Press showing, ‘the family all seem to have a strong aversion to anyone seeing the house in its un-beautiful state,’ reflected Hamblin.¹⁸³ For a time, it seemed possible that the opening date might even have to be pushed back. At the end of February Robin Fedden urged Grace Hamblin not to book any upcoming visitors in the diary, just in case.¹⁸⁴

Finally, in March, Fedden, Soames and Lord Euston settled on May 17, 1966 as a celebration date for Chartwell. The event was to be a totally private affair to avoid soliciting unwanted attention or uninvited guests. It was to be marked with a luncheon, and a marquee was hired to hold approximately 80 guests.¹⁸⁵ With just two months to go, preparations were swift but precise. ‘I am sure you will agree,’ wrote Fedden to Lord Euston, ‘that it is most important that the wine and food should be outstandingly good.’¹⁸⁶ By the end of March the invitations had been drafted and addresses were sourced.¹⁸⁷ For the sake of confidentiality, the purpose of the gathering was omitted from the invitations, in case it would be leaked to

¹⁸¹ Memorandum Lord Euston to Robin Fedden, February 16, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁸² Grace Hamblin to E. P. Ryan, February 10, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁸³ Grace Hamblin to E. P. Ryan, February 15, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁸⁴ Memorandum Lord Euston to Grace Hamblin, February 28, 1966, Chartwell Manor Publicity, 1965-1977, 134:46:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁸⁵ Memorandum Robbin Fedden to Lord Euston, March 31, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁸⁶ Memorandum Robbin Fedden to Lord Euston, March 31, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁸⁷ Second Memorandum Robbin Fedden to Lord Euston, March 31, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

the public.¹⁸⁸ Not even the local community of Westerham was made aware of the special event taking place at Chartwell.

On the day of the opening, Fedden reflected fondly on what had been accomplished at Chartwell. Now the private family and associates had been dutifully satisfied, he looked forward to pleasing the general public, too. 'For myself, I think that what has been achieved is a huge success,' he wrote to Mary Soames, 'The public will be fascinated by what they see, and will get from Chartwell a real idea of your Father's character.'¹⁸⁹ Reflecting on the luncheon twelve years later, Soames also gave it the family seal of approval. 'It was a lovely occasion, and to the eyes of my mother, Randolph, Sarah and me, the Chartwell of yesterday had miraculously been revived before us.'¹⁹⁰ An official media announcement was scheduled for the following day. Lord Euston and Mary Soames both addressed the press to reveal that Chartwell would be open to the general public in a month's time.¹⁹¹ On June 23, 1966, the National Trust recorded 2,500 visitors on its opening day.¹⁹²

As is typical of national sites of mourning, the wishes of the deceased paled in comparison to the demands of the still-living.¹⁹³ The enshrinement of Hyde Park and Chartwell was set in motion by Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, but upon their deaths, these men themselves were frequently missing from the subject of discussion. Where the National Park Service sought direction in their own statutes, transparency and bureaucratic expectations, the National Trust found a way forward using the opposite resources – flexibility, private networks and pragmatic decision-making. Discerning the best way to honour the departed involved conferring with an array of interested parties. At Chartwell, the opinions of

¹⁸⁸ Second Memorandum Robbin Fedden to Lord Euston, March 31, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁸⁹ Robin Fedden to Mary Soames, May 19, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁹⁰ Soames, *Clementine Churchill*, 507.

¹⁹¹ Second Memorandum Robbin Fedden to Lord Euston, March 31, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁹² W. Granger Blair, "Churchill's Home, Chartwell, Opened to Public," *New York Times*, June 23, 1966, 16.

¹⁹³ For some discussion of public investment in sites of mourning see Bin Xu, "Mourning Becomes Democratic," *Contexts* 12, no. 1 (February 1, 2013): 42–46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504213476247>; Adrian Kear and Deborah Lynn Steinberg, *Mourning Diana: Nation, Culture and the Performance of Grief* (London: Routledge, 2002); Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp and Lori A. Lanzilotti, "Public Memory and Private Grief: The Construction of Shrines at the Sites of Public Tragedy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84, no. 2 (May 1, 1998): 150–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335639809384211>.

surviving family and associate were placed front and centre. At Hyde Park, it was the imagined visiting public who were viewed in the highest regard.

For the Park Service this stance was not just a bureaucratic imperative but a democratic one. The Park Service tried to channel the politics of Roosevelt and his New Deal by both involving the public in opening ceremonies and inviting representation from their ranks. Nothing of the sort transpired at Chartwell. Ironically, the National Trust proved itself much more eager to turn visitors into consumers, in part because it was a private organization in perpetual need of funds and in part because such an approach had become much more acceptable on both sides of the Atlantic by 1965 than it had been in 1945. For all their differences, however, both Hyde Park and Chartwell reveal how difficult it was—and would be—to make heritage houses come alive, to pay the bills, and honour appropriately the men who have loved these homes for so long.

Chapter Five:

The Curated Home

Contemporary museology scholarship acknowledges the constructed and curated essence of all museum displays. Dominant ideologies, political messages and social norms are inherently implanted in museums, made even more potent by the unspoken assumption that the visitor is receiving the ‘truth’ about the past.¹ Even meticulously preserved heritage sites – which may appear to be entirely authentic – necessarily involve favouring one particular element of past human experience above others. Likewise, at Hyde Park and Chartwell, the aura of heritage preservation may hide the contingencies that have coalesced to bring about a heavily curated space. This chapter explores the process of preservation and interpretation that the National Park Service and the National Trust engaged in at the homes of Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. By interrogating their decisions over a period of fifty years, it becomes clear that successful house museology required shrewd acts of curation to maximise both the public effectiveness of the site and its historical integrity.

This chapter revolves around three central questions that determined the approach of each administration. Firstly, to what extent can and should the site be preserved in its original, unaltered state? At the centre of this query was the paradigm of visitor accessibility versus historic authenticity. Secondly, to what extent should visitor interaction with the site be mediated by interpretation programs? This question drove to the heart of the role of the museum as an educative tool and laid bare management assumptions about the audience’s level of knowledge and interest. Thirdly, what stories about the past should the interpretive content prioritise, and should those priorities change over time? This function of the site was constantly revised according to contemporary views about the home’s relevance to society. In tackling these questions, the National Park Service and the National Trust frequently drew on established patterns of preservation in their respective country, giving each site a clear national inflection.

¹ For an exploration of the self-reflective turn known as New Museology see Peter Vergo, *New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997); Sharon Macdonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); Max Ross, “Interpreting the New Museology,” *Museum and Society* 2, no. 2 (2004): 84–103, <https://doi.org/10.29311/mas.v2i2.43>; Vikki McCall and Clive Gray, “Museums and the ‘New Museology’: Theory, Practice and Organisational Change,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 29, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 19–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2013.869852>.

The priority of preservation in Britain and America

Preservation practice is no straightforward affair. Experts in heritage conservation utilise a complex array of approaches to maximise the protection and usefulness of a given historic building. Preserving a site may involve any number of interventions, from coating the walls in protective materials, re-grouting tiles and rewiring the electricity to more dramatic intrusions like installing missing stonework, importing replacement furniture collections or fabricating an imitation rug. The appropriate level of involvement to prevent natural erosion and decay is contested.

A milestone development in heritage governance in America occurred in 1935 with the Historic Sites Act that recognised historic preservation as a federal responsibility.² As discussed in Chapter Four, this occurred in tandem with Franklin Roosevelt's decision to unite all parks and monuments under the administration of the Park Service. Most importantly, this Act established the process of identifying, recording and making recommendations to sites deemed nationally significant. Yet the 1935 Act had little power to enforce maintenance of a given historic site. Maintenance depended instead on cooperative agreements with other preservation organisations or state and municipal groups.³ This usually proved insufficient motivation for historic protection, especially when the costs were high or the site's potential real estate value was high.⁴

It wasn't until the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act that historic sites were legally protected.⁵ This Act set the policy foundations of the industry in the U.S. and provided standards that have largely continued into the twenty-first century. Declaring that 'the preservation of irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest,' this act initiated the National Register of Historic Places across America.⁶ Sites on the register were documented and then preserved under the auspices of the National Park Service. A system of congressional grants-in-aid enabled preservation work to be undertaken. The act defined four

² Historic Sites Act, 1935 (USA). Accessed June 6, 2020 from <https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/hsact35.htm>.

³ Marilyn Phelan, "A Synopsis of the Laws Protecting Our Cultural Heritage," *New England Law Review* 28 (n.d.): 46.

⁴ Barry Mackintosh, 'Historic Preservation as Public Policy: the Historic Sites Act of 1935,' *National Park Service*, 1973. Accessed June 6, 2020 from <http://npshistory.com/publications/preservation/historic-preservation-mackintosh-1973.pdf>.

⁵ National Historic Preservation Act, 1966, (USA). Accessed June 6, 2020 from <https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/nhpa1966.htm>.

⁶ Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, 174.

types of protective treatments which could be applied to a given historic site: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction.⁷ Where ‘preservation’ involved processes which ‘sustain the existing form, integrity and materials of an historic property,’ ‘rehabilitation’ aimed to make possible ‘a compatible use’ of the site through repair. ‘Restoration’ called for depicting a site as it used to appear by adding back missing pieces, and ‘reconstruction’ entailed completely rebuilding non-existing structures from scratch. Federal regulations and the oversight of State Historic Preservation Offices (state-based delegated authorities) determined which of these preservation actions was allowable in every occasion, based on the condition of the existing structure.

In the 1940s, when Hyde Park was first opened as a heritage site, the 1966 regulations were not yet in existence. But much of the aforementioned preservation ethos had already been internalised by staff due to the growing body of National Park Service literature and guide-books on the matter.⁸ Preservationists had been elaborating procedures for treating heritage since the 1930s, when a number of historic buildings came into the Park Service’s care. The National Park Service had already equipped itself with conservation specialists and technical expertise. The 1966 legislation took those standards and passed them in law, where they have remained ever since.

In Britain, heritage legislation has been more piecemeal and fragmentary.⁹ Yet the dominant emphasis in British preservation has very much been on the side of protecting – rather than restoring – historic buildings. The 1882 Ancient Monuments Act was the first government effort to list certain monuments as significant, but the guardianship of these sites relied upon voluntary cooperation of landowners.¹⁰ Government power to intervene for preservation purposes began in 1913 with the Ministry of Works now able to ‘prevent damage’ to a historic building. But the Ministry of Works’ desire to take dramatic action was often minimal. As Inspector of Public Monuments, Charles Reed Peers wrote in 1910 about the aim ‘to preserve, with as little change as possible, what the lapse of Time has spared... repair and not restoration is the essence of the matter.’ Furthermore a belief that ‘the story of

⁷ See ‘The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards,’ *National Park Service*. Accessed June 6, 2020 from <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards.htm>.

⁸ For a list of Park Service archival documents regarding preservation practice, see ‘Park History: Park and Historic Preservation Laws,’ *National Park Service* accessed July 16, 2020 from <https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/hisnps/fhpl.htm>.

⁹ Stefan Fisch, *National Approaches to the Governance of Historical Heritage Over Time: A Comparative Report* (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2008), 183.

¹⁰ Fisch, 193.

the building is definitely at an end,' steered preservation away from attempts to rehabilitate buildings into functional spaces.¹¹ Simon Thurley, architectural historian, has argued that the majority of heritage work in the twentieth century was characterised by a preservation style that favoured medieval periodisation, oftentimes brashly removing any later – say sixteenth or seventeenth century – additions, focused instead on returning the building to the single phase that most interested the collectors in charge of this task.¹²

Several significant developments changed the shape of preservation in Britain in the final decades of the twentieth century. Under Margaret Thatcher's government, a new scientific approach was deemed necessary. Michael Heseltine's 1981 decision to re-catalogue all listed buildings resulted in a refined selection of protected sites. Described by some as 'The Modern Domesday,' this listing effort was herculean and ensured a base level of information for every given site to ensure its protection.¹³ In 1983, English Heritage was created to unite the various government heritage functions under one semi-autonomous body. 'The 1983 act,' argues Thurley, 'was about cost effective management, about exploiting the commercial potential of historic properties in state care; it was about efficiency and presentation not about preservation.'¹⁴ Maximising commercial opportunities at heritage sites proved to be a high priority in British conservation, as this chapter will later discuss.

The National Trust took over Chartwell before most of these regulations went into effect, thus rendering preservation a minor aspect of caretaking. The house itself (which was largely a Victorian build, with 1920s alterations) did not seem to call for preservation anyway. It was not particularly old, compared to the majority of British ancient monuments which had been listed. Costs for preservation treatment did not even factor into the first Financial Report, presented to the National Trust General Purposes Committee in September 1965 to outline expected capital expenditure before opening.¹⁵ It would be several decades

¹¹ Simon Thurley, 'The birth of heritage and the fabrication of history,' October 22, 2009, Gresham College. Transcript accessed June 6, 2020 from <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/the-birth-of-heritage-and-the-fabrication-of-history>.

¹² Simon Thurley, 'The birth of heritage and the fabrication of history,' October 22, 2009, Gresham College. Transcript accessed June 6, 2020 from <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/the-birth-of-heritage-and-the-fabrication-of-history>.

¹³ 'National Heritage List: About the List,' *Historic England*, accessed July 16, 2020 from <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/about-the-list/>.

¹⁴ Simon Thurley, 'From Boom to Bust: The politics of Heritage 1997-2009,' December 10, 2009, Gresham College. Transcript accessed June 6, 2020 from <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/from-boom-to-bust-the-politics-of-heritage-1997-to-2009>.

¹⁵ Minutes from National Trust General Purposes Committee, September 23, 1965, Chartwell Manor (F St. J. Gore's File), 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

before serious preservation efforts, such as environmental control, ventilation and treatment of materials were applied at Chartwell.¹⁶

The defining preservation decision taken at both houses was to present Hyde Park and Chartwell as homes ‘frozen in time’. This presentation style is typical of house museums from the modern era, where the development of the interiors and furnishings have been well documented, or left entirely in situ. In an evocative fashion, each house was ‘dressed’ to present a snapshot of life for particular historical figures in a particular historical moment. Chartwell and Hyde Park were designed to transport the visitor to the 1930s and 1940s, respectively. This was achieved both through preserving the historical detail that existed and precisely reproducing those elements that were missing or broken. These eras were chosen by surviving family or professional preservationists to reflect the home when it was at its peak of activity.

From paint colours to furniture upholstery and artefacts on show, the Trust and the Park Service aimed to create a sense of everyday life as lived by the Churchills and Roosevelts in a way that seamlessly flowed through the building. For example, at Chartwell,

There are fresh flowers in the rooms, up-to-date daily newspapers, glasses of what looks like whisky on tables, and cigars placed in ashtrays awaiting the smoker’s return. In the drawing room, the chairs appear recently vacated, the cushions naturally dented and in the dining room the table is laid out for a family tea. In the studio his painting overall hangs on the back of a chair, paints and brushes set out ready for use. The general impression is one of him having momentarily left the room...¹⁷

Expertly conserving these homes in time whilst keeping them open for visitors to explore was no easy task. Staff at Chartwell and Hyde Park had to manage concerns of wear and tear, security breaches and the natural deterioration of objects and interiors over time

The tension between preservation and public accessibility was felt by both National Park Service and National Trust staff. Frederick Rath acknowledged that the pull he felt to protect Hyde Park at all costs competed with his desire to allow the public to enjoy it as much as possible. In some cases, public accessibility won out. For example, Rath and George Palmer decided against installing too many indoor barriers and ropes. ‘We like to believe that

¹⁶ Jean Broom, “Conservation Requirements 1993/4”, Chartwell – Housekeeping, 105:21:00, National Trust Archives.

¹⁷ Catherine Palmer, “Touring Churchill’s England,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 30, no. 2 (April 2003): 433, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(02\)00100-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(02)00100-7).

FDR wouldn't have wanted too much restriction,' concluded Rath in July 1946.¹⁸ But an ongoing concern was security at the Roosevelt Home, particularly preventing theft of valuables and any unlawful entry. As much as they wanted the public to enjoy the home, they were wary of how much any given visitor could be trusted. In February 1946, consultant Ned Burns prepared a report on 'Protective Measures Needed at the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt'. His advice began with limiting the number of visitors in the house at any one time, installing four circulating guards inside, erecting hardwood barriers across doorways, locking windows and doors and eliminating the fire hazard of floor lamps and other lighting fixtures. 'The recommendations in this report may appear to be rather drastic,' he admitted, 'but they are based on the known experience of other museums under similar circumstances and are necessary to provide the protection needed by a place where the desire to secure souvenirs both by planned theft and casual lifting is greater than at any other.'¹⁹ The notion of security cropped up again in Frederick Rath's personal palm-card notes. 'All first floor windows must be checked,' he jotted on one note, 'Thorough check each night of house & locking up' on another.²⁰ In March 1946 he even visited the Brooklyn Museum to run reconnaissance on other museums' procedures, 'I did notice that they had raised their 34 inch barrier to about 80 inches by adding glass to keep kids from being dropped over,' he remarked.²¹ The National Park Service regarded the general public as a liability to the home and as a danger to the project of protecting their Roosevelt inheritance.

At Chartwell, more concessions were made to the visiting public, who were in turn viewed less suspiciously. It was acknowledged from an early stage that significant adjustments would be needed to accommodate a heavy flow of visitors. As Linda Young has argued, a central challenge facing house museums is 'to introduce many people into spaces generally designed for a small number.'²² At Chartwell this meant serious structural changes. The back servants' stairs were replaced with a sturdier and wider flight, designed to handle up to 50,000 visitors annually.²³ A 3.5 acre carpark was cut into a field, just north of the

¹⁸ Frederick Rath Diary, July 31 – September 5, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

¹⁹ Ned J. Burns, Report on Protective Measures, February 6, 1946, 0-36 Proposed National Historic Sites (Part 3), 2620, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

²⁰ Frederick Rath, Historians Notes, 1946, Frederick Rath's Papers, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

²¹ Frederick Rath Diary, March 22, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

²² Young, *Historic House Museums in the United States and the United Kingdom*, 16.

²³ James Holloway, "Churchill Home is Opening: Public to be admitted to Chartwell, Kent, this Summer," *New York Times*, May 1, 1966, 469.

home.²⁴ Posts and barrier ropes were installed in doorways and around the furniture as protective measures against the public.²⁵ The task of planning the number of posts, and the length of rope required, was left to Miss Wigram (Robin Fedden's Secretary), and Grace Hamblin. Correspondence between Hamblin and Wigram in March 1966 indicates the baffling and large-scale mission of installing barriers through all three floors of the home.²⁶ Giving administrators this responsibility, rather than looking to the experts, demonstrates that for the National Trust, security was less of a pressing concern than at Hyde Park.

The biggest alteration made by the National Trust at Chartwell was its decision to transform several of the first floor bedrooms into a museum exhibition space for Winston Churchill. The aim was to display personal artefacts gathered from the home to commemorate Churchill's diplomatic achievements.²⁷ The staff went ahead with their alteration, knowing that it risked compromising the historical integrity of the site. Staff members believed that were in accord with Winston himself, who had always wanted a museum on the grounds. In April 1946, Churchill wrote 'I should propose to leave for museum purposes a considerable number of war trophies and souvenirs which have been presented to me... It may be that one or two rooms [at Chartwell] would be required to be used for museum purposes, unless any museum is subsequently built.'²⁸ So, more than twenty year later in November 1965, Robin Fedden visited Chartwell to make a preliminary examination before putting Churchill's wishes into effect. 'There will be more than enough to create an impressive display,' Fedden observed. 'There are for instance about a dozen uniforms, ranging from boiler suits to Garter robes, which will fill a large showcase, and much else of interest.'²⁹ Construction work on the museum interfered with the existing floorplan, requiring some walls to be knocked down, period features erased, and a circular walking route established. These measures were not considered problematic by the National Trust, despite their obvious conflict with traditional values of preservation.

²⁴ James Holloway, "Churchill Home is Opening: Public to be admitted to Chartwell, Kent, this Summer," *New York Times*, May 1, 1966, 469.

²⁵ Spring 1966, National Trust, Historic Newsletters, National Trust Archives.

²⁶ Miss Wigram to Grace Hamblin, March 16, 1966, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives.

²⁷ According to the National Trust Newsletter in Spring 1966, Clementine Churchill helped to 'make available some of the principal contents, including some of Sir Winston's paintings together with documents and objects of public interest.' Spring 1966, National Trust, Historic Newsletters, National Trust Archives.

²⁸ WSC to Charles Nicholl, April 11, 1946, MCHL 5/1/128, Churchill Archives.

²⁹ Robin Fedden to the Earl of Antrim, November 19, 1965, Chartwell Manor, 110:19:00, National Trust Archives. The exhibit designer was Michael Haynes (who later helped with the Victoria & Albert Museum's first fashion displays) and calligraphic labels were commissioned by Denzil J Reeves from Ipswich, Essex.

Preservation wavered in the list of priorities at Hyde Park and Chartwell. True preservation was, at times, the natural enemy of visitor experience and accessibility of the site. Yet overall the National Park Service was much more zealous in its preservation efforts than the National Trust. This was partially the legacy of preservation legislation, which provided uniform requirements in the U.S. long before these standards became commonplace in the U.K.

Opportunities for reconstruction

In the history of their administrations, two major uncontrolled events, an electric fire and a regional storm, have been the largest violations to preservation efforts at Hyde Park and Chartwell. Though catastrophic in their destruction, interestingly these events allowed administrators to rethink and crystallise their preservation practices, opening the way for more coherent reconstruction efforts.

In 1982, the Home of FDR experienced an unprecedented threat to life and limb. On an icy January evening an electrical fault in the old ceiling wires caused a fire to break out in the Springwood attic. The blaze quickly escalated and caused major damage to the entire third floor of the home. The lower floors suffered smoke and water damage.³⁰ Both the Fire Department and Park Service staff responded rapidly, and put in a ‘heroic effort’ to evacuate objects and protect what they could.³¹ The *New York Times* described the events in lively terms:

While 250 firefighters from 10 local fire departments worked through a snowstorm to bring the blaze under control, curators rushed in and out trying to save the house’s antique furnishings. They lifted paintings off the wall, grabbed chairs and rolled up rugs, many of which had been in the 156-year-old house since the former President’s father, James, bought it in 1867.

As flames leaped from huge holes in the roof, a curator tossed a tarpaulin over the bed in which Roosevelt was born on January 30, 1882. Another curator plucked a delicate Dresden chandelier from a first-floor ceiling moments before firefighters ordered the room evacuated for fear the ceiling would collapse. “It was worse than the worst nightmare,” said Dixon Freeland, the superintendent. “There was a moment there when it seemed as if we’d lose the whole thing.”³²

³⁰ Margaret Partridge, Interpretive Prospectus, February 1989, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

³¹ Margaret Partridge, Interpretive Prospectus, February 1989, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

³² *New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1982, p. 1; *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*.

The burnt out roof was a total loss, and required an entire replacement. Much wallpaper and paint were irrevocably damaged and many valuable artefacts were destroyed. In the wake of so much damage and the destruction of original material, the Park Service now began to shift its focus from preservation to restoration.³³

In August 1982 Congress appropriated \$2,000,000 for the restoration of Hyde Park, \$600,000 of which was allocated to be spent on restoring the furnishings.³⁴ The National Park Services' North Atlantic Historic Preservation Center were contracted to replace major structural elements of the third story, and restore other parts of the home that had been damaged. Wallpaper imitation reproductions were created for seven rooms; tiles and flooring were also entirely replaced.³⁵ The fire and its aftermath also provided the first opportunity to undertake comprehensive conservation work on the entire contents of the home. The Park Service assembled a pre-fabricated building on site, fit with a laboratory and sophisticated equipment. This process allowed for the first proper cataloguing of objects and the proactive preservation of delicate materials. As a result of this effort, in 1991 the Parks Service declared that the 'completely restored historic building is in better condition than it has been since the Park Service took possession in 1946.'³⁶ Nevertheless, it is difficult to deny that much of what had been original and 'authentic' in the fabric of Hyde Park had now been replaced with reproductions and imitations.

On the 16th October 1987 Chartwell experienced severe damage in a weather event known as the 'Great Storm'. It is still considered to be the worst storm that South-East England has weathered for 300 years.³⁷ The storm wreaked havoc across the Kent landscape and cut off Chartwell's water and electricity. In November of that year, the National Trust took aerial photographs of Chartwell to gauge the extent of the damage. Although the home remained intact, the gardens did not. Ground damage was declared to be 'very severe,' with

³³ National Historic Preservation Act, 1966, (USA). Accessed June 6, 2020 from <https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/nhpa1966.htm>.

³⁴ Jannelle Warren-Findley, "Chapter 6: Fire at the Home of FDR and its consequences" *Administrative History of Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historic Site*, Unpublished transcript, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives, 235.

³⁵ Albee, *Historic Structure Report, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt: Architectural Data Section*, 100.

³⁶ Margaret Partridge, Interpretive Prospectus, February 1989, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

³⁷ Summary of Storm Damage, Undated, Chartwell Correspondence (4) Storm General Correspondence, CIR 1196, National Trust Archive.

80-90% of trees lost.³⁸ The storm knocked down 23 mature trees in the garden, taking out the entire orchard. The most significant impact was the felt by Chartwell's surrounding woodland. Many of the trees that were felled had been mature and long-standing oak and beech trees. Of particular concern was the ancient woodland on the eastern side of the property, which had sustained an uncommon ecosystem (particularly for several small invertebrates) for hundreds of years.³⁹ 'In landscape terms,' John Meehan reported, 'the structure of Chartwell gardens and park has been more or less destroyed.'⁴⁰ Viewing the site four months later, Mary Soames was 'simply devastated to see the scene of destruction.'⁴¹

This event, too, became an occasion for reconstruction, in this case by the National Trust. In November, John Sales reported that the Chartwell garden staff had done 'astonishingly well in the few weeks since the disaster to clear so much and to restore the main part of the garden to a respectable condition.'⁴² The team was congratulated on their 'cheerful and positive approach' to the challenge ahead.⁴³ In February 1988 Chartwell staff applied to receive Grant Aid from the English Heritage. It was estimated that clearance, replanting and tree surgery in the gardens and woodland was to cost more than £16,000 in the next three years.⁴⁴ In March the grant was approved and the National Trust secured vital funds to repair the damage sustained at Chartwell.⁴⁵

The Storm provided an opportunity to rethink the interpretive approach in the gardens. John Sales drafted a new Conservation Plan for the garden and park in early 1988. Foremost in his vision was to keep Churchill's influence 'dominant in the garden, as in the house.'⁴⁶ Chartwell was fortunate to benefit from its ongoing appeal to the public, stemming

³⁸ John Sales, Memorandum, November 16, 1987, Chartwell Correspondence 1974-1990, CIR 1196, National Trust Archive.

³⁹ John Sales, Memorandum, November 16, 1987, Chartwell Correspondence 1974-1990, CIR 1196, National Trust Archive.

⁴⁰ James Cooper, Application for Grant Aid, February 1988, Chartwell Correspondence (4) Storm General Correspondence, CIR 1196, National Trust Archive.

⁴¹ Mary Soames to Martin Drury, February 24, 1988, Chartwell: Management (1983-1987), 112:68, National Trust Archive

⁴² John Sales, Memorandum, December 2, 1987, Chartwell Correspondence 1974-1987, CIR 1196, National Trust Archive

⁴³ John Sales, Memorandum, December 2, 1987, Chartwell Correspondence 1974-1987, CIR 1196, National Trust Archive

⁴⁴ James Cooper, Application for Grant Aid, February 1988, Chartwell Correspondence (4) Storm General Correspondence, CIR 1196, National Trust Archive.

⁴⁵ Krystyna Bilikowski to J. Cooper, March 18, 1992, Chartwell Correspondence (4) Storm General Correspondence, CIR 1196, National Trust Archive.

⁴⁶ John Sales, Outline Policy for the Conservation of the Garden and Park, January 1989, Chartwell Correspondence (4) Storm General Correspondence, CIR 1196, National Trust Archive.

(at this time) from historical interest in Churchill more than in Chartwell's trees or scenery.⁴⁷ Planting and landscaping focused on replanting similar species to the pre-eighteenth century originals in the Grove and Woodlands. Sales also hoped to evoke Chartwell as it appeared in the Victorian era by re-establishing the nearby sloping commons.⁴⁸ One major setback was the loss of Churchill's orchard apple trees which had stood since the 1920s. Churchill's ha-ha and the steps he built leading to the Butterfly House also needed to be reconstructed. But Sales emphasised retaining all that could be, and augmenting the existing plants with faithful replicas. He also recognised the opportunity to plant more flowering varieties to encourage the 'important tradition' of cut flower arrangements at Chartwell, in the style of Clementine. With this new injection of funds, he insisted, 'facilities and labour for [flower] raising and arrangement must be provided.'⁴⁹

Five years after the Great Storm, and as part of National Tree Week, the National Trust hosted a publicity event to commemorate the progress that had been made. Lady Margaret Thatcher attended Chartwell to plant Oak Saplings in part of the site that was still being regenerated. The saplings planted were grown from acorns first collected at Chartwell, demonstrating their ongoing native replanting efforts. The National Trust press release continued to frame Chartwell's garden as an artefact of the life and times of Churchill. The event was described as 'an appropriate tribute from one former Prime Minister to another.'⁵⁰

At Hyde Park and Chartwell, staff were able to recover from damages inflicted by fire and storm by reimagining them as opportunities to refine their practice. The new cataloguing and storing of items at Hyde Park, an enormous and expensive undertaking, may never have taken place without this incentive. At Chartwell, the garden staff – though devastated by the scale of the loss – were able to clarify their interpretive priorities in the gardens and to realign the designs to the landscape as it stood in the Churchill-era. In both cases, truly historic elements of the house and gardens were lost forever. Yet paradoxically, the imperative to restore and reconstruct provided an opportunity to imbue the sites with features that improved

⁴⁷ John Sales, Outline Policy for the Conservation of the Garden and Park, January 1989, Chartwell Correspondence (4) Storm General Correspondence, CIR 1196, National Trust Archive.

⁴⁸ John Sales, Outline Policy for the Conservation of the Garden and Park, January 1989, Chartwell Correspondence (4) Storm General Correspondence, CIR 1196, National Trust Archive.

⁴⁹ John Sales, Outline Policy for the Conservation of the Garden and Park, January 1989, Chartwell Correspondence (4) Storm General Correspondence, CIR 1196, National Trust Archive.

⁵⁰ National Trust Press Release, October 30, 1992, Chartwell Correspondence 1974-1990, CIR 1196, National Trust Archive.

upon the originals. That these features were the result of modern construction was not revealed to visitors.

Interpretation infrastructure

How to reveal an historic site to visitors is ultimately a question of interpretation.

‘Interpretation’ in the context of the heritage sector is a term that was originally coined by John Muir, a preservationist who worked for the National Park Service at the turn of the twentieth century. Muir, most famous for his work in establishing the Yosemite National Park, was determined to make the natural world accessible and comprehensible to all Americans – in his words, to interpret it.⁵¹ Interpretation has been described as the ‘bridge’ which connects the visitor to historic artefacts or information.⁵² At historic sites such as Hyde Park and Chartwell, interpretation is at a premium due to the imperative of making sense of a foreign – historic – environment.

Interpretation can come in many forms, some passive (signs, labels and brochures) and others more active (tours, audio guides and interactive displays).⁵³ Another useful delineation of interpretation forms is those delivered via personal service – anything from demonstrations, to informal discussions or guided walks – versus those given via media – text panels, audio recording or video.⁵⁴ Interpretation staff at historic sites are bolstered in their interpretation due to the input of the physical sensory experience. Visitors perceive the historic environment and it informs their understanding. Entering a home, viewing the objects, smelling the dust, hearing the creaking door: these sensory markers assist interpreters in ‘transporting people back in time.’⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the best means and methods of interpretation remain hotly contested. Fashions and technologies have evolved over the past sixty-plus years of operation at Hyde Park and Chartwell. The values of the National Park Service and the National Trust have informed the creation of two very different house museums. Broadly speaking, the staff at Hyde Park favoured active and personal

⁵¹ Kevin Bacher,, et al, “Foundations of Interpretation: Curriculum Content Narrative,” *Interpretive Development Program*, January 1, 2007, accessed from <https://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/101/FoundationsCurriculum.pdf>

⁵² Suzanne B. Schell, “On Interpretation and Historic Sites,” in *Patterns in Practice: Selections from the Journal of Museum Education*, by Museum Education Roundtable, 1st ed (Washington, D.C: Museum Education Roundtable, 1992), 27–34.

⁵³ Suzanne B. Schell, 30.

⁵⁴ Kevin Bacher,, et al, “Foundations of Interpretation: Curriculum Content Narrative.”

⁵⁵ Suzanne B. Schell, “On Interpretation and Historic Sites,” 30.

interpretation methods, whilst the National Trust staff at Chartwell have traditionally stuck with passive and media-based interpretation plan. Central to their differences is their focus on interpreter-led versus visitor-led learning. At Hyde Park, the park rangers provide the voice of history, but at Chartwell, the house has oftentimes been required to speak for itself.

For over twenty years, visitors have been unable to visit the Springwood home at Hyde Park without the assistance of an ‘interpreter’ in the format of a guided tour. Yet even before that – and even when an official interpretive program had yet to be established – the responsibility of connecting audiences to the past was left to the Park Rangers. Armed with only a brief informative leaflet, visitors were encouraged instead to actively engage the ‘guards’ (rangers patrolling the home) with their questions and comments. Robert McGaughey, a ranger who had previously been a butler for the Roosevelts, was a rich source of anecdotal stories and local knowledge. The Park Service prioritised visitor relations, and even circulated a ‘Public Relations Procedures’ guide for its Hyde Park staff.⁵⁶ ‘We who meet the public are the shock troops,’ wrote the first Hyde Park historian, Frederick Rath, ‘All the efforts of the higher echelons is to no avail if we are remiss in meeting the public, our *raison d’etre*,’ he reflected in his diary.⁵⁷

At the opening of the Home of FDR in 1946, there is evidence that staff were already presenting a pre-prepared informative talk to visitors. Rath describes here how the early such talks were meant to distract from the boredom of the visitors who were standing in long lines:

In order to placate the crowds on line, which got longer and longer throughout the day, I began to experiment with a short talk of welcome and explanation. Altho [sic] it wasn’t memorized, it always covered a few main points. I identified this Site with other areas in NPS, welcomed the people on behalf of NPS. Then I explained why they were on line, told them we could do no better with the crowds on hand. I went on to tell them how they were going to see the Home, unchanged since the death of FDR, and how willing we were to answer their questions. I generally ended by mentioning Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt’s remark in her dedication speech – that it was in this spot that her husband found rest and peace and strength – and said that it was the hope of the NPS that all those who visited here would find the same benefits.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ In his notes he recorded some key points, including that the objective of the P.R. program was to ‘see that the public understands, approves & supports the aims & ideals of the NPS, in general & in the particular park.’ Frederick Rath, Historians Notes, 1946, Frederick Rath’s Papers, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

⁵⁷ Frederick Rath Diary, June 14, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

⁵⁸ Frederick Rath’s Diary July 31 – September 5 1946

By 1957 the Hyde Park staff had produced an outline for an introductory tour, meant to help new guides get their bearings.⁵⁹ It contained an introduction to the Grave Site, the Rose Garden, and the Home. The tour was designed to take place outside, before the self-guided tour of the interior of the home began. Guides were told that they should present the information in their own words (underlined in the script) and should cover the important names, dates and details. This ‘proto-tour’ focused on family history, architectural changes, the legal administration of the National Park Service and efforts to maintain the home exactly as FDR wished and in accordance with how it had been left to them.⁶⁰ In the 1960s, a similar introductory tour was available to any group upon request at the Ticket Booth. By this time the tour had expanded to include a discussion of the greenhouses, ice house and coach house stables.⁶¹ Only a small proportion of visitors, however, took up this opportunity to see the home via a guide. In 1961, 236 groups were given guided tours of the estate. This was an increase of fifty-four from the year prior, but the interest was still low.⁶² Tours constituted a small subsection of the total guests, most of whom preferred to explore independently.

By the late 1990s, guided tours had become the *only* means of visiting the home. This decision was a conscious attempt to engage visitors more actively in the site. Motivated by the fading of FDR from living memory, the interpretive staff felt that without a guided tour, the home would consist of just ‘looking at the furniture’ rather than engaging with a real person and family history.⁶³ In this new scheme, visitors could not wander over to the house of their own accord but would partake in scheduled guided visits. This compulsory change was not without some protest, especially amongst those with young children who wished to walk through the house on their own.⁶⁴ Although visitors still partake in some self-guided viewing once inside (especially on the second floor which is too narrow for group gathering), their visits are always accompanied by a lengthy guided preamble. Groups meet in the Visitor

⁵⁹ Charles W. Snell, Interpretation and Information Park Guide Manual, May 18, 1957, Park Guide and Manual Interpretation, Box 11, Roosevelt Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

⁶⁰ Charles W. Snell, Interpretation and Information Park Guide Manual, May 18, 1957, Park Guide and Manual Interpretation, Box 11, Roosevelt Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

⁶¹ Charles R. Rinaldi, Information and Interpretive Services Report, January 29, 1961,, Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

⁶² Charles R. Rinaldi, Information and Interpretive Services Report, January 29, 1961,, Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

⁶³ Fran Macsali, personal interview, August 7, 2018, Hyde Park, NY.

⁶⁴ Fran Macsali, personal interview, August 7, 2018.

Center and must travel with their interpreter to the Home, stopping to admire the Library, the Rose Garden and Gravesite, and the Front Porch with accompanied commentary.

Today, the interpreters at Hyde Park are trained to put together their own bespoke tours. Shunning ‘canned tours’ – or scripted tours – the interpretive staff encourage guides to present the stories that most interest them in their own fashion. Geoffrey Ward’s book *Before the Trumpet* informs their research, known affectionately as the ‘bible’ for tour guides at the Home of FDR.⁶⁵ Modern tours are shaped by a central message of the enduring relevance of Franklin Roosevelt’s life, in other words to convince visitors that ‘we live in the world that Franklin Delano Roosevelt created.’⁶⁶ In the Summer, these tours run every hour, or half hour, from the Visitor Center, taking at least two, and up to fifty people, at a time.⁶⁷ Within the National Park Service, park rangers have always held a mediatory role, facilitating a rich visit to a historic site for visitors who are no longer very acquainted with the life and times of Franklin Roosevelt.

Limited resources and an older-style approach to historic display gave rise to a different interpretive tradition within the National Trust. At Chartwell, like many other National Trust homes, an object-oriented approach has persistently won out against overt interpretation. At National Trust homes, visitors are encouraged to observe what they see rather than to be told what it is. While stewards stand in the corner of each room, available to answer questions, visitors move at their own pace and refer to brief placards for any historic detail on the furnishing and decorations. The primary form of interpretation has traditionally been the guidebook, available for purchase from the ticket office, or a shorter leaflet, often given out free of charge.

National Trust homes like Chartwell pride themselves on being ‘alive,’ holding the spirit of an authentic home. The intangible experience of walking in someone else’s shoes by experiencing the space as they saw it, is what elevates the home above other static museums spaces, like a gallery exhibit. Such a place, some might say, is best enjoyed in its purest form without artificial additions. It was believed that overt interpretation such as placards or signs were necessarily detracting from the ‘truth’ of the past. At some house museums the National Trust offered guided tours on special occasions, or perhaps provided an introductory talk once an hour. Nevertheless, the default assumption was that visitors would explore the home

⁶⁵ Fran Macsali, personal interview, August 7, 2018.

⁶⁶ Fran Macsali, personal interview, August 7, 2018.

⁶⁷ Scott Rector, personal interview, July 30, 2018, Hyde Park, NY.

independently and uninhibitedly. One commentator, after interning with the organisation in 1987, described that ‘the prevailing view in the Trust is that the best interpretation is as little as necessary, and that visitors should experience the house without the interference of a tour guide.’⁶⁸

A more recent interpretive guide produced by the Trust confirms this remained the case. The internal 2013 ‘Principles for Interpretation’ booklet suggested to National Trust staff that many properties can speak for themselves:

Like good waiters, it’s our role to introduce visitors to our properties with artful discretion. People don’t come to visit our places to appreciate our interpretation. They come to experience, to admire, or simply enjoy being in the place itself. Our interventions should therefore do just enough, but no more. If an object, view or a room can speak for itself, let it. This may mean exercising strong editorial control, leaving details that may distract on the cutting room floor. Less is more.⁶⁹

Throughout this document the National Trust advocated for conveying a site’s unique story (or the ‘spirit of the place’) through the choice of artefacts, the flow of the space and carefully designed minimalist images, pithy text, timelines and interactive elements. It was hoped (not assumed) that historic learning could take place incidentally during a visit, but not as the main aim.⁷⁰

The difference in interpretative styles at the two homes is rooted in cultural differences between the US and the UK. Frederick Rath explained that he liked to give talks at Hyde Park because ‘the American likes to know why.’ ‘As one woman said,’ he recalled, “‘It made me feel at home.’”⁷¹ Described by Kim Christensen as the ‘tenuous balancing act between “ideas” and “things,”’ the question of how to present material culture along with their interpretation is a common struggle in house museums. Staff from the National Park Service contended that interpretive work needs to be done to bring out historic narratives, so

⁶⁸ Bruce Harvey, “Inside the Treasure Houses: The English National Trust Wrestles with Interpretation as It Attempts to Gain American Support,” *History News* 42, no. 3 (1987): 16–18.

⁶⁹ Tony Berry and Andy Beer, “Everything Speaks: Seven Working Principles for Interpretation,” p.12. Accessed June 6, 2020 from https://intoorg.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/seven_working_principles_of_interpretation_booklet.pdf.

⁷⁰ Tony Berry and Andy Beer, “Everything Speaks: Seven Working Principles for Interpretation,” p.6. Accessed June 6, 2020 from https://intoorg.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/seven_working_principles_of_interpretation_booklet.pdf.

⁷¹ Frederick Rath Diary, July 31 – September 5, 1946, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Site Archives.

that the object becomes a means to an end, not an end in itself.⁷² Many American heritage scholars would agree that unless the home is preserved due to its aesthetic or artistic value alone, a visitor to an historic house museum needs be offered more than just the opportunity to look at furniture.⁷³

Yet on the other side of the Atlantic, the tradition of Country House tourism has infiltrated public expectations in Britain. This style is no less rich for refraining from such interpretation. As Peter Mandler has shown in *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*, Country Houses once lost to their aristocratic owners (and visitors) were revived as modern tourism locations in the 1940s. By the 1970s they had been reappropriated in the public consciousness as a collective source of British identity, rather than a symbol of elite inequality. Linda Young argues that essence of country house tourism is admiring ‘the magnificence of architecture, furnishings, and gardens, and the intricacies of life – high and low – in the house,’ most essentially the liberation of the public being allowed *in* to ‘spacious privilege and hedonistic fantasy.’⁷⁴ The persistent tradition of Country House tourism in Britain still has a foothold in interpretive methods at the National Trust. In the British tradition, some have argued that visitors ‘merely want to be awed by these magnificent estates and their collections,’ and that educational resources are not appreciated.⁷⁵ Perhaps we could suggest that the Brit does *not* need to know why.

Indeed, Catherine Palmer has argued convincingly that merely walking around and observing a house like Chartwell powerfully subsumes a visitor in historic narrative and national heritage. She argues that visitors exploring Chartwell partook in an ‘unconsciously performed ritual’ which ‘flags the nation.’⁷⁶ Various artefacts positioned to be discovered around the home acted as ‘props’ which gradually built an interpretive image of the man of the house.⁷⁷ Although the National Trust was heavily reliant upon these cultural objects, she argues that at Chartwell their interpretive aims were effectively achieved despite the lack of overt guides or tours.

⁷² Barbara G. Carson, “Interpreting History through Objects,” *The Journal of Museum Education* 10, no. 3 (1985): 2–5.

⁷³ Christensen, “Ideas versus Things,” 154.

⁷⁴ Young, *Historic House Museums in the United States and the United Kingdom*, 209–2010.

⁷⁵ Harvey, Bruce, ‘Inside the Treasure Houses: The English National Trust Wrestles with Interpretation as It Attempts to Gain American Support,’ *History News* (1987).

⁷⁶ Palmer, “Touring Churchill’s England,” 431.

⁷⁷ Palmer, 438.

Interpretive emphases

Over time, the stories told at Hyde Park and Chartwell – whether written, recorded or orally presented to guests – have changed. Interpretive emphasis has varied with the tides of popular culture and politics. In the second half of the twentieth century, the advent of new forms of social history compelled curators to consider presenting the ‘backstairs’ interpretation at historic house museums. Suddenly the service quarters, kitchens, laundries and other less-presentable parts of the house were of growing interest. Since the 1960s, the economic underpinnings and tools of maintenance of a household have gradually been brought to light.⁷⁸ Meanwhile the passage of time (from the installation of these museums until the present day) has created helpful distance for interpretation. In each passing decade, moreover, the curators of Hyde Park and Chartwell have become increasingly confident in their ability to tackle controversial and problematic aspects of their home’s history.

The earliest National Park Service records reveal that staff was eager to emphasise the state of the home as authentic. ‘Tell them to remember, as they go through the home,’ wrote Snell in 1957, ‘That perhaps the most interesting thing about the house is the fact that everything in the Home has been left almost exactly as it was when Franklin Roosevelt made his last visit.’⁷⁹ By preserving the home exactly as they found it, the Park Service believed that visitors could ‘form a pretty good idea of what life must have been like’ inside.⁸⁰ But this emphasis on the authenticity of the material culture never prevented the Park Service from providing additional interpretive aids. Over seventy years of operation the interpretation at Hyde Park evolved from a traditional recounting of names, dates and pertinent fact into an exploration of social conditions, psychology and family dynamics.

The earliest iteration of the tour script, written by Charles W. Snell in 1957, placed heavy emphasis on the distinguished architecture of the building. Consistent with the style of information provided at other American Country Estates, this tour placed Springwood amongst its stylish peers on the Hudson River. Visitors on tour stood in front of the house and were shown a printed image of the home as it appeared in 1882. The guide would then direct them to observe the alterations and renovations that had taken place in the intervening

⁷⁸ Bruce, ‘Inside the Treasure Houses’.

⁷⁹ Charles W. Snell, Interpretation and Information Park Guide Manual, May 18, 1957, Park Guide and Manual Interpretation, Box 11, Roosevelt Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

⁸⁰ Charles W. Snell, Interpretation and Information Park Guide Manual, May 18, 1957, Park Guide and Manual Interpretation, Box 11, Roosevelt Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

period. Guides communicated the size of the acreage, the number of rooms, bathrooms, the materials and style in detail.⁸¹

By 1961, the Hyde Park tour had evolved into a choreographed walking tour. Charles R. Rinaldi, the tour's creator, wrote of the importance of the leader 'organizing the group,' and then focusing the group's 'attention' and 'pointing out' various physical landmarks in turn as he 'leads the group into the grave site.' 'The group is held in front of the Home, where architectural history is presented,' he writes, 'the group is then released.'⁸² It is clear that by this time, the tour had developed a clear route and a geographic element, both missing from early orientation talks, including Frederick Rath's welcoming speech.

In 1961, Eleanor Roosevelt, now a United Nations diplomat, lecturer and humanitarian role-model, was brought back into involvement at Hyde Park. Under the guidance of the Park Service, she recorded the site's first 'message repeater' or audio recording for the benefit of guests. Once activated by a button, the recording had Eleanor speak for 3-minutes, reminiscing about her affection for the stables and the special role of horses in the Roosevelt home.⁸³ This recording provided a proxy tour guide experience for visitors to discover upon their entry into the stables. There were plans to accompany this message repeater with further audio recordings by Eleanor Roosevelt at the entrance to the home, beside the ice pond and perhaps another next to the tree plantations.⁸⁴ It is unclear whether those other recordings ever came to fruition; probably not as Eleanor died in 1962. Nevertheless, the stables' recording was played 3,277 times in August 1965, alone.⁸⁵ During this period, the National Park Service began to view the site more holistically and incorporated various outhouses and buildings into the visitor experience. Forestry also rose to the attention of the interpretation staff during the 1960s, and new research into the Hyde Park

⁸¹ Charles W. Snell, Interpretation and Information Park Guide Manual, May 18, 1957, Park Guide and Manual Interpretation, Box 11, Roosevelt Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

⁸² Charles R. Rinaldi, Information and Interpretive Services Report, January 29, 1961,, Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

⁸³ Charles R. Rinaldi, Information and Interpretive Services Report, January 29, 1961,, Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

⁸⁴ Charles R. Rinaldi, Information and Interpretive Services Report, January 29, 1961,, Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

⁸⁵ Superintendent's Monthly Report, August 1965, Box 214, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 1, NARA II.

environment led to the construction of an ‘interpretation trail’ through the woods.⁸⁶ In 1973 the Park Service published a guidebook to the trees at Vanderbilt Mansion and Hyde Park was produced by the National Park Service.⁸⁷

The approach at Hyde Park has also diverged from its original emphasis due to the passing of time and the fading of the memory of FDR. In the early years and especially before Eleanor Roosevelt’s death in 1962, interpreters were wary of the opinions of surviving friends, relatives and fans who would often visit the home and grave as part of a regular pilgrimage. But by 1974, a new interpretive theme recognised the need to explain the park’s significance to a contemporary audience far removed from FDR’s life and times.⁸⁸ In this interpretative document written by Leonard E. Brown, FDR was described as a ‘world citizen’ who was ‘shaped by the environment that surrounded him.’ Brown emphasised not just his fame and renown, but that he also ‘generated a deep fear and hatred among a large minority.’⁸⁹ These words represented a striking change which was permitted only by the emergence of a ‘generation unborn in April 1945.’ Possibly, Brown was referring to contemporaneous revisionist scholarship or works that suggested the government had not responded adequately to the destruction of European Jewry.⁹⁰ In this climate there developed possibilities of a more critical – and less reverential – attitude to interpretation at Hyde Park.⁹¹ With less assumed knowledge, it was also deemed necessary that a longer handbook be produced, beyond the freely available folder picked up by all visitors entering the house. Brown was eager to maintain the efforts of preserving, and ‘freezing’ the home, as it was in 1945. Yet he also recognised the home ‘does and should reflect the full span of Roosevelt’s

⁸⁶ Charles R. Rinaldi, Information and Interpretive Services Report, January 29, 1961,, Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

⁸⁷ Leonard E. Brown, Interpretive Prospectus, July 9, 1974, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

⁸⁸ Leonard E. Brown, Interpretive Prospectus, July 9, 1974, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

⁸⁹ Leonard E. Brown, Interpretive Prospectus, July 9, 1974, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

⁹⁰ John A. Garraty, “The New Deal, National Socialism, and the Great Depression,” *The American Historical Review* 78, no. 4 (1973): 907–44, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1858346>; Henry L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945* (New Brunswick, NJ.: Rutgers University Press, 1970).

⁹¹ Leonard E. Brown, Interpretive Prospectus, July 9, 1974, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

life,' which freed staff to speak about topics broader than architecture and family culture in their tours.⁹²

In 1989, Margaret Partridge site manager at Hyde Park authored a new interpretive prospectus which set the course of the management of the home into the twenty-first century. In her discussion of objectives, Partridge contended with the growing revisionist scholarship about FDR. 'There is no general agreement as to how Roosevelt became the leader that he was... There are historians who believe that the work programs and relief measures that Roosevelt formulated during those years, saved our democratic system. Then there are those who are opposed to Roosevelt and all his works who maintain that he pandered to the working classes simply because they comprised a large segment of the vote.'⁹³ Yet Partridge's primary intervention was to hang the interpretation at Hyde Park on a recently published book, *Before the Trumpet* by Geoffrey C. Ward.⁹⁴ Partridge described Ward's book as an effective explanation for Roosevelt's motivations and inner world. Borrowing from Ward's scholarship, Partridge pointed to the adoring attention of his parents, the progressive and reformist influences of his wife, the example of his distant cousin President Theodore Roosevelt, and the time spent amongst New York's upper circles as well as frequent travels to Europe as factors that developed Roosevelt as a man for public leadership.⁹⁵ Partridge's interpretive plan also urged the Park Service to look to Sara Roosevelt as 'one aspect of the Roosevelt story in need of revision' at Hyde Park.⁹⁶ Sullied by classist sentiment and coming off poorly in comparison to Eleanor, Sara, Partridge argued, needed to be rescued from her popular reputation as 'a kind of ogre.' Partridge suggested a fresh image of Sara Roosevelt as a leader in her society, generally admired, and adored by her grandchildren – 'Every story has two sides; in the case of Sara's, only one has been heard.'⁹⁷

Margaret Partridge reframed the interpretive themes under three headings: 1. The influence of Franklin's parents and family on his character and political career, 2. The

⁹² Leonard E. Brown, Interpretive Prospectus, July 9, 1974, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

⁹³ Margaret Partridge, Interpretive Prospectus, February 1989, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

⁹⁴ Ward, *Before the Trumpet*.

⁹⁵ Margaret Partridge, Interpretive Prospectus, February 1989, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

⁹⁶ Margaret Partridge, Interpretive Prospectus, February 1989, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

⁹⁷ Margaret Partridge, Interpretive Prospectus, February 1989, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

influence of his education and social background, 3. His love of his Hyde Park home and its environs.⁹⁸ Partridge also dwelt on the home as a place of insight into private matters and was not afraid to move towards taboo topics. In particular, she points out the empathy that is created at Springwood regarding Roosevelt's paralysis.

During his years in office the members of the press shielded Roosevelt from news releases and photographs that might expose his paralysis. To re-enforce his image as a strong and effective leader, he was never shown in a wheelchair or being carried by bodyguards. But in the Home there is no secret about his disability. The visitor sees the ramp to the library and another in the hallway upstairs, and finally in his dressing-room the little homemade wheelchair sits as a poignant reminder of his crippling disability. He preferred this simple wooden armless chair mounted on wheels, because it was more easily manoeuvrable than the commercial kind. The impact of Roosevelt's struggle with polio is a theme that the Home amply addresses.⁹⁹

Although FDR's wheelchair has always been present in the Home at Hyde Park, it was not until Partridge wrote her prospectus in 1989 that it was dealt with overtly by interpretation staff. Instead of shying away from difficult or painful realities, the acknowledgment of FDR's disability was seen to create empathy, rather than disrespect, among visitors. Coinciding with the gradual combatting of discrimination, and the eventual passing of the Americans with Disability Act in 1990, the interpretation of FDR's home was clearly evolving in tandem with America.

The interpretive program at Chartwell was fairly robust and predictable. The tried and tested self-guiding method dictated a consistent presentation of the house itself, with little additional input for visitors. The only major site of experimentation was Churchill's painting studio. Freed of the home's four walls and located at the bottom of the garden instead, this site may have been viewed as less risky – a natural site for trial and error. Yet even this space was subject to politicised, and partial, curation.

In the summer of 1967 the National Trust decided to begin development of the studio for public viewing, rather than letting it sit in disrepair. Discussion centred on which of Churchill's original paintings to display and how. Because the National Trust did not possess enough Churchill canvases to fill the space, discussion turned to whether paintings kept

⁹⁸ Margaret Partridge, Interpretive Prospectus, February 1989, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

⁹⁹ Margaret Partridge, Interpretive Prospectus, February 1989, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

elsewhere might be photographed and reproduced or enlarged on site.¹⁰⁰ In the end, the shortfall was met by a temporary loan from Clementine, at the behest of her daughter, Mary Soames.¹⁰¹ As Chapter Four showed, the Churchill family was deeply involved in Chartwell as a memorial to Winston from the very start. In February 1968 St John Gore wrote to Clementine to thank her for her kindness, ‘the trust is deeply indebted to you for allowing them to borrow these pictures,’ he assured her.¹⁰²

In the studio, the National Trust was hoping to focus less on the greatness of the man by placing some of Churchill’s imperfections on view. Whilst Chartwell only contained Churchill’s most celebrated paintings, the studio was envisioned as a space that allowed for his ‘experimental or unfinished canvases.’¹⁰³ Nevertheless, as always, the Churchill family retained right of veto and this now was showing itself in interpretation decisions. With regards to the studio, Grace Hamblin reported that Clementine Churchill objected to showcasing a particular painting. ‘There is one very bad portrait of Lady Casterosse which she does not wish to be hung’ reported Hamblin.¹⁰⁴

The arrangement of the paintings in the studio was developed self-consciously, rather than with an eye for historical integrity. This was a workshop, and the Trust aimed to show it encompassing a variety of Churchill’s paintings; some good, some bad, some finished, some not. St John Gore hoped to create the appearance of a ‘disarranged’ and ‘apparently casual arrangement’ rather than using a traditional symmetrical style.¹⁰⁵ His vision for the studio was to develop a sense of random authenticity to ‘give the impression that the pictures were put on the walls as they were painted.’¹⁰⁶ There were significant problems with the task of fabricating casualness. Gore recognised that he was undertaking a sort of guise, as he pursued a ‘random’ arrangement but still had to provide a balanced pattern with no unbroken areas of

¹⁰⁰ Letter to Mary Soames, June 30, 1967, Chartwell Manor (F. St. J Gore's File), 110:19:00, National Trust Archive.

¹⁰¹ Mary Soames, July 3, 1967, Chartwell Manor (F. St. J Gore's File), 110:19:00, National Trust Archive.

¹⁰² St John Gore to Clementine Spencer-Churchill, February 27, 1968, Chartwell Manor (F. St. J Gore's File), 110:19:00, National Trust Archive.

¹⁰³ Letter to Mary Soames, September 15, 1967, Chartwell Manor (F. St. J Gore's File), 110:19:00, National Trust Archive.

¹⁰⁴ Grace Hamblin to St John Gore, July 30, 1967, Chartwell Manor (F. St. J Gore's File), 110:19:00, National Trust Archive.

¹⁰⁵ St John Gore to Mary Soames, July 21, 1967, Chartwell Manor (F. St. J Gore's File), 110:19:00, National Trust Archive.

¹⁰⁶ St John Gore to Mary Soames, July 21, 1967, Chartwell Manor (F. St. J Gore's File), 110:19:00, National Trust Archive.

wall.¹⁰⁷ He also mimicked a professional gallery style with the decision to whitewash the studio walls – ‘I think that the pictures would look infinitely better with this as the background.’¹⁰⁸ In this way a studio meant to look ‘natural’ and ‘authentic’ was in fact a highly curated space.¹⁰⁹

The urge to satisfy public expectations again reared its head. Releasing the Studio to visitors required installing new and extensive security measures. A report from the surveyor in February 1968 described the vast insurance concerns arising from having so many invaluable Churchill paintings gathered together. The National Trust was urged to install multiple deadlocks, alarms and security guards. But the request to install iron gates over the windows did not sit well with Gore and others. ‘This is the point which really worries me,’ Gore wrote. ‘The last impression that we wish to give the public is that they are caged in behind iron grilles.’¹¹⁰

In 1980 the studio was altered once more, as The National Trust gained possession of more paintings upon the death of Clementine Churchill in 1977. These paintings had previously belonged to Clementine and were transferred to the Treasury in lieu of Capital Transfer Tax. The Treasury gifted the paintings to the National Trust for display to the public.¹¹¹ This period marked a renegotiation of the Chartwell loan agreement, because the earlier agreement of 1969 (as mentioned in Chapter Four) expired upon Clementine’s death.¹¹² With this new acquisition came a second occasion to rework interpretation at the studio. After ‘thickening up’ the display, the National Trust also issued an informative leaflet for visitors that explained the paintings and their origin.¹¹³ In this period the style of the studio was clarified. Historic photos made it possible recreate the space as it had appeared when Churchill worked in it. An unfinished canvas with a used painting palette were now arranged next to a chair and cigar in the inner studio to create the impression the Churchill

¹⁰⁷ St John Gore to Mary Soames, July 21, 1967, Chartwell Manor (F. St. J Gore's File), 110:19:00, National Trust Archive.

¹⁰⁸ St John Gore to Mary Soames, July 21, 1967, Chartwell Manor (F. St. J Gore's File), 110:19:00, National Trust Archive.

¹⁰⁹ Grace Hamblin to St John Gore, January 24, 1968, Chartwell Manor (F. St. J Gore's File), 110:19:00, National Trust Archive.

¹¹⁰ St John Gore to J. W. Devenish, February 22, 1968, Chartwell Manor (F. St. J Gore's File), 110:19:00, National Trust Archive.

¹¹¹ W. I. Sargeant to J. D. Boles, March 11, 1980, Chartwell Manor: General, 106:65, National Trust Archive.

¹¹² M. D. Drury, Memorandum, April 11, 1980, Chartwell Manor: General, 106:65, National Trust Archive.

¹¹³ Martin Drury to Peter Miall, June 26, 1981, Chartwell Manor: General, 106:65, National Trust Archive.

had just left the room.¹¹⁴ The exterior room was decorated with a mosaic of canvases; in 1989 a large globe, four-foot in diameter, was added to the room. It had originally been gifted to Winston Churchill in 1943 by Franklin D. Roosevelt, and was given to the National Trust to restore and reassemble in their Chartwell studio.¹¹⁵ Thus the Studio transitioned from being something of a gallery room into a re-created living space.

This change deployed the principle of freezing an interior in time, the then dominant principle of conservation, and the style which had already been cemented inside Chartwell proper. This decision to return the studio to a frozen room-scape rather than exploring other uses, such as a dynamic site for art exhibitions or a location for rotating displays, demonstrates the ongoing power of traditional house museum interpretation methods in the mind of the National Trust.

One shared interpretive theme at Chartwell and Hyde Park has been an eagerness to present Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt as everyday countrymen. The perceived humbleness of their abodes was regarded at both sites as an effective means of engaging the public. Visitors to Chartwell have been recorded consistently remarking upon Chartwell's familiarity, 'that's like our fire place...' 'see that old chair, that's like the one we've got.'¹¹⁶ Palmer has argued that public identification with Churchill's struggles, financial, familial or otherwise, makes him more relatable. 'This perception of ordinariness endows him with a superior status enabling him to speak for "us" both as individual and as a nation,' she writes, 'It legitimizes him in the eyes of "the people" providing him with the moral authority to act and to speak for the nation.'¹¹⁷ Likewise at Hyde Park, many early visitors found the home reassuringly modest. A Parks Service Supervisor, upon first visiting Hyde Park, described it this way:

I was surprised to find the Roosevelt home furnishings, together with the out-buildings, not nearly as sumptuous as I had supposed them to be... I can understand the impression that many people have after visiting the place; that Mr Roosevelt's surroundings as to furniture, size of rooms, and similar matters, were not greatly

¹¹⁴ H. Sandwith, Memorandum, April 4, 1984, Chartwell: Management (1983-1987), 112:68, National Trust Archive.

¹¹⁵ National Trust, Press Release, February 8, 1989, Chartwell: Management (1983-1987), 112:68, National Trust Archive.

¹¹⁶ Palmer, "Touring Churchill's England," 432.

¹¹⁷ Palmer, 431-32.

different from their own, and they go away feeling that he really understood the kind of lives lived by the average American.¹¹⁸

The desire to present Churchill and Roosevelt as ‘ordinary’ harks back to their lifetimes. In times of war, the imagined nation was a powerful impetus for individual sacrifice and dogged perseverance. Thus, both national leaders wanted to be seen as regular members of their respective nations, and not living outlandishly.

The National Park Service embraced the interpretive potential of affordable audio-visual technology when it became available in the 1960s. In this area, their pioneering attitude stands starkly against the National Trust’s more tradition-bound approach. An audio guided tour of the Roosevelt Home given by Eleanor Roosevelt was introduced at Hyde Park as early as 1963. This was a much more comprehensive recording than the initial experimentation of ‘audio messages’ trialled in the stables. The tour audio was recorded by Mrs Roosevelt in a New York studio in January 1962, ten months before she died. The idea for the project first arose in 1959, but had been delayed by several years. It was organised by supervising Park Historian, Franklin R. Mullaly, who judged the audio tour ‘very lifelike’.¹¹⁹ He regarded this development as a way to motivate previous visitors to make a return visit. When introduced, thirty audio units (comprising of two sets of earphones covered in disposable paper) were available to rent from the Home of FDR. The *Poughkeepsie Journal* described the audio tour in April 1963 as an ‘innovation’ and a ‘dramatic treat for many’.¹²⁰ In September 1963, an internal report described the introduction of audio guides at FDR’s home as a ‘superb interpretive device’¹²¹ Recorded visitor responses included ‘it seemed very personal to have her for our guide;’ ‘the AcousticGuide has added a sense of authenticity to the tour;’ ‘the emotional impact of hearing Mrs Roosevelt’s voice in this setting, and the warmth and humor in her comments made the visit very enjoyable;’ ‘it gives you the feeling that she is actually giving you a personal tour,’ ‘it was well worth the small

¹¹⁸ Roy A. Appleman Memorandum, December 2, 1946, Washington Liaison Office, 1946, Box 2620, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, NARA II.

¹¹⁹ Poughkeepsie Journal, April 28, 1963, Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

¹²⁰ Poughkeepsie Journal, April 28, 1963, Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

¹²¹ Benjamin H. Davis, September 10, 1963, Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

charge.’¹²² Of forty-five recorded responses during the summer of 1963, only three were unfavourable. Nearly 4000 people used the AcousticGuides in August, representing just over 8% of visitors to the home that month. These numbers were substantially limited by an inadequate supply of audio consoles. In July 1963, one visitor wrote to the Park Service to tell them that ‘the AcousticGuide be a must with the price of admission... because only then does the house become alive, full of meaning and the Roosevelt’s are with us again and forever,’¹²³

Nevertheless, the National Park Service experienced extensive and repetitive technical difficulties with the equipment, which frustrated both staff and visitors. The AcousticGuide was produced for Hyde Park by a company called Autolecture, inc.¹²⁴ In August 1963, only four months after its introduction, Autolecture was required to send nineteen new replacement machines to Hyde Park. Yet these also proved to be faulty – nearly half had broken down again within a week.¹²⁵ From April to August, the audio machines cost the Park Service more than \$3,000; still they yielded a small profit of nearly \$500. The introduction of audio guides also cost a lot of staff time, especially as one guard was required to stay at the pick-up station throughout the day, rather than roam the home as usual. Despite these difficulties, the inimitable experience of Eleanor Roosevelt’s ‘personal’ tour was considered unique and vital. After six months of implementation the Park Service was happy to declare the AcousticGuide as an ‘unquestionable successful interpretive device.’¹²⁶ The audio tour was regarded very highly for over a decade. In an interpretive document from July 1974, FDR Staff considered it to still to have been one of the ‘premier interpretive experiences in the National Park Service.’¹²⁷ Though widely lauded as a success, the

¹²² Benjamin H. Davis, September 10, 1963, Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

¹²³ Beatrice Kirschenbaum, July 12, 1963, Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

¹²⁴ Benjamin H. Davis, September 10, 1963, Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

¹²⁵ Benjamin H. Davis, September 10, 1963, Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

¹²⁶ Benjamin H. Davis, September 10, 1963, Interpretive Activities, Services, Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, 1960-63, Box 1499, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 11, NARA II.

¹²⁷ Leonard E. Brown, Interpretive Prospectus, July 9, 1974, Interpretive Reports 1974-1991, Park Resource Management and Planning Reports, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS Records.

equipment was never fully incorporated into the visitor experience. In 1965, only 10% of visitors were taking the AcousticGuide tour; it was thought that usership always lagged behind potential.¹²⁸ With quality and availability of audio technology so unreliable, the AcousticGuide gradually faded from use and from Park Service records.

In recent years, compulsory guided tours have replaced the need for any pre-recorded audio at Hyde Park. Nevertheless, during 2011, in the aftermath of the Financial Crisis, a small radio was set up in the home to play clips from FDR's fireside chat on the banking crisis. Mirroring the problems that faced Obama when he came to office, this interpretive audio method was aimed at helping visitors to see the ways history was repeating itself.¹²⁹ Meanwhile, the National Trust never showed much interest in this technology.

The experience economy

In the twenty-first century, both Hyde Park and Chartwell have undergone (and are undergoing) major shifts in what they offer visitors. At Hyde Park, the physical growth of the site has been notable, as the National Park Service has gradually acquired more and more of the original Roosevelt estate. The construction of the Wallace Center in 2003 provided the space, resources and equipment to expand the interpretive program at Hyde Park. Likewise, at Chartwell, recent developments coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of Churchill's death have opened the National Trust to fresh interpretive methods and new vision. These changes have occurred within a context of changing visitor expectations and a reimagining of the role of heritage sites as experiential and multifunctional locations.

During the first decades of the twenty-first century, house museums shared in a museum-wide trend towards reinventing themselves. Driven by economic, tourism and cultural transformations, the traditional role of the heritage sector was being reimagined. By the end of the 1990s, the demands of an 'Experience Economy' had penetrated the museum sector. A concept first articulated by B. Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, in the Experience Economy visitors must be won over through entertainment and aesthetics, not just information.¹³⁰ The Experience Economy looks to turn passive receivers into engaged participants wishing to experience memorable events. These new expectations paved the way

¹²⁸ Superintendent's Monthly Report, February 1965, Box 214, National Parks Service Central Classified File 1933-1949, Appendix 1, NARA II.

¹²⁹ Fran Macsali, personal interview, August 7, 2018.

¹³⁰ B. Joseph Pine, Joseph Pine, and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Business Press, 1999).

for what heritage experts have labelled ‘co-creation’: methods of inviting visitors to shape and adapt the interpretive material to create their own stories and meanings. The rise of social media has cemented the process of co-creation as a cultural norm.

In Britain, the development of an Experience Economy through the early 2000s was occurring alongside a drop in government funding in the cultural sector. Yet increased resources were necessary, now more than ever, to meet the demands of the modern tourist. Roy Ballantyne and David Uzzell have argued that this resulted in ‘visitor-centred’ museums that strive for profit and visitor satisfaction as the ultimate aim, placing market conditions at the heart of institutional planning.¹³¹ ‘Clearly, over the past 30 years, the expectation that a museum is largely concerned with storing, caring for, and exhibiting objects has expanded,’ they write, arguing that it now functions as a ‘non-formal educational institution providing a public service through an engaging presentation of objects and experiences to visitors.’¹³² With this new model, the visitor becomes a client to be satisfied and their visit an occasion to be monetised. Ballantyne and Uzzell bemoan this development, seeing in it one that threatens to turn museums into sites for pure entertainment (appealing to the masses) or a specialised site which caters only for a targeted segment of the population.

In America, the pull of the Experience Economy was made stronger by an explosion in the number of house museums across the country. In 2014, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (US) estimated there to be more than 15,000 of them.¹³³ Asking ‘Are there too many house museums?’ many scholars critiqued the proliferation of heritage homes that lacked the audience and the resources to be effective museums.¹³⁴ Overzealous for preservation, argues Richard Moe, too many homes were listed and maintained by a stretched group of volunteers unable to properly maintain the site or interpret it effectively. Over the last few decades, this has provided new impetus for house museums to creatively solve their

¹³¹ Roy Ballantyne and David Uzzell, “Looking Back and Looking Forward: The Rise of the Visitor-Centered Museum,” *Curator: The Museum Journal* 54, no. 1 (2011): 85–92, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2151-6952.2010.00071.x>.

¹³² Ballantyne and Uzzell, 87.

¹³³ Ruth Graham, ‘The great historic house museum debate,’ *The Boston Globe*, August 10, 2014. Accessed June 6, 2020 from <https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2014/08/09/the-great-historic-house-museum-debate/jzFwE9tvJdHDCXehIWqK4O/story.html>.

¹³⁴ Richard Moe, “Are There Too Many House Museums?,” *Forum Journal* 27, no. 1 (2012): 55–61.

problem of low visitor numbers and lack of local community involvement, as witnessed through the barrage of books published on this issue.¹³⁵

The result of such a national and international heritage revolution was the rendering of many reliable interpretation methods traditionally employed at house museums suddenly irrelevant. Lisa Lopez couched the change in these unapologetic terms in 2015:

‘Velvet ropes that keep rooms pristine and guided tours that describe in agonizing detail residents’ daily routines are, after all, the domiciliary equivalent of sticking a pin through an insect and calling it an exhibition. Working toward (r)evolution, historic house professionals are beginning to reimagine these sites as active, breathing spaces to engage with both the past and the present.’¹³⁶

Solutions for house museums in this context included repurposing the site for event management such as weddings and farmers markets, creating spaces for art exhibits or theatre performances, and opening the site for hire by local community members. Meanwhile interpretive staff began to recognise that ‘audio and visual communication, atmospherics and on-site engagement’ constituted some of the most important factors in influencing visitor experience.¹³⁷

The Home of Franklin Roosevelt National Historic Site has in recent years expanded and likewise opened itself to new interpretive opportunities. The first addition was the incorporation in 1974 of the Newbold-Morgan estate, known as Bellefield, an adjacent home which now houses the National Park Service offices and headquarters.¹³⁸ In 2001, the Park Service acquired Top Cottage, FDR’s wheelchair-friendly, Dutch Colonial-style hilltop retreat. The cottage is accessible to visitors via a regular coach route in the summer months. This site represents the greatest space for experimentation at Hyde Park. Faced with a lack of original historic furnishings, it was not possible to embark on a purely preservationist policy. Instead, rangers use Top Cottage as a site for community meetings, public discussion and deeper interpretive work. Tours of the site run like a small seminar, where visitors sit on the

¹³⁵ Butler, “Past, Present and Future: The Place of the House Museum in the Museum Community”; Harris, *New Solutions for House Museums*; Beaulieu, *Financial Fundamentals for Historic House Museums*; Turino and Balgooy, *Reimagining Historic House Museums*.

¹³⁶ Lisa Junkin Lopez, “Introduction, ‘Open House: Reimagining the Historic House Museum,’” *The Public Historian* 37, no. 2 (2015): 10–13, <https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2015.37.2.10>.

¹³⁷ Joanna Kempniak et al., “The Heritage Tourist: An Understanding of the Visitor Experience at Heritage Attractions,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 23, no. 4 (April 21, 2017): 388, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2016.1277776>.

¹³⁸ Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, “General Management Plan 2010,” National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 2010, p.15.

porch (just as FDR used to with his guests) while the guide helps to construct a more in-depth discussion of Roosevelt's policies, legacies, and the effects of World War II.¹³⁹ This location is targeted toward 'die hard' Roosevelt fans who are motivated towards ongoing education and analysis.

Perhaps the most important development in interpretive methods at Hyde Park was the 2003 construction of the Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Education Center. The building is jointly administered by the National Park Service and the National Archives and Records Association.¹⁴⁰ This was the first major new facility to be constructed on the estate during the National Park Service's tenure.¹⁴¹ The center includes a 140-person seat auditorium, a gift shop, a café, a meeting space for tour groups and a ticketing office.¹⁴² Here, visitors are orientated to the site via a documentary film, information panels and a large mosaic floor map, before embarking on their visit to the Home or Library. By all accounts, the Wallace Center revolutionised the visitor experience at Hyde Park.¹⁴³ Described as an 'incredible addition,' the Wallace Center has increased capacity for school groups and created space for supplementary interpretive events (for example, every June authors on the Roosevelt period are invited to give lectures) as well as a space for community hire.¹⁴⁴ Perhaps most important of all, it has provided a clear avenue of cooperation between the National Archives and the National Park Service, as they work together to sell tickets and manage the building. This modern and expansive visitor center is a far cry from the old outdoor ticket booth which was in operation for nearly 60 years. 'We had so little back then,' recalls Fran Macsali, FDR Site Manager, 'and we didn't realise until we got this.'¹⁴⁵ At the Wallace Center, the National Park Service is free to explore multi-purpose use of the site without the danger of damaging the historic Springwood building.

In 2007, the National Park Service acquired 334 acres of land east of the Home, land which had previously made up FDR's forestry estate during his lifetime. Joining up

¹³⁹ Fran Macsali, personal interview, August 7, 2018.

¹⁴⁰ Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, "General Management Plan 2010," National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 2010, p.15.

¹⁴¹ "Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Educational Center," FDR Library and Museum Website, Accessed from <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/henry-a-wallace-visitor-and-educational-center>

¹⁴² *Architectural Record*, November 2006, Vol. 194 Issue 11, p63-63.

¹⁴³ "Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Educational Center," FDR Library and Museum Website, Accessed from <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/henry-a-wallace-visitor-and-educational-center>

¹⁴⁴ Fran Macsali, personal interview, August 7, 2018.

¹⁴⁵ Fran Macsali, personal interview, August 7, 2018.

Springwood and Val-Kill, this land has been repurposed as walking route for visitors.¹⁴⁶

Hyde Park is now able to market itself to visitors as an expansive parkland and walking trail area, not just a historic house. Added to this the partnering Eleanor Roosevelt Historic Site (Val Kill) which was established in 1977 and the presence of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library on neighbouring land. By 2008, site began to dwarf the comparable space available at Chartwell.

In 2010, the latest general management plan sketched the intended direction of interpretation at Hyde Park. In this interpretive plan, staff frame the site as FDR's 'laboratory for ideas' where Roosevelt was able to learn and practice skills, not just in conservation, land stewardship and rural improvement but also in local heritage and architecture.¹⁴⁷ Today at Hyde Park there is an unparalleled array of entrance points to the story of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Depending on their preferences, visitors enter the Wallace Center and they may choose how to spend their day at Hyde Park. Perhaps to visit the Library for historic context, or the Home for the Roosevelt family history, or Val Kill for Eleanor Roosevelt's unique contributions, or Top Cottage for an in-depth discussion of FDR's policies and legacy; or all of the above.

In 1998 a management plan was drawn up to bring Chartwell into the twenty-first Century. In a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, the concerns of the period became apparent. Chartwell was not providing an experience that could compete with other heritage sites. The reliance on enthusiast visitors, a loss of Churchill's relevance in 'recent' history, falling visitor numbers and lack of accessibility by public transport; all these factors urged the National Trust management at Chartwell to create a new solutions.¹⁴⁸ They identified opportunities for evolution, including utilising recent market research which hoped to access a new audience – those who would visit Chartwell not just for Churchilliana but for the rewarding experience of visiting a well-operated leisure garden within a short drive of London. One outcome of these speculations was the restoration of Churchill's original butterfly house in 2010 to promote Chartwell as a wild-life friendly garden.¹⁴⁹ Emphasis was also placed on the need for staff to develop 'anecdotal' historical

¹⁴⁶ Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, "General Management Plan 2010," National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 2010, p.15.

¹⁴⁷ Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, "General Management Plan 2010," National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 2010.

¹⁴⁸ Chartwell Management Plan 1998-2002, January 1998, Chartwell Reports, CIR 612, National Trust Archive.

interpretation that would make Churchill's life more accessible for a new audience, especially an audience drawn to the Churchill passions of gardening and painting.¹⁵⁰

Many of these ideas have come to fruition in the last decade. In 2016 a major new development, the 'Chartwell Appeal,' reinvigorated the management of the site. Funded by a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the theme of their cause was fighting for the 'relevance' of Churchill for young people, especially as research showed that most local children could not even recognise Churchill from a photograph.¹⁵¹ Coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of the Home's opening, this appeal was further motivated by the fact that many of Churchill's artefacts remained in the ownership of Randolph Churchill, Winston's great-grandson.¹⁵² Concerned that these items on loan could conceivably be lost at any time, the National Trust sought to raise funds and attention to 'help us keep Churchill's legacy at Chartwell.' The projected costs of buying back the Chartwell collection was £7.1 million.¹⁵³ In the National Trust Newsletter of August 2016, the project was framed as a patriotic act to 'secure the most significant of these items for the nation.'¹⁵⁴ Within three months, over eighty percent of these funds had been raised.¹⁵⁵

In their appeal to raise funds, the National Trust also promised that this money would be spent on finding 'new ways of telling Churchill's story.' The interpretive plan was not just to buy back Churchill's objects but to re-imagine Chartwell entirely, so that visitors could 'get up closer to more of the collection and step into family rooms that have never been seen by the public.'¹⁵⁶ In June 2017 new research was undertaken with a team from the British Library to conduct oral histories in preparation for the opening of new rooms. Of particular investigation has been details about Churchill's bedroom (first opened to the public in March 2018) and the Secretary's offices (due to be opened in 2020).¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁰ Chartwell Management Plan 1998-2002, January 1998, Chartwell Reports, CIR 612, National Trust Archive.

¹⁵¹ Beatrice Rapley, "Churchill's Chartwell: Rediscovering relevance in the twenty-first century," *Views*, National Trust, Issue 56, Autumn 2019, p.9.

¹⁵² "National Trust hopes to buy Churchill's country house heirlooms," *The Guardian*, September 5, 2016. Accessed June 6, 2020 from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/sep/05/national-trust-buy-churchills-chartwell-country-house-heirlooms>.

¹⁵³ "Updates from the Churchill's Chartwell Appeal," National Trust, Chartwell Website, accessed from <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell/projects/keep-churchill-at-chartwell-appeal-updates>

¹⁵⁴ National Trust Newsletter, Autumn 2016, National Trust Archives, p.27.

¹⁵⁵ "Updates from the Churchill's Chartwell Appeal," National Trust, Chartwell Website, accessed from <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell/projects/keep-churchill-at-chartwell-appeal-updates>

¹⁵⁶ National Trust Newsletter, Autumn 2016, National Trust Archives, p.28.

¹⁵⁷ "Updates from the Churchill's Chartwell Appeal," National Trust, Chartwell Website, accessed from <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell/projects/keep-churchill-at-chartwell-appeal-updates>

The Chartwell Appeal has also birthed the first guided walking tours of Chartwell. Launched in March 2018, visitors can now book onto a Highlights Tour themed around ‘Churchill and Family.’¹⁵⁸ Led by experienced room stewards, this tour culminates in a visit to Churchill’s bedroom. A guided tour is a necessary pre-requisite for viewing this particular room, situated as it is behind rope barriers and beyond the usual traffic flow of rooms at Chartwell. The opening up of these previously ‘private’ spaces reflect the changing position of Winston Churchill in national consciousness. ‘Though the house has been open to the public since 1966, it is only now with the passing of time that it was considered suitable to open the intimate space of the bedroom,’ reported *The Telegraph* in June 2017.¹⁵⁹ Moving from an attitude of reverential worship and deference to gritty human interest, modern visitors want to feel they are receiving the whole story, warts and all.

In 2017 the National Trust released a research report, ‘Places that Make Us,’ which demonstrated their rationale going forward.¹⁶⁰ In line with the lessons of an Experience Economy, the National Trust examined the emotions of experience in order to justify their preservation work. In partnership with the psychology department at the University of Surrey, ‘Places that Make Us’ revealed the brain activity that accompanies human interaction with significant places. As well as undertaking surveys, researchers used MRI technology to measure participants’ brain activity in the Amygdala, Medial Prefrontal Cortex and Parahippocampal Place Area whilst they viewed images of and physically visited places which were personally ‘special’ to them.¹⁶¹ This detailed document was a point of pride for the Trust. By demonstrating that places ‘have long-lasting effects that have an impact on us physically and psychologically’ the National Trust was able to affirm the value of their original mission (described by founder Octavia Hill) to provide ‘places to sit in, places to play in, places to stroll in, and places to spend a day in.’ Yet ironically, this scientific evidence was not geared towards revolutionising their sites but instead bolstered the longstanding National Trust ethos of hosting visitors with minimal interference, allowing them to independently enjoy and discover their own significant places.

¹⁵⁸ “Updates from the Churchill’s Chartwell Appeal,” National Trust, Chartwell Website, accessed from <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell/projects/keep-churchill-at-chartwell-appeal-updates>

¹⁵⁹ Hannah Furness, “Churchill’s bedroom to open to public for the first time as Prince Charles gets tour from grandson,” *The Telegraph*, June 5, 2017. Accessed June 6, 2020 from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/05/churchills-bedroom-open-public-first-time-prince-charles-gets/>.

¹⁶⁰ “Places that Make Us: Research Report,” National Trust, 2017. Accessed June 6, 2020 from <https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net/documents/places-that-make-us-research-report.pdf>.

¹⁶¹ “Places that Make Us: Research Report,” National Trust, 2017, p.14. Accessed June 6, 2020 from <https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net/documents/places-that-make-us-research-report.pdf>.

Historic houses, though part of the broad spectrum of museology, are not typical of museums. As Linda Young has argued, the site that is both an historical artefact of itself, and a space for public access to historical artefacts, is peculiar. In fact, House Museums vary greatly among themselves.¹⁶² Curation occurs, sometimes overtly – such as in the ‘museum room’ at Chartwell – but more often invisibly, through the indistinguishable mix of historic and reproduced artefacts, those items on show and those items held in storage, the stories of the tour guide or the anecdotes in the brochure.

The biggest questions of interpretation and curation have emerged when the heroes of the home have seemed, so in modern times, to drift into disrepute or irrelevance. Suddenly, what was once an obvious site of historic value must fight to win visitors and industry respect. An examination of the last sixty years of operation at Hyde Park and Chartwell suggests that the National Park Service has taken a more proactive approach to this obsolescence problem – recognising early the need to ‘set the narrative’ and interpret FDR’s significance in increasingly overt ways. Instituting compulsory guided tours, even at the cost of visitor complaints and added staffing requirements, has been the response to this imperative. At Chartwell, recent years have seen a similar realisation take hold. Fighting lingering habits to avoid over-interpreting, the National Trust staff continue to negotiate a new century where Churchill’s national significance threatens to fade, or at the very least, become less immediate. The National Trust has taken a different angle, seeking to diversify its audience and promoting Chartwell’s appeal on the basis of its garden and facilities, rather than on Churchill’s legacy alone. The future of these sites hangs on their success in drawing new and return visitors, enhancing visitor experience and leaving them with compelling stories about their heroes and their nation, all of which relies on the crucial work of interpretation.

¹⁶² Linda Young, “House Museums are Not All the Same! Understanding Motivation to Guide Conservation,” *Conference Proceedings, The Artifact, Its Context, and their Narrative: Multidisciplinary Conservation in Historic House Museums*, November 6-9, 2012. Accessed from http://www.icom-cc.org/ul/cms/fck-uploaded/documents/DEMHIST%20%20ICOM-CC%20Joint%20Interim%20Meeting%202012/25-Young-Keynote-DEMHIST_ICOMCC-LA_2012.pdf

Conclusion:

Home at Last

Franklin Roosevelt never visited Chartwell. In the years they shared as Allied leaders, Winston Churchill was residing at Downing Street or Chequers, and Chartwell was closed for fear of aerial bombing.¹ Churchill did not return there until after Roosevelt's death in 1945. But Churchill *did* visit Roosevelt at Hyde Park – on at least three occasions.

In June 1942, August 1943 and September 1944 Hyde Park was utilised by these men as a rendezvous site before together they both attended major conferences in Washington D.C. and Quebec.² Historians regard 1944 as the most significant of these meetings, when Roosevelt and Churchill signed an atomic energy agreement in the Hyde Park Springwood study.³ Committing the UK and US to collaborating in 'developing tube alloys for military and commercial purposes' – i.e. the Manhattan Project – proved a pivotal decision in the remainder of the Second World War and the Cold War to come.⁴ When political historians discuss the home, it is often these moments of behind-closed-doors diplomacy that most readily capture their attention.

Yet a focus on the home only in its capacity as a site for policy decisions and alliances threatens to leave scholars neglecting other important aspects of the country home lives of these two men. Throughout this dissertation Hyde Park and Chartwell have proven their significance beyond war-time politics – as places of self-creation, power-brokering and story-telling. Although historians have long recognised the personal attachment that Roosevelt and Churchill harboured towards Hyde Park and Chartwell, this study elevates the homes from subjects of sentimental value to objects of critical importance in these two men's history, and the history of their legacy.

Nineteenth and twentieth century homes

The heart of this work has not been two statesmen nor two heritage organisations, but rather, two houses. It has attempted to broaden our vision through a dual process: first, considering

¹ Chris Wrigley, *Winston Churchill: A Biographical Companion* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2002), 111.

² Lash, *Roosevelt and Churchill, 1939-1941*; Kimball, *Forged in War*.

³ Martin Gilbert, *Churchill and America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 281.

⁴ Barton J. Bernstein, "The Uneasy Alliance: Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Atomic Bomb, 1940-1945," *The Western Political Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (1976): 244, <https://doi.org/10.2307/448105>.

how the homes enlighten our understanding of Roosevelt and Churchill's lives and characters; and second, considering how the homes illuminate national styles of preservation and interpretation. These questions, though divergent, are not unrelated. In several ways, the character of Roosevelt and Churchill as explored through the houses in Part One provides the key to the character of contemporaneous heritage management as discussed in Part Two.

In their personal style and character, Roosevelt and Churchill set the tone that would prove consistent in determining, to begin with, the nature of their *homes* and eventually, the nature of their *house museums*. These characteristics can be distilled into a compelling contrast between the modern, forward-looking, managerial Roosevelt and the old-fashioned, rigid and sentimental Churchill. In other words, where Roosevelt's Hyde Park represented the values of the twentieth century, Churchill's Chartwell clung to the principles of the nineteenth. These observations hold consistent, both for the use of the home in their heyday, and the adaptation of the home into public heritage sites. Furthermore, they are useful categories in understanding the roots and beliefs of the National Park Service and the National Trust.

FDR's personality was characterised by a progressive and innovative attitude, which could be seen in many features of family life at Hyde Park. Throughout this dissertation, Roosevelt's actions at home demonstrate his modern gaze, despite the old-world style of his upbringing. From the time of his diagnosis, FDR was always looking for ways to compensate for his physical disability and eagerly forged his own path towards political success. He was unwilling to accept old-fashioned limitations placed by society on 'invalids', or the Victorian notions of retirement that his mother advocated. Roosevelt's progressivism, which came to a head in the New Deal, was showcased in his Hyde Park pursuit of carefully managed reforestation. Roosevelt was eager to utilise technology for his own gains and happily rejected much of the accepted wisdom that dominated the thinking of local farmers. Instead, FDR saw potential in the ideas percolating amongst academic circles and worked with individuals like Nelson Brown from New York State University on ecology. Although Roosevelt was born into privilege and inherited a country house lifestyle, he was not tied to the social traditions of patricians. Instead, Roosevelt embraced the 'Age of the Common Man' and cultivated the beginnings of egalitarianism in the way he treated his staff. These views were also manifested in his easy and business-like relations with his neighbours, even if he didn't share their farming 'common sense.'

The same twentieth century managerialism was typical of the National Park Service who inherited the Hyde Park estate. Their approach to caring for the Home of FDR relied

upon protocol and scientific conservationist strategies. From within their ranks were experts from every field. Proper procedure was considered the bedrock of a successful heritage operation, as witnessed in the actions of staff when dealing with the stress of opening the site. Furthermore, Franklin Roosevelt's democratic spirit was imbued in the Park Service who saw their role as providing a public service for all Americans. At the official Dedication of the site, the desire to cater for the national interest pervaded the decision-making process. Interpretive staff at Hyde Park have maintained this outward stance throughout the decades. By intervening through guided tours and extensive educational material they worked to create a unified coherent narrative for audiences. Their modern mindset extended to a willingness to embrace audio-visual technology and respond dynamically to contemporary questions about the Roosevelt era.

Churchill was not forward-thinking but instead demonstrated a deep-rooted identity in the customs and mindset of nineteenth century gentility. At Chartwell, Churchill created a Victorian refuge. Beginning with his garden, which he meticulously landscaped to meet enlightenment ideals, Churchill masterminded a mini-empire of his own. He was enamoured by aesthetic pursuits, like painting, and became a true Victorian man of letters, burrowed away in his Chartwell study working on the latest book or article. Churchill was also an ardent believer in the stratification of society, and delighted in being waited upon by servants, staff and secretaries, each occupying their 'proper place' in his world. As an inheritor of European progress, Churchill took great interest in the latest scientific discoveries being described to him by Chartwell regular, 'the Prof' Lindemann. Yet during his wilderness years at Chartwell his mind was set against any revolution in the world order, as demonstrated in his ardent stand against Indian self-rule. In both manners and ideology, Churchill struggled to embrace a twentieth century society.

These habits were echoed in the style of the National Trust who administered the opening of Chartwell to the general public. Founded at the end of the previous century, the Trust's foundations sprung from the aristocracy and the upper echelons of pre-war Britain. Procedural norms were always subject to the desires of those with the most social prestige, a style of management that was becoming increasingly unfashionable in the egalitarian twentieth century. In the case of Chartwell, eminent surviving family members were given the final word on all matters of conservation and presentation. This proved true even when Trust protocol (for example, to avoid erecting statues on-site) was broken by their wishes. The nineteenth century *modus operandi* was evident in Chartwell's 'gallery-style' presentation which avoided over-interpreting, presented the home 'as it was' and allowed

audiences to reach their own conclusions about the site. The National Trust staff continued to avoid exploring novel museum strategies (such as interactivity or social engagement) for decades after the opening of Chartwell, preferring to stick to the traditional model of heritage management.

Comparative challenges

The comparative study of Roosevelt and Churchill; Hyde Park and Chartwell, has presented both unique opportunities and challenges. It is widely regarded that Roosevelt and Churchill shared a number of characteristics – such as their managerial qualities, perfectionistic tendencies and charismatic abilities. Both Hyde Park and Chartwell, too, played similar roles in the national heritage scene, standing as politicised markers on the landscape in Britain and America. However, there is much which sets these men, and their houses, apart. Some differences are trivial, but other disparities are harder to reconcile. Chartwell was Winston Churchill's adult investment project, but the Springwood mansion at Hyde Park was inherited by Franklin Roosevelt and not fully in his possession till his mother's death in 1941.

Chartwell is a singular 'manor' but Hyde Park comprises of multiple dwellings: Springwood, the main residence, Val-Kill, where Eleanor dwelt, and Top Cottage, Franklin's private retreat. In natural settings the houses differ, too. Chartwell overlooks the mild, green, rolling hills of Kent, while Hyde Park's surrounding forests bask in the humidity and seasonal fluctuations of upstate New York. Their architectural style varied from the stucco colonial revival style at Hyde Park to the red brick vernacular architecture at Chartwell. Today, Chartwell is managed by a charitable institution, whilst Hyde Park is a federally run national site. The houses were transferred as public sites in 1946 and 1965, twenty years apart. Their operation has been subject to different heritage legislation and their audiences conditioned by different national traditions.

Disparities in this dissertation were at times magnified by the different archival traditions of the UK and the US, the National Trust and the National Park Service. This was especially true in Part Two of this work, during which I discovered that the Park Service's bureaucratic and procedural style proved to produce a significantly larger portion of historic documentation (held today in the National Archives, College Park, Maryland, US) than can be found in the Trust's private archives (managed by the head office in Swindon, UK).

All of these differences have combined to represent a significant hurdle in the presentation of a coherent comparative study. In order to work towards a singular argument, I have had to carefully choose each moment of comparison according to the available historic

material and to weigh each issue for its relative significance on each side of the Atlantic. Shared themes have united the study and provide a framework for cohesive analysis. Yet this has left some fascinating topics unexplored. For example, there is room for further research into the relationship of the Presidential Library to the Hyde Park home, two federally operated buildings that share one site. No such similar research library exists on-site at Chartwell.

Nevertheless, this comparative study has embraced the presence of differences, accepting that all comparisons are imperfect. It has highlighted the peculiarities of domestic arrangements specific to any family, the cultural norms that differ across the Atlantic, and the varying rhythms of political life in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Dissertation summary

Part One of this dissertation was motivated by the desire to challenge the content and context of traditional narratives about Roosevelt and Churchill by focusing on their home lives during the interwar years. Instead of front-lining their achievements in the White House or Downing Street, Part One of this study sought to find the means and methods of each man's political success as they first appeared at home.

Chapter One utilised major moments of renovation and reconstruction as a viewpoint into the familial ambitions of the Roosevelts and the Churchills. It framed intra-family power relations and conflicts between husband and wife or mother and son over matters of architecture as indices of broader conflicting ambitions for self-improvement. In particular, class identity and mobility were expressed through symbols of consumption and leisure, pointing to the creative and perfectionist tendencies each man held.

Chapter Two explored the significance of Hyde Park and Chartwell during times of personal turmoil. Facing the threat of emasculation and career failure, both Roosevelt and Churchill returned home to regather. This chapter demonstrated the importance of the grounds and gardens in providing solace to each man as a means of gaining back control. Through aesthetic design and productive management, Roosevelt and Churchill reasserted their masculine potential, and took strides towards their own political reinvention.

Chapter Three delved into the network of associates whose labour underscored the political work that took place at Hyde Park and Chartwell. From service staff to secretaries and friends, these individuals provided the emotional intimacy, practical support, intellectual assistance and physical care that each man required. Far from being self-sufficient, Roosevelt and Churchill can be understood as products of the home-life systems that supported them.

Part Two of this dissertation asked how a continued focus on these homes through the decades could challenge the authenticity of political narratives about Roosevelt and Churchill. Rather than accepting the style and stories presented at Hyde Park and Chartwell as given, this study interrogated how and why such interpretive and preservationist decisions had been made.

Chapter Four uncovered the inner workings of the National Park Service and the National Trust in their efforts to turn private houses into public heritage sites. In the wake of Roosevelt's and Churchill's passing, each house functioned, at least initially, as a shrine. The administration of the homes varied according to the style, values and capabilities of government and charitable institutions, respectively. Surviving family members proved themselves to be major stakeholders at Chartwell, where the imagined democratic public was a prominent force at Hyde Park.

Chapter Five examined the style and content of interpretative programs at Hyde Park and Chartwell. From tour-guiding to self-guiding, the means of accessing these homes spoke volumes about the history of heritage presentation in Britain and America. Coming to terms with contemporary political discourse, as well as a rapidly changing visitor demographic, has pushed the Trust and the Park Service to be flexible about the stories being shared at each home and challenged the 'authenticity' of their heritage.

The study of houses cannot be simply relegated to the interest of architects and builders. As revealed in this dissertation, the home offers historians a chance to explore complex familial and class-oriented power dynamics, processes of recovering or regathering strength, and the way that a network of family, associates and staff can be mobilised towards a common goal. It is precisely these stories, amongst many others, that must be shared with the public when a home becomes a house museum.

Indeed, in their second life as house museums, another set of insights about Hyde Park and Chartwell has emerged. Far from being abandoned to the dusty past, it is clear that over the last half-century each house has continued to function as an evocative and emotional space. This dissertation has demonstrated that Hyde Park and Chartwell are the unique product of certain administrative values, highly reflective of national-cultural traditions and in constant conversation with contemporary audiences.

Hyde Park and Chartwell, from their original purpose as family dwellings into their modern capacity as public heritage sites, have always been more than brick and mortar. This dissertation has uncovered the stories of how each site was created, curated, utilised and weaponised to meet the needs and desire of its owners and administrators.

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