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CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT FOR  
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT  
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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VOLUME I: SITE HISTORY, EXISTING CONDITIONS, AND ANALYSIS



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# CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT FOR ELEANOR ROOSEVELT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

INTRODUCTION

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SITE HISTORY

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EXISTING CONDITIONS

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ANALYSIS

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2005

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Cover Photo: Eleanor Roosevelt and her dog, Fala, at the edge of the Val-Kill pond, 1951. Image courtesy of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, reference number NPX 55-490(2).

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## FOREWORD

Val-Kill is a special place that serves as a window into Eleanor Roosevelt's private life. Its understated beauty, natural setting, and unpretentious amenities may appear surprising to first-time visitors because of the site's simplicity; a vision that seems incongruous with expectations about the home of a figure as influential as Eleanor Roosevelt. But Mrs. Roosevelt cherished her Val-Kill home. It nurtured her spirit and provided a stimulating setting for her extraordinary accomplishments.

Much of the significance of Val-Kill is related to its diverse landscape resources, including the residential area surrounding Eleanor Roosevelt's home, the adjacent agricultural fields, and the surrounding woodlands where she frequently exercised. The following cultural landscape report documents these significant spaces, placing them in context to the larger Roosevelt estate that they were once a part of.

This report will contribute to the general management plan currently underway for the combined Roosevelt and Vanderbilt properties of Hyde Park. Historical information and determinations about the significance of the site's landscape characteristics and features presented in this report will help to craft a successful and informed long term vision for the parks. We are delighted to receive the Cultural Landscape Report for Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site and stand ready to put its findings to work in the preservation of Val-Kill. I particularly want to acknowledge the excellent work of Lisa Nowak and the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation for the preparation of this report.

Sarah Olson

Superintendent, Roosevelt/Vanderbilt National Historic Sites



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Many other park staff contributed to this report through their informed review comments and their intimate working knowledge and institutional memory of Val-Kill. Anne Jordan, Chief, Museum Services Division; Frank Futral, Supervisory Museum Curator; Fran Macsali-Urbin, Supervisory Park Ranger; and Diane Boyce, Park Ranger, generously gave their time to strengthen the report by commenting on review drafts. Ron Galente, retired Supervisory Horticulturist, and Dave Cerasero, Roads and Grounds Maintenance Supervisor, provided information about the landscape during the National Park Service's stewardship through their hands-on experience with caring for the site. Michele Ballos, Museum Registrar, was helpful in combing through the park's extensive archival records, including oral histories, manuscripts, and images.

Thanks are also due to the staff of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, who assisted in locating pertinent information about Eleanor Roosevelt and Val-Kill in their voluminous collection, making the research process less overwhelming.

George Brown, Human Resources Specialist for the Northeast Region, proved to be an excellent and unexpected source of information. His childhood and adolescent years spent playing and later working at Val-Kill, which was a short distance from his home, were a rich source for details about the appearance and workings of Val-Kill in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

Richard R. Cain, author of *Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill*, graciously offered the use of his personal photographs of the site, taken by his father and grandfather who lived and worked on the agricultural lands associated with Val-Kill.

The staff at the Dutchess County Historical Society provided access to their collections about local history that enriched the site history component of the report.

Special thanks are due to Joyce Ghee of the Dutchess County Historical Society, formerly of Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill Inc., for granting an interview to discuss the grass-roots advocacy for the designation of the national historic site. Her

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Thank you to all who contributed to this Cultural Landscape Report for Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site; know that your support was a valuable component of this project that will resonate through the preservation of this significant landscape.



Henry Toombs, Marion Dickerman, and Eleanor Roosevelt at the Stone Cottage, circa 1926.  
Cook-Dickerman Collection 721, ROVA park files.

# Introduction

**PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT**

**DESCRIPTIONS OF THE STUDY AREA**

**HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

**SCOPE OF WORK AND METHODOLOGY**



## **INTRODUCTION**

### **THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT**

Cultural landscape reports (CLRs) serve as the National Park Service's primary document for the treatment of cultural landscapes, defined as geographic areas associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or areas that exhibit significant cultural or aesthetic values. CLRs are tools to inform day-to-day decision making as well as long-term landscape preservation strategies. These goals are met by providing information about a site's history and evolution, existing conditions, historical significance, and integrity to guide sensitive and well-informed treatment actions. At Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site (Eleanor Roosevelt NHS or Val-Kill), a CLR has been prepared to provide information about the cultural landscape to inform the most appropriate presentation of the Val-Kill landscape that allows visitors a snap-shot of the place Eleanor Roosevelt so affectionately called home.

This report represents the first volume of a CLR, including a site history, existing conditions, and analysis of significance and integrity, which will hopefully be followed by a comprehensive landscape treatment plan in the future. Currently, a general management plan (GMP) is being prepared for the combined Roosevelt/Vanderbilt properties, including Val-Kill, the Home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Top Cottage, and Vanderbilt Mansion to replace outdated individual GMPs. As numerous changes have occurred to the regional area and park management in past decades, an effort to update the comprehensive vision of the related historic sites is needed. This CLR will provide information about the history and significance of the Val-Kill landscape to support the ongoing GMP effort. It is intended that treatment actions proposed in the second volume of the CLR treatment plan, to be completed in the future, be subordinate to the strategies outlined in the GMP.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA**

Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, located in the New York State Hudson River Valley town of Hyde Park, is a 180.5 acre site formerly owned by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt. The site is administratively managed as a component of the joint Roosevelt/Vanderbilt National Historic Sites. Unlike the Home of FDR and the Vanderbilt Mansion that overlook the Hudson River,

Val- Kill is located one and a half miles east of the river, approximately 70 miles north of New York City.

The site is characterized by its rural setting that was historically devoted to agriculture and contains a variety of environments including forest land, designed landscapes, and cultivated fields. The historic core, where most of the resources directly associated with Mrs. Roosevelt are located, is in the center of the site at the edge of the Val- Kill pond, an artificial water body created by the Roosevelts in the 1930s by dredging the Fall- Kill creek and its associated wetland. The historic core contains the two primary structures on site, the Stone Cottage and Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. These two buildings are the residential units of Val- Kill, around which other landscape features and associated buildings were located. The historic core is an informal, heavily planted, pedestrian- scaled area that reflects Mrs. Roosevelt's straightforward and understated personality. Visually distinct landscapes prevail on either side of the historic core, to the east and west. The east region is heavily forested with a limited circulation system connecting the more remote corners of the site, while the west region is characterized by distinctive open fields and meadows that have long been used for agriculture.

#### **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

Hundreds of years before the study area became associated with Eleanor Roosevelt, Algonquin speaking Wappinger Indians inhabited the region, hunting game, collecting shellfish from the Hudson River, and farming on land cleared using fire. Though archeological evidence of Native American settlements has been found in the region, no evidence supports the presence of permanent or temporary settlements in the study area. Regardless, Val- Kill may have provided ample hunting and fishing ground for local groups.

European exploration of the new world led several maritime adventurers up the Hudson River as they looked for the famed Northwest Passage to the far east. Records of the expeditions bear fruitful accounts of the local landscape as seen from the ships or during limited exploring excursions. The landscape was said to have contained abundant mulberries, plums, cherries, apples, strawberries, and figs, but most awe- inspiring were the native forests filled with virgin timber.

After a short period under Dutch rule, New York was overtaken by the British in 1664. They divided the colony into twelve counties and set the stage for parceling land to individual owners. Dutchess County was first divided under an agreement called the Nine Partners Patent and then subdivided many times before manageable sized tracts were available for small family farms. By the 1730s settlers began coming to the area in substantial numbers. In the Hyde Park area,

most early settlers established homes and farmsteads adjacent to the Hudson River, which was the primary transportation route of the time. This left tracts on the interior, like Val- Kill, uninhabited for many decades.

Historic maps from the 1850s show a sizable number of landowners surrounding Val- Kill, indicating that the local population increased substantially to warrant settling land without river frontage. Though the study area was surrounded on all sides by farmsteads, none resided within it. Most of the property included in today's Eleanor Roosevelt NHS was owned and run by a farmer who resided on the west side of Violet Avenue, the road that abuts the park's west boundary. The farm's agricultural complex, including barns and the farmhouse, was located west of the road, though a farm road was depicted running onto the Val- Kill property leading toward the Fall- Kill creek in the middle of the site. Presumably, early farmers like their counterparts in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century used the Val- Kill property for crop production and animal grazing, watering livestock in the creek. The Fall- Kill divided the property in half and would have provided a formidable hindrance to farming in the middle of the site. The creek was slow moving and shallow, forming a wide, irregular channel and spreading wetland.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's (FDR's) father, James Roosevelt, moved his family to Hyde Park in 1867, purchasing the Wheeler estate on the west side of the Albany Post Road. The home was surrounded by many acres, affording ample pasture land for Roosevelt's horses and spectacular views of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains beyond. The elder Roosevelt began purchasing property surrounding his land shortly after 1867, amassing a sizable estate that spanned both sides of the Albany Post Road. The land Val- Kill stands on today was not added to the Roosevelt estate until 1911, after James died. FDR purchased the land, known as the Bennett Farm, and continued to rent it to tenant farmers.

Eleanor Roosevelt became acquainted with the property in the early 1920s, utilizing the east bank of the Fall- Kill for picnicking. Known for their love of outdoor activity and informal gatherings, the Roosevelt family adopted the picnic spot on the Bennett Farm as a favorite place away from Springwood, the main Roosevelt home overlooking the Hudson River, to relax in a secluded, natural setting. At the time, the east bank of the creek was a successional agricultural field used intermittently for grazing, resulting in a partially cleared landscape with a few mid- sized trees but devoid of thick forest.

The idea for the Val- Kill retreat reportedly stemmed from one of these family picnics when Mrs. Roosevelt's close friends Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook were in attendance. The three friends, with FDR's consent, decided to create a year- round cottage on site. Planning progressed during 1924 and construction began that year and continued into 1925. When complete, the cottage, known as the Stone Cottage, was the nucleus of the women's retreat that became a beloved

second home for Mrs. Roosevelt and a full- time home for Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman.

During the construction of Stone Cottage, planning began for a structure to house a cottage industry, known as Val- Kill Industries, a joint venture supported by Mrs. Roosevelt, FDR, Marion Dickerman, Nancy Cook, and their friend Caroline O'Day. They built a simple, two- story, stucco building, called the Factory, to support a furniture- making business. Cook, being a skilled craftswoman, ran the day- to- day operations of the business that later expanded to include other crafts such as weaving and pewter making.

Val- Kill, derived from the Dutch phrase “valley stream,” was used regularly by the Roosevelt family in the 1920s and early 1930s. Mrs. Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, and Marion Dickerman built a pool and badminton court, dredged a portion of the stream, and rustically landscaped the Stone Cottage environs with cedar trees, climbing vines, and loose foundation plantings. 1936 marked a watershed year at Val- Kill, when Val- Kill Industries closed, Mrs. Roosevelt converted the Factory into her residence that became known thenceforth as Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, and Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman added on to the Stone Cottage. Numerous landscape changes accompanied the events of 1936, including the reordering of the driveway system and the development of a more refined series of gardens surrounding the Stone Cottage. Nancy Cook experimented with a number of flower borders and beds around the cottage, adding color and variety through the introduction of flowering shrubs, annuals, perennials, and climbing vines. The landscape treatment of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage remained informal, retaining much of the native plant material and its previously simple and rustic design.

Mrs. Roosevelt made Val- Kill her permanent home in 1945 after FDR died, leaving his Springwood home to the federal government. As FDR's estate was being divided and sold for profit, she and her son Elliott purchased 842 acres surrounding Val- Kill and began a commercial farming enterprise called Val- Kill Farms. The short- lived venture focused largely on livestock and FDR's Christmas tree plantings but also grew grains and hay to support the farm. Many of the farms adjacent to Val- Kill served as farm centers and the west fields of Val- Kill remained in production. After the farm fell into insolvency in the early 1950s the former estate parcels were sold, some to real estate developers who built housing developments near Val- Kill.

Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook sold their shares of Val- Kill to Mrs. Roosevelt in 1947 and vacated the site. Upon their departure, they removed some plant material and decorative fencing from around the Stone Cottage, leading the way for a different landscape aesthetic at the cottage. By 1951, Mrs. Roosevelt's son John and his family took up residence in the Stone Cottage and altered the

landscape to suit their needs and visual preferences. The once well-maintained and complex flower beds declined due to either benign neglect or as a conscious effort to reduce maintenance and add lawn area. The pool terrace remained actively used by Mrs. Roosevelt's many children and grandchildren but became more loose and naturalistic with less intensive care and maintenance. A tennis court was added to the lawn near Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage to provide more recreational activities on site.

By the early 1960s Val-Kill was characterized by mature shade trees, loose foundation plantings, recreational features, and its unchanged secluded, rural setting. The pond had slowly succumbed to the forces of natural succession, with much less open water than at its maintained peak in 1937. Long grasses and wetland shrubs rooted around the pond except for directly in front of the cottages. The immediate surroundings remained largely unchanged from the 1920s. The adjacent forests matured to provide shade and block views to the east and south while the west agricultural fields remained in cultivation.

Mrs. Roosevelt's son John remained at Val-Kill after his mother's death in 1962, living in the Stone Cottage and converting the Playhouse and Mrs. Roosevelt's home into rental units. Landscape changes focused on reducing maintenance-intensive features. Much of the structure of the landscape stayed the same but what was lost was the spark and luster of the once lovingly cared-for retreat.

John sold the property in 1970 to new owners who continued to rent the property to tenants. The absentee landlords viewed the site as an investment and tried on a few occasions to have the property zoned for condominiums and senior housing. While their business plans foundered on the desk of the Hyde Park planning board, the landlords largely neglected the site which fell into serious disrepair by 1977. Local groups, along with some Roosevelt family members, notable among them a not-for-profit organization called Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill Inc., (ERVK) - chartered to perpetuate discussion and educational opportunities in areas of concern to Mrs. Roosevelt - pushed for the protection of Val-Kill and the designation of a memorial to Mrs. Roosevelt. In response to this strong local advocacy, the National Park Service acquired the property and set about returning it to good condition. The NPS shared the site with ERVK, an arrangement defined in the enabling legislation, and initially ERVK staff was the only personnel on site, as the park was not open to the public. In the interim, the NPS renovated the buildings, reset walkways, replanted tree screens, and restored several gardens to prepare for the 1984 public opening.

The NPS and Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill, Inc. still coexist on site, with ERVK offices located in the Stone Cottage. Visitor contact is made in a wing of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, an orientation film is shown in the Playhouse, and interpreters lead guided tours of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. The site is actively

used by local, repeat visitors who take advantage of the beautiful scenery and abundant acreage for cross-country skiing, dog walking, and exercise.

### **SCOPE OF WORK AND METHODOLOGY**

This report synthesizes new research with previous research efforts and existing management documents in its four distinct chapters. An understanding of the evolution of the site is provided in the site history chapter, which was created through documentary research and historical photo analysis. It is intended that this chapter present information about the historic landscape to provide a concise reference tool for park staff. Integral to the preparation of the site history were numerous oral history interviews that captured the institutional memory of former site employees of Mrs. Roosevelt, John Roosevelt, and the National Park Service. These personal recollections, which span eight decades, were invaluable in understanding the evolution of the Val-Kill landscape. Period plans, or diagrams that graphically capture the appearance of the site at key moments in history, are provided for 1935, 1945, 1960, and 1970.

The existing conditions chapter represents an inventory of the site's extant characteristics. The discussion is structured by grouping similar landscape components like vegetation and circulation systems, that when combined, provide a complete picture of the physical environment of Val-Kill.

The analysis of significance and integrity chapter seeks to address the association of Val-Kill's cultural landscape with Eleanor Roosevelt and whether the existing resources retain integrity to the period of significance (1924-1962). This chapter is based on definitions and criteria set by the *National Register of Historic Places* program that is administered by the National Park Service. Landscape characteristics as well as specific features are documented for their contribution to the presentation of the historic scene.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> It is worthy of further study to explore the relationship between large estates and their associated recreational structures and sites. The inception and development of Val-Kill is closely tied to the story of the larger Roosevelt Estate and may have similarities with the additional structures built at the Vanderbilt estate, for example, that served as housing for friends and family and places for recreation. Such an exploration may be best framed as a historic resources study or historic theme study.



Stone Cottage, circa 1926. Cook-Dickerman Collection 759, ROVA park files.

## Site History

**PRE-HISTORY TO 1867**

**EARLY ROOSEVELT PERIOD, 1867-1924**

**PARTNERSHIP OF ELEANOR ROOSEVELT, NANCY COOK, AND  
MARION DICKERMAN, 1924-1945**

**VAL-KILL AS ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S HOME, 1945-1962**

**LATE ROOSEVELT AND NON-ROOSEVELT OWNERSHIP OF VAL-KILL,  
1962-1977**

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S VAL-KILL,  
INC., 1977-PRESENT**



## **PRE-HISTORY TO 1867**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The initial chapter of the site history presents information about the area now known as Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic site and the surrounding landscape from the time of early Native American habitation to 1867. Little site-specific information is known about this early period, so contextual information about the regional and local landscape is presented to describe larger trends affecting the study area.

The region was first inhabited by native peoples, followed by European settlers beginning in the mid- 1600s. Initial European settlement of the Hudson Valley began slowly under Dutch rule and increased significantly in the mid- 1700s. By the late 1700s and early 1800s, the Hudson Valley evolved into a rich agricultural area. Agricultural use predominated throughout the region and in the study area in the 1800s, though a secondary but important sub- use emerged, that of river-front country estates for the wealthy. The study area remained removed from this new cultural group through the 1800s due to its distance from the Hudson River but the land's relative proximity to the estates made it attractive to large landowners looking to expand their holdings.

### **NATIVE AMERICAN HABITATION AND EARLY EUROPEAN CONTACT**

Val- Kill, Eleanor Roosevelt's home in Hyde Park, New York, resides in the mid-Hudson Valley, a landscape dominated by the remnants of glacial activity. The last glaciers retreated north from the Hudson Valley by 12,500 B.P., leaving behind the streams, rivers, undulating topography, and rocky soil that typify the region.<sup>2</sup> The local landscape came to be dominated by the scoured Hudson River channel, its adjacent terraces of flat land, and rocky, hilly upland terrain beyond the river. This topographic pattern was represented in the study area, located approximately 1.8 miles east of the Hudson, where ridges of steep glacial till abutted low lying areas. Vegetation in the newly thawed landscape resembled the tundra, with spruce, willows, and low growing sedges prevailing.<sup>3</sup>

Evidence of human populations has been found beginning in this period. Early nomadic Native Americans hunted large game, including caribou, mammoths, mastodons, moose, elk, giant beavers, horses, and bison, and gathered edible plants from the local rivers, streams, and forest.<sup>4</sup> The climate warmed as the ice age ended, changing the flora from tundra to coniferous forest by 10,000 B.P., and

to a northern hardwood forest by 6,500 B.P.<sup>5</sup> Subsequent periods supported an oak- chestnut forest and animals similar to ones found today, including turkey, white tailed deer, beaver, raccoon, and freshwater shellfish.<sup>6</sup> Native American populations grew as forest resources increased. Archeological evidence suggests that humans inhabited the Hudson Valley fairly continuously from the end of the glacial period onward.<sup>7</sup>

Present- day Dutchess County was inhabited by Algonquian speaking Wappinger Indians, possibly as early as 1000 B.P.<sup>8</sup> They represented one of the northernmost groups of the Delaware peoples who occupied large tracts of land in and between the Hudson and Delaware River valleys. The Delaware were organized socially and politically in a flexible framework of independent but related communities that were arranged by clan and lineage.<sup>9</sup> Delaware groups were divided by two distinct but related dialects, Munsee and Unami. The Wappinger Indians spoke the Munsee dialect of the Algonquian language and were culturally and politically closest to other Munsee groups that inhabited an area in northeastern Pennsylvania, northern New Jersey, and southeastern New York in the seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup>

Archeological studies in nearby Hudson Valley sites suggests that the Wappingers lived in well spaced, unfortified settlements away from main rivers and on well- drained flat land.<sup>11</sup> They probably lived in villages of a few hundred people, based around a matrilineal structure. The Munsee lived in longhouse dwellings that sheltered between seven and eight families or twenty to twenty- two people.<sup>12</sup> The settlements remained sedentary in winter and tended to be located inland for better hunting, yet were more mobile in the summer season as the groups traveled to be near agricultural fields and streams rich in fish and shellfish.<sup>13</sup> Several types of Native American settlements have been identified in the region, from inland rock shelters to low- lying camps on the Hudson River, illustrating the numerous types of itinerant seasonal villages.<sup>14</sup> No evidence of permanent or seasonal settlement sites has been found in the study area, but the area may have been used on hunting and gathering expeditions.<sup>15</sup>

The Wappingers used fire as a tool to increase hunting and farming yields, altering the native landscape in the process. Hunting parties of one to two- hundred people set fire to the forest to surround game, making for an easier slaughter. Burning was also the primary method of clearing agricultural land. Early Europeans observed this practice of brush burning soon after making contact with Indian groups. Adriaen Van der Donck, a Dutch traveler who sailed up the Hudson River in 1655, observed:

*The Indians have a yearly custom (which some of our Christians have also adopted) of burning the woods, plains and meadows in the fall of the year when the leaves have fallen. . . . This practice is named by us and the Indians, 'bush*

*burning which is done for several reasons. First to render hunting easier. . . . Secondly, to thin out and clear the woods of all dead substances and grass. . . . Thirdly, to circumscribe and enclose the game within the lines of the fire.*<sup>16</sup>

The Native Americans cultivated the staple crops of corn, squash, gourds, beans, and tobacco in the burned fields, abandoning them after several years when the soil was depleted. Van der Donck also noticed the regeneration process that occurred after the fields had been retired:

*It has happened when I have been out with the natives, that we have come to a piece of young woodland. When I have told them, in conversations, that they would do well to clear off such land, because it would bear good corn, that they said, "it is but twenty years since we planted corn there, and now it is woods again." I asked them severally if it were true, when they all answered in the affirmative.*<sup>17</sup>

While no evidence suggests that this brush-burning agriculture took place at Val-Kill, the surrounding landscape may have been influenced by such a practice.

Van der Donck was predated by other European explorers, trappers, settlers, and travelers. Among the first recorded interactions between local Indian groups and Europeans occurred during Henry Hudson's 1609 journey up the Hudson River for the Dutch East India Company. The Dutch East India Company joined the crowded race of European powers seeking a western passage to the East Indies. Hudson explored present-day New York Harbor that Venetian Giovanni da Verrazano had first reported to Europe in the mid-sixteenth century, in hopes of finding the elusive northwest passage. Hudson abandoned his quest after a month of traveling the Hudson River when he reached approximately the site of Albany, New York. Fellow Dutchman Johannes De Laet published some of Hudson's 1609 journal entries in 1625, thirteen years after Hudson's death. In his varied observations about the native peoples and new landscapes that he encountered, Hudson remarked about the plentiful forests seen from the ship; a predictable observation from a European so accustomed to the largely deforested landscape at home. "It is as pleasant a land as one can tread upon, very abundant in all kind of timber suitable for ship-building, and for making large casks."<sup>18</sup>

Many others followed Hudson in search of natural resources. The Dutch, the first colonial power to claim the area, were initially largely interested in the fur trade and other commodities rather than settlement. In the early 1600s as European settlements sprung up throughout the eastern seaboard, the New Netherlands hosted a substantially smaller population than nearby Massachusetts and Virginia that were settled at roughly the same time. For example, by 1643 the population of Massachusetts was 16,000 and Virginia hosted

15,000 people, while New Amsterdam reported only 2,000 residents.<sup>19</sup> This trend toward low population growth continued throughout the Dutch rule of New Amsterdam, impeding European settlement of the study area.

Van der Donck, in his 1655 journey up the Hudson, observed the landscape near the end of the pre-European era and his writings give insight into the nature of what the earliest European settlers encountered. He described the large forests and virgin timber, notably oak and "nutwood" trees, with sixty to seventy feet of clear wood before the canopy branches began.<sup>20</sup> These trees would have been especially attractive components of the native landscape for the English who needed new sources of clear timber for shipbuilding. Van der Donck was so astounded by the abundant forests that he wrote, "The land is so natural to produce wood . . . that unless there be natural changes or great improvidence, there can be no scarcity of wood in the country."<sup>21</sup>

Van der Donck also described the wild nuts and fruits of the Hudson Valley:

*The mulberries are better and sweeter than ours, and ripen earlier. Several kinds of plums, wild or small cherries, juniper, small kinds of apples, many hazelnuts, black currants, gooseberries, blue India figs, and strawberries are in abundance all over the country.*<sup>22</sup>

He saw grapevines growing prolifically in open fields, near rivers and brooks, and climbing up forest trees.<sup>23</sup> Van der Donck also evidenced wild blueberries, raspberries, onions, leeks, melons, and many nuts. Though he observed these plants in lands bordering the river, many such species were likely present in inland tracts like the study area.

## **EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT**

In 1664, the British sailed unchallenged into New Amsterdam harbor, overtaking the Dutch in a bloodless exchange. With the change from Dutch to English control, shifts in settlement patterns began to occur. Keeping with the customs of the time, the British divided much of New York into patents and manors, or large tracts of land sold to loyal subjects of the crown. Manors were owned and managed by the landowner, or patroon, who controlled rights to all the land and rented parcels to tenants, exercising a great deal of power over the lives of their tenants. Conversely, patent lands were owned jointly by the patentees, many of whom were attracted to the investment for the potential land speculation profits.<sup>24</sup>

The British government divided New York State into twelve counties in 1683 and present-day Dutchess County, in which Val-Kill is located, was first included as a provisional piece of Ulster County due to its sparse population. The first

European ownership of the Hyde Park area occurred in 1697 when nine gentlemen purchased 145,000 acres of present-day central Dutchess County, including four miles of Hudson River frontage, from the Wappingers. This parcel became known as the Nine Partners Patent. The patent was subdivided two years later with the southwest corner divided into nine tracts, referred to as the Water Lots (Figure 1.1). Each Water Lot was approximately 1/2 mile wide by four miles long, running east-west, and bordered the Hudson River on its western boundary (Figure 1.2). These lots differed from the other parcels of the Nine Partners Patent in that they were owned outright by each patentee and did not require permission of the other partners to be subdivided.<sup>25</sup>

Val-Kill is located within what was Water Lot 4, originally purchased by James Emmott, and Water Lot 5, owned by John Aretson (Figure 1.3).<sup>26</sup> Generally, early land owners like Emmott and Aretson did not settle the area or sell smaller parcels to individual farmers. Limited land distribution methods and primitive transportation routes kept population growth to a minimum. Although an act passed in 1703 established a sixty-six foot wide highway between Albany and New York City, the main land route through the county most likely remained little more than a path through the forest.<sup>27</sup> The Hudson River continued to be the primary and most reliable north-south transportation route. Though a few squatters settled illegally, the region remained largely uninhabited in the early eighteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

Dutchess County in the early 1700s most likely resembled the descriptions made by Adriaen Van der Donck in the mid-1600s. As only 445 people were recorded in the combined Dutchess and adjacent Putnum Counties in 1714, one year after Dutchess County split from Ulster County, there was probably little visible human impact on the landscape.<sup>29</sup> Most early settlers located near the Hudson River and nearby streams to be close to transportation and water power. Several settlers established themselves adjacent to the Hudson in Poughkeepsie, Fishkill, and Rhinebeck between 1688 and 1713.<sup>30</sup> Yet, inland tracts like the Val-Kill site remained wilderness during this period. The interior was as an isolated place, dominated by large forests. Even in 1748, lands just north of the Water Lots were described as wild and largely untouched.<sup>31</sup> Early land owner Peter Fauconnier, who owned a patent between present-day villages of Hyde Park and Staatsburgh, bequeathed it to his daughter in 1748 without improving the land or selling substantial tracts. Vast areas may have appeared just as they did in 1655 when Van der Donck wrote, "[T]he whole country is covered with wood . . . there is all too much of it."<sup>32</sup>

## GROWTH OF THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

### 1700s

By the mid- 1700s, Dutchess County began changing from near wilderness to an agricultural landscape. Stimulating this shift in economic and land use patterns was an additional land division of the Nine Partners Patent, including the Water Lots. Sales in both 1734 and 1741 facilitated the parceling of manageably sized and priced tracts for small family farmers.<sup>33</sup> The region absorbed an influx of New England, Long Island, and English Quaker settlers, all attracted to the newly available land.<sup>34</sup> By 1737, present day Dutchess and Putnum Counties had increased in population to 3,418 and continued to grow substantially in the following decades.<sup>35</sup>

In Hyde Park, development first occurred at the Hyde Park landing on the Hudson River, in Water Lot 9. Jacobus Stoutenburgh settled south of the Crum Elbow Creek in 1741 and other families followed, settling along the river, near Hyde Park landing and to the south in Water Lot 8 in a well- dispersed pattern of farms.<sup>36</sup> Most practiced subsistence agriculture while clearing land, later shifting toward producing both cash crops and food for the table.

Beginning in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, wheat became the dominant cash crop as the Hudson River provided easy access to market in New York City, promoting a local shift to market farming. Mills emerged along the nearby Crum Elbow Creek to capitalize on the growing local wheat industry.

In contrast to the small family farmer of the Hyde Park area, Dr. John Bard, a New York City physician, purchased the former Fauconnier lands in 1763 and retired to the estate in 1772. While Bard's estate was located north of the Val- Kill area, had river frontage, and a much different history, information about the local landscape can be learned from the estate records. For example, in 1768 Bard sold a portion of his estate to settle debts. The parcel's advertisement described its physical attributes and natural resources:

*The tract is filled with exceedingly good timber, fit for staves, ship timber, and lumber of all kinds, and abounds in rich swamps; a great part of the upland [is] exceedingly good for grains or grass, and has on it some valuable improvements; particularly to the southward, A large improved farm, with good house, a large new barn, a young orchard between five and six hundred apple trees, most grafted fruit, and bearing order; between 30 and 40 acres of rich meadow ground . . . and about 150 acres of upland cleared and in tilling order . . . a good road may easily be made through the tract into the Nine Partners, which is now a fine wheat country.<sup>37</sup>*

Bard, like Hudson and Van der Donck before him, noted the impressive trees and forest resources. Landowners capitalized on the valuable timber and processed the raw wood at local mills along the Crum Elbow Creek. Also of note is Bard's reference to the productive wheat farms of the area. This, coupled with the thriving timber industry, made for prosperous times and accounted for Dutchess County being the fastest growing county in New York State between 1700 and 1799.<sup>38</sup>

Recorded improvements to Water Lot 5 occurred in the late 1700s as well. Anthony Rutgers, owner of Water Lot 5, died prompting his heirs to sell the estate to several members of the Crook family in 1748.<sup>39</sup> One of the Crook family members, Charles, bought his relative's shares of about a third of the lot to become the sole owner of that portion the same year. The presence of a family cemetery indicates that the family settled the land, possibly erecting buildings for themselves or for seasonal or permanent homes for tenants.<sup>40</sup> The estate was divided once more in 1793, with the eastern portion going to Ann Crook Barber and her husband William, and the eastern portion bequeathed to Maria Jane Ann Crook.<sup>41</sup> A Crook estate map from 1793 displays what was called a mansion and several other structures on the western portion overlooking the Hudson River. No improvements were shown for the inland parcel. It is not known if the Crook family or the owners of Water Lot 4 sold any of their land to small family farmers in the late 1700s.

### **1800s**

At the turn of the nineteenth century, farming in Dutchess County provided a good living due largely to the high price of wheat and ease of transporting goods. Speaking to the abundant natural resources and prosperous times, the 1813 *Gazeteer of New York State* lauded the attributes of Dutchess County:

*The County of Dutchess is one of the most opulent farming counties in the state. The taxable property, agreeable to the estimates in the Supervisor's books for 1810, amounts to \$8,490,181. In agriculture, no county exceeds this in the style of improvement, and none has a greater respectability of character, engaged in practical farming . . . Dutchess took an early lead in the introduction of gypsum as a manure, with the most decided advantage . . . There are 83,853 sheep . . . 51,650 meat cattle, and 14,341 horses.<sup>42</sup>*

At this time, sheep, raised for wool and meat, dominated local livestock holdings. Sheep grazing, coupled with wheat farming, most likely led to a higher rate of forest clearing as the population of the county grew and family farm acreage increased.

Increased stagecoach travel on the Albany Post Road stimulated the growth of hotels, taverns, and the local service economy.<sup>43</sup> Many visitors traveling the post road commented on the beauty and productiveness of the local landscape:

*An almost endless variety of venerable forest trees give shade and beauty to the landscape, through which hurries a copious stream, headlong and noisy as the Arno itself, filling the hanging gardens and grove on its borders with murmurs. On the sunny declivity, sloping to this rivulet I saw cart loads of ripe watermelons, some of them . . . forty pounds each. Fruit and flowers . . . are rich and abundant. The woods are vocal with the song of the birds. The present enterprising proprietor for this farm has but just commenced improvements. . . He will doubtless render it still more than it is now, a terrestrial paradise.<sup>44</sup>*

Yet, others lamented the changes visible in the landscape as the community became more populous. "The glories of the ancient forest have been replaced by bare fields, intersected by hideous zigzag [sic] fences. . . the wild grandeur of nature has disappeared, and the charm of cultivation has not yet replaced it."<sup>45</sup> It is likely this traveler preferred the native landscape or a well-established farmstead to the rugged reality of a nineteenth-century farm.

Wheat farming remained profitable through the first quarter of the 1800s, yet by 1835 soil depletion, limited pest control, and the opening of western farm land by the Erie Canal ten years earlier decimated the Dutchess County wheat industry.<sup>46</sup> By 1840, wheat was the fifth ranking Dutchess County crop instead of the highest ranking as it was a few decades before.<sup>47</sup> In response, many farmers diversified their output, raising more livestock and growing other crops such as corn and hay. The regional shift to dairying began during this period and intensified in ensuing decades.

One of the most significant influences on the nineteenth century landscape and culture of the Hudson Valley was the railroad. The Harlem Valley Railroad connected New York City and Dutchess County in 1845, opening a fast and easy route to transport goods and people. The Hudson Valley Railroad was built shortly after, in 1849. With New York City now only a few hours away, wealthy families purchased river front properties along the east bank of the Hudson River, establishing a fashionable community of well-connected seasonal residents. Land prices increased along the river and large estates and their associated gentleman farms replaced family farms. One Hudson Valley resident discovered the repercussions of this new trend in 1853:

*I met one of my neighbors yesterday, seated in his wife's rocking-chair on top of a wagon-load of tools and kitchen utensils, and preceded by his boys, driving a troop of ten or fifteen cows. As he was one I had always chatted with, in passing, and had grown to value his good sense and kindly character, I inquired into his*

*movements with some interest. He was going (to use his own phrase) "twenty miles farther back, where a man could afford to farm, at the price of the land." His cornfields on the banks of the Hudson had risen in value, a probable site for ornamental residences, and with the difference (between two hundred dollars the fancy acre, and sixty dollars the farming acre) in his pocket, he was transferring his labor and his associations to a new soil and neighborhood.<sup>48</sup>*

Hyde Park became home to wealthy families such as the Newbolds, Rogers, Mills, Vanderbilts, and Roosevelts in the later 1800s.<sup>49</sup> Many families were attracted to the Hudson Valley for its proximity to New York City, the natural beauty of the Hudson River, views to the distant Catskill Mountains, and the bucolic countryside that was transformed from wilderness to a cultivated landscape in the last half century. Most estates contained large amounts of acreage, often divided between well maintained house grounds and their associated farms. As such, the local landscape retained a rural character despite the presence of large and ostentatious mansions along the river.

However, railroads not only benefited the wealthy. Local farmers now had easier access to markets downstate. The shortened travel time especially aided dairy farmers who could freight their perishable milk, butter, and cheese to New York City in less time and helped stimulate the popularity of dairying in Dutchess County.

Small farms were located throughout Hyde Park by the mid- 1800s, even in the interior lands near present day Val- Kill. The local landscape was dominated by strong east- west property boundary patterns established in 1699 by the Water Lots division of the Nine Partners Patent. Many private parcels resembled smaller versions of the long, linear Water Lots with east- west running boundaries slightly off perpendicular.

The study area spanned two family farms. Deeds and historic maps document ownership of the Bennett Farm, the main historical parcel that made up the study area, beginning in 1808. Mrs. Maria Whiley is identified as the owner of the property in an 1808 map drawn by Henry Livingston. Mrs. Whiley and her husband Richard Whiley sold 191 acres to John Cooper in 1835, making allowances for their tenant, Abraham De Groff, to stay on the land until 1837. Richard Whiley owned other property in the area, as witnessed by a brief ownership of the southern quarter of Water Lot 6 in 1810.<sup>50</sup> John Cooper sold the property to Richard Pudney in 1846 who three years later sold it to Thomas Hadden. Hadden may have farmed the land but he rented the farmhouse prior to 1850 to Patrick Butler and his wife Mary, aged sixty and sixty- eight respectively (Figure 1.4).<sup>51</sup> By 1858, J. Hadden, possibly a child or relative of Thomas Hadden, lived in the farmhouse on the west side of Violet Avenue (Figure 1.5). Hadden

kept the property longer than his predecessors, selling to Homer Nelson in 1865. Homer Nelson then sold the property to the Bennett family in 1868.<sup>52</sup>

As early as 1793, the Tompkins family, whose descendants owned the second farm that comprises the study area, purchased land in Water Lot 4.<sup>53</sup> Several men with the last names spelled Tompkin and Tompkins appeared on the 1810 census for the town of Clinton, which at that time included present day Hyde Park, Clinton, and Pleasant Valley, though no map has been found that locates them within the township. Yet, the Tompkins family is documented as owning the southern portion of the study area by 1850.<sup>54</sup>

### **LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION IN 1867**

Dutchess County, a virtually uninhabited area in the mid- 1700s, was gradually transformed into a bustling agricultural economy and pleasure ground for the wealthy by the late 1800s. Degrees of wealth dictated local land use, creating a fairly strict spatial division between wealthy estate owners and small farmers, separated by the north- south divide of the Albany Post Road. Affluent families purchased large tracts of land along the east bank of the Hudson River and pushed many family farmers east into areas that were previously sparsely populated.

The study area was included within the Nelson Farm, or future Bennett Farm and the Tompkins Farm. Both farms shared common components based on their long, narrow configurations and similar natural features and landforms. While little is definitively known about the specific activities of the farms in the mid-1800s, period maps and later land- use patterns that were influenced by unchanging factors such as topography and surface water can be used to make assumptions about their basic organizing features. Maps from 1858 do not show any structures in the study area as both the Bennett and Tompkins farms centralized activities on their land west of present day Route 9G. The farmsteads likely contained typical elements of self- sufficient farms including gardens, orchards, chicken houses and other animal enclosures in or around the domestic yard. Other agricultural outbuildings and barns may have been located on the east side of Creek Road to be near farm fields and grazing land.

Marginal cropland likely impeded substantial development within the study area. Much of the western acreage of the study area, contained within the Bennett Farm, was wet and swampy. A rectangular area in the southwest region of the study area was likely the prime cultivated field because of its moderately drained, level soil. Toward the north and east of the northwest field the Fall- Kill, running through the center of the study area, spilled out of its narrow, shallow creek bed and inundated surrounding areas. East of the Fall- Kill, several level areas may

have been used for cropland before the land rose sharply along the east boundary. The wet or steeply graded areas were probably used to graze livestock. Because most of the study area was used for agricultural purposes at one time or another, an informal road system existed to provide access to the east fields, though little is known about these features. Much of the study area may have been deforested by this time due to the recurrent need for more cropland and firewood.

## Endnotes: Pre- History to 1867

- <sup>2</sup> Clifford W. Buell and Nancy S. Buell, "Preliminary Assessment of Archeological Resource Potential of the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York," State University of New York at Albany, Department of Anthropology, January 1979, 4.
- <sup>3</sup> "Draft Archeological Overview and Assessment, Home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York," National Park Service, Archeological Branch, Northeast Cultural Resources Center, Lowell Massachusetts. October 2000, 8.
- <sup>4</sup> Robert E. Funk, "Recent Contributions to Hudson Valley Prehistory," New York State Museum and Science Service, Memoir 22, 1976, 210, as cited in Buell and Buell, 7.
- <sup>5</sup> "Draft Archeological Overview and Assessment, Home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York," 8.
- <sup>6</sup> Ritchie, William A. and Funk, Robert E., *A Typology and Nomenclature for New York Projectile Points*, Albany, New York: New York State Museum and Sciences Service, Bulletin 384, as cited in Buell and Buell, 8.
- <sup>7</sup> Funk, 1976, 404, as cited in Buell and Buell, 8.
- <sup>8</sup> Frank W Porter III., *Indians of North America; The Lenapes*, ed. Robert S. Grumet (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989), 14.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>10</sup> Noted from conversation with Chuck Smyth, Northeast Region Ethnographer, National Park Service.
- <sup>11</sup> Robert E. Grumet, *Historic Contact* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 9, 215.
- <sup>12</sup> Ives Goddard, "Deleware," as in *Handbook of North American Indians; Volume 15, Northeast*, ed. Bruce G. Trigger (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 216-217.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 216- 217.
- <sup>14</sup> Funk, 1976, 204, as sited in Buell and Buell, 8.
- <sup>15</sup> "Archeological Testing, 1983- 1984, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historical Site," 17. ROVA park files.
- <sup>16</sup> Adriaen Van der Donck as quoted in Nancy Gordon's "Saratoga Battlefield - A Vegetative History," Saratoga National Historical Park files, 1987, 8.
- <sup>17</sup> Adriaen Van der Donck, *A Description of the New Netherlands*, ed. Thomas F. O'Donnell (Syracuse University Press, 1968), 20.
- <sup>18</sup> Johannes De Laet, cited in Van Zandt, *Chronicles of the Hudson; Three Centuries of Traveler's Accounts* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1971), 18.
- <sup>19</sup> Van Zandt, 3- 4.
- <sup>20</sup> Van der Donck, 19.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.
- <sup>24</sup> Buell and Buell, 11.
- <sup>25</sup> Lecture by Ruth M. Halsted, 23 October 1984, Dutchess County Historical Society files.
- <sup>26</sup> Aretson sold his property to Michael Hawdon shortly after acquiring the parcel. "Archeological Overview and Assessment, Home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York," 13.
- <sup>27</sup> Kristin Baker, "Cultural Landscape Report for the Home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Draft 1999)," National Park Service, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation and the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, 14.
- <sup>28</sup> William McDermott, ed., *Eighteenth Century Documents of the Nine Partners Patent, Dutchess County, New York* (Baltimore, MD: Gateway Press, Inc., 1979), xiv.
- <sup>29</sup> Buell and Buell, 12.
- <sup>30</sup> Buell and Buell, 12.
- <sup>31</sup> Charles Snell, "Early History of Hyde Park, 1705- 1894," Prepared for the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, 1955, 3. ROVA park files.
- <sup>32</sup> Van der Donck, 19.

- <sup>33</sup> McDermott, xiv.
- <sup>34</sup> Joyce C. Ghee, "A New Look at Old Dutchess," April 15, 1983, Dutchess County Historical Society files.
- <sup>35</sup> James H. Smith, *History of Dutchess County, New York* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Co., 1882.), 59- 60, as cited in Buell and Buell, 12.
- <sup>36</sup> Buell and Buell, 17.
- <sup>37</sup> John Bard, Advertisement, May 12, 1768, as cited in Snell, 9.
- <sup>38</sup> McDermott, xi.
- <sup>39</sup> "Archeological Overview and Assessment, Home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York," 13.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>42</sup> Horatio Gates Spafford, *A Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Albany, NY: H.C. Southwick, 1813).
- <sup>43</sup> Buell and Buell, 19.
- <sup>44</sup> New England Farmer, 4 September and 2 October 1829, as cited in Snell, "The History of Hyde Park," 36.
- <sup>45</sup> Captain Thomas Hamilton, "A Tour Through North America; Together with a Comprehensive View of the Canadas and United States, as Adapted for Agricultural Emigration," *American Quarterly Review* XVII, March and June 1835, 384, as cited in Snell, "A History of Hyde Park," 42.
- <sup>46</sup> Martha Collins Bayne, *Dutchess County Farmer* (Poughkeepsie, NY: The Women's City and Country Club with Vassar College, 1937), 31.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> Nathaniel Parker Willis, "Letters from Idlewood, Letter V, or the Shaping of a Home on the Banks of the Hudson," 1853, as cited in Arthur G. Adams, *The Hudson Through the Years* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), 198- 109.
- <sup>49</sup> "Archeological Overview and Assessment, Home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York," 15.
- <sup>50</sup> Baker, 19.
- <sup>51</sup> 1850 Sidney Wall Map and the 1850 Dutchess County Census records, both courtesy of the Dutchess County Historical Society.
- <sup>52</sup> Abstract of the title to farm land situated in the town of Hyde Park - now owned by William G. Bennett - from 1835, FDR papers, Family, Business, Personal subject file; Hyde Park Matters, Roosevelt Estate, Deeds, Surveys, Title Searches, Box 22, FDRL.
- <sup>53</sup> Buell and Buell, 35.
- <sup>54</sup> As seen on the 1850 Sidney Wall Map, Dutchess County Historical Society.

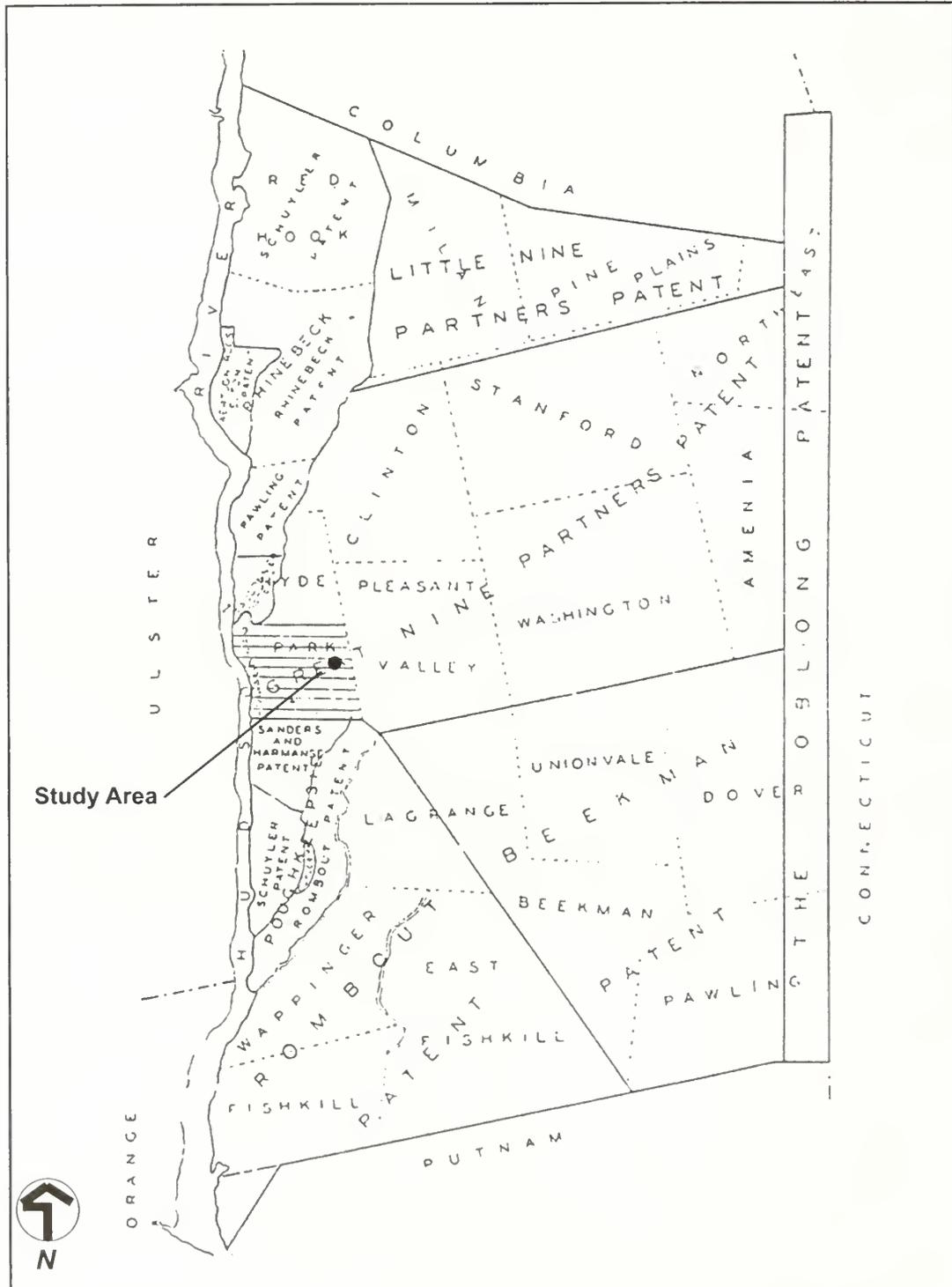


Figure 1.1. Present-day Dutchess County including the Nine Partners Patent and surrounding patent lands. The study area is located in the Water Lots, pictured as the narrow, linear tracts of land in the left center of the image. FDRL.





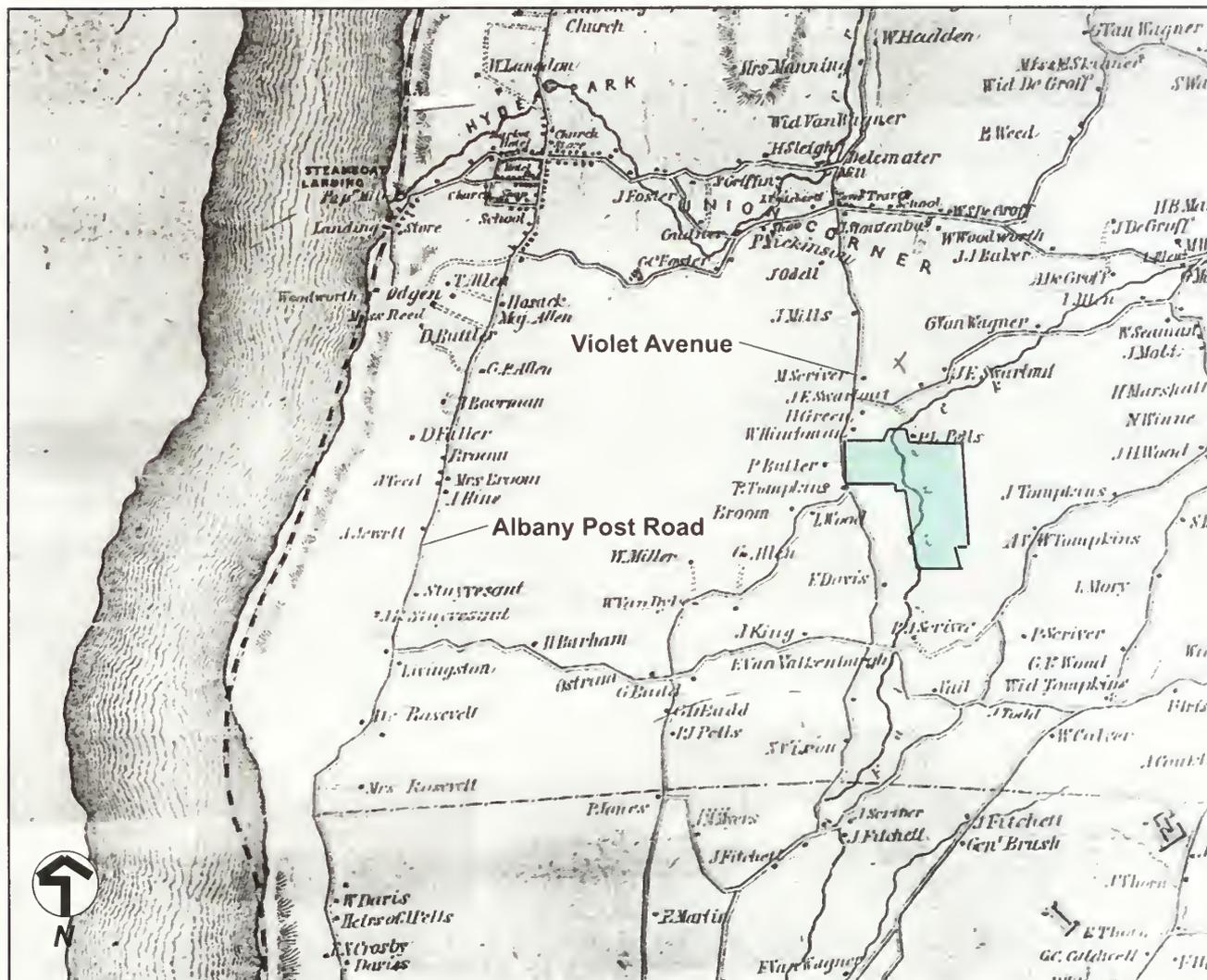


Figure 1.4. Detail of the 1850 Sidney Wall Map. The study area is shaded blue. Notice the concentration of farmers surrounding the study area but none settled within it. Not to scale. Courtesy of the Dutchess County Historical Society.



Figure 1.5. Detail of the 1858 Gillette Wall Map. The study area is shaded blue. As with the 1850 Sidney Wall Map, the study area is ringed with farmsteads but not home to any. The farmer across Violet Avenue would have utilized the northwest portion of the site for cultivation. Not to scale. Courtesy of the Dutchess County Historical Society.

## **EARLY ROOSEVELT PERIOD,**

### **1867-1924**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

By 1867, the mid- Hudson Valley was a well established agricultural center, having been worked by many generations of farmers. The new movement of Hudson River estate building was on the rise with numerous well- connected New York City families making the Hyde Park area their seasonal home. The Roosevelts entered this foray of wealthy residents, establishing a modest estate on the east bank of the river, just south of the village of Hyde Park. James Roosevelt and his son Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) after him expanded the estate through numerous acquisitions between the 1870s and the 1930s. FDR's purchase of the majority of the study area in 1911 became one of the key sites on the estate outside of the main family home for recreation and forestry activities.

#### **THE ROOSEVELT ESTATE**

The Roosevelt family was among the first European land owners in the Hudson Valley, beginning in the 1680s.<sup>54</sup> Many subsequent generations of Roosevelts traveled between the Hudson Valley and New York City, the latter being where the family made its fortune in various business ventures. The first connection between the Roosevelt family and the town of Hyde Park began in 1867 when FDR's father, James Roosevelt, purchased the 110- acre Wheeler estate on the bank of the Hudson River after his previous home, a few miles south, burned. Roosevelt renamed the property "Springwood."<sup>55</sup>

The area directly surrounding the Wheeler home had already been developed when James Roosevelt acquired it and included a house, horse trotting track, stable, and large pastures (Figure 2.1).<sup>56</sup> Beyond Springwood's boundaries, large, well spaced estates with romantic names such as Bellefield, Edgewood, and Sunnybrook lined the east bank of the Hudson River. Common land use patterns dictated that the west side of Albany Post Road was dedicated to the estate's mansion grounds, while the east side of the road often contained associated estate farms.

James began expanding his land holdings shortly after his initial purchase by acquiring two properties south of Springwood and another parcel southeast of the Wheeler property in 1868. The acquisition of additional land in subsequent

decades assembled a large, irregularly shaped estate that stretched from the Hudson River to the Mariches Creek, west of Violet Avenue or present day Route 9G (Figures 2.2 and 2.3). When James Roosevelt died in 1900 his estate included 750 acres. The estate was willed to James's second son, FDR, born in 1882, but subject to a life estate willed to his wife Sara.

At the time of James Roosevelt's death, FDR was an eighteen-year-old student at Harvard University. Shortly after graduating, he married his fifth cousin once removed, Anna Eleanor Roosevelt (Eleanor Roosevelt) in 1905, the niece of President Theodore Roosevelt. Eleanor was a Hudson Valley native herself, having grown up north of Hyde Park in Tivoli, NY. Much like earlier generations, the couple maintained two residences, a New York City townhouse and Springwood. While they predominantly lived in the city, FDR's love of the countryside, instilled in him by his father during childhood, drew him to Hyde Park on a regular basis.

Independent of his mother, who actively managed her former husband's estate, FDR purchased the 194-acre Bennett Farm from Willet Bennett in 1911, perhaps in an effort to remain personally connected with the local landscape. This parcel added an eastern extension to the large Roosevelt estate that flanked both sides of the Albany Post Road and though FDR did not need the land to be income producing he planned to keep the farm in production. Bennett continued to live and work on the farm as a tenant until 1916.<sup>57</sup>

In 1911 the property included a main farmhouse, which was a two-story, wood-frame structure with a front porch facing Violet Avenue, and numerous agricultural outbuildings. The farmhouse and most of the barns were located on the west side of Violet Avenue. The farm also contained a greenhouse, tank house, slaughterhouse, and wagon shed that Bennett owned and was responsible for removing at the end of his lease.<sup>58</sup> Later residents of the farm remember keeping livestock typical of small self-sufficient farms, including chickens and dairy cows that most likely existed in 1911.<sup>59</sup> While most of the associated farm structures were concentrated on the west side of Violet Avenue, tenants utilized fields on the east side of the road for animal grazing and for hay and corn cultivation. Specifically, the long field on the southwest side of the study area would have been engaged for crops because much of the other land to the north and east was either too low and wet or hilly and rocky to cultivate.

A small tenant farmhouse was located a few hundred yards east of Violet Avenue, near the edge of the wetland created by the Fall-Kill (Figure 2.4). As was the case at the main farmhouse, the tenant house also contained a working farm yard. Period photos show the domestic yard appearing untended with a kitchen garden, post and wire fence, and tractor or wagon tracks visible in the rear of the house. Small numbers of livestock for family consumption, possibly including

chickens, sheep, and goats, may have been kept near the house.<sup>60</sup> The tenant house faced south, toward a stone wall lined driveway that connected the house to Violet Avenue and likely provided access to the eastern areas of the farm.<sup>61</sup> If an eastern extension existed by 1911, it was presumably only a small packed earth path used to transport livestock to grazing lands across the creek. It is unknown if a bridge traversed the creek at this time.

At the end of Willett Bennett's lease in 1917, FDR rented the farm to Patrick E. Morris. Interesting insights into FDR's conservation values are presented in Morris's lease. FDR stipulated that Morris could not sell any timber from the farm, nor cut amounts of wood that exceeded his need for firewood, and that he cut firewood only from areas approved by FDR.<sup>62</sup> Since the lease postdated the planting of an experimental stand of white pine trees in 1914, FDR likely felt the need to protect the fledgling trees and possibly others on the property. Morris was also not to profit from selling manure or hay produced on the farm, as such agricultural commodities may have been needed elsewhere on the estate.<sup>63</sup>

John Townsend rented the former Bennett farm after Patrick Morris.<sup>64</sup> Moses Smith and his family followed Townsend as tenants of the farm beginning in 1920 and remained for twenty-seven years. Smith recalled FDR being a good landlord who did not interfere with farm operations. The two spoke and corresponded several times a year, but FDR never questioned Smith's management of the property.<sup>65</sup> Smith and FDR's rental agreement required Smith to attend to small repairs around the farm, while larger matters were taken care of by FDR. Another agreement stipulated that Smith repair fences using logs from the property with FDR providing the wire.

In his own words, Smith practiced "garden trucking," meaning he grew a variety of crops, vegetables, and fruits, to protect against failure of one cash crop.<sup>66</sup> Smith recalled growing hay and corn, but no grain crops. He also kept between eighteen and twenty milk cows, from which he sold whole milk. He did not have enough tillable acreage to produce enough feed for the cows, so he purchased feed.<sup>67</sup> Clifford Smith, Moses's son, remembered as a child that his father fenced off part of the creek and "back fields," presumably ones east of the creek, with barbed wire to contain his livestock.<sup>68</sup>

While FDR left farm management up to Smith, he did exercise the right to utilize portions of the farm for his own uses. He used the small tenant house as housing for various estate employees.<sup>69</sup> FDR and his family also used the property for recreation. Smith recalled a day in 1924 when FDR and his secretary, Missy Lehand, drove by as he worked in the corn field east of Violet Avenue. The two spread a blanket at a high spot on the west bank of the Fall-Kill creek and composed a nominating speech for Al Smith's presidential bid.<sup>70</sup> The Roosevelts also used the site for picnicking. The family was known for their love of the

outdoors and informal entertaining and FDR, Mrs. Roosevelt, their children, and various friends made use of the east side of the creek as a quiet gathering spot.

Photos taken before development of the area began provide useful insight into the character of the Val-Kill landscape during family picnics of the early 1920s. The secluded site was separated from Violet Avenue and the activities of the neighbors by the marshy Fall-Kill and surrounding woods. The landscape surrounding the bridge and creek was vegetated with undergrowth and mid-height shrubs, while only a few large trees surrounded the area (Figure 2.5). The acreage east of the creek was a sparse birch-cedar stand with low and mid-height undergrowth growing on the former agricultural land (Figure 2.6). The area may have been used as pasture for Smith's livestock.

As seen in period photos, the original bridge over the Fall-Kill was a rough, unfinished log structure with no railings. Many of the small-diameter logs appeared loose, together creating an uncertain deck. Stacked fieldstone piers at the water's edge supported the bridge. This bridge most likely served a limited purpose, connecting the east and west banks of the creek for livestock crossing. The creek bed itself was lined with dense shrub growth and because of the marshy creek edge, it is difficult to ascertain where the water and land met (Figure 2.7).

### **FDR'S EARLY FORESTRY ACTIVITIES**

Sara Roosevelt actively managed her Hyde Park estate with the help of a superintendent and numerous laborers, yet FDR found ways to exercise his own enthusiasm for the estate and his love of the outdoors through experimental forestry and conservation activities. As Eleanor Roosevelt noted, "Franklin's mother never allowed him to interfere with the running of the place at Hyde Park, or the farm, but the woodland was his and he ran that as his own."<sup>71</sup> Building on his interest in forest conservation and his concern about soil depletion, FDR began replanting and actively managing forest resources on his estate lands in 1912. He participated in the "Reforestation Movement," a broad-based initiative to replant denuded landscapes and old farm fields that gained popularity in the first decades of the 1900s.<sup>72</sup> FDR also fostered a relationship with the College of Forestry in Syracuse, New York, relying on their expertise in forestry practices to guide the management of his forest stands. FDR's reforestation plans began as a limited effort to plant a few stands of white pine, Norway spruce, and tulip poplars, mostly in depleted farm fields. Later, the program grew to include over a half million plantation trees throughout his estate.<sup>73</sup>

Early in FDR's forestry program, he directed the planting of a white pine stand at the northeastern edge of the Bennett Farm.<sup>74</sup> A Society of American Foresters

brochure of 1931 described the 1914 plantation and how the area appeared prior to planting. "Back of the Val- Kill shop there is a white pine plantation of 1914. . . . It is on nearly level ground and was a pasture with gray birch trees before it was planted.<sup>75</sup> The stand had an irregular shape, formed by the straight northern edge of the property and the sinuous edge of the Fall- Kill wetland.

#### **LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION IN 1924**

In 1924, the Bennett Farm appeared largely as it did when FDR acquired the site in 1911 (Figure 2.8). Besides the 1914 white pine plantation, the farm functioned as a working agrarian landscape as it had for many decades. The current tenant, Moses Smith, ran a mixed farm with livestock grazing, fodder crops, and a kitchen garden, similar to many of his predecessors. Smith based farming operations on the west side of Violet Avenue where the farmhouse and most of the animal enclosures and barns were located. Across the road, a tenant house with its own domestic yard containing animals and outbuildings was located along an earthen driveway. This driveway served as an informal boundary line, dividing the cleared agricultural fields in two, with a dry and tillable parcel to the south and a low-lying, marshy parcel north of the road. Smith grew crops in the south field and grazed animals in the north field.

The central region of the site was defined by the Fall- Kill and wetland. Areas east of the creek were partially forested with small trees and low shrub growth. Animals grazed amongst the sparse trees. Further east still, the site became rocky and hilly, unsuitable for grazing. Moses Smith fenced the area around the creek and east pastures to contain the animals and a stone wall divided the farm from the Tompkins property to the south. While the west side of the study area did not change substantially in coming years, the land use in areas east of the creek would soon change, leading to rapid alteration of the landscape.

## Endnotes: Early Roosevelt Period, 1867- 1924

- <sup>54</sup> Kristin Baker, "Cultural Landscape Report for the Home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Draft 1999)," National Park Service, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation and the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, 35.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>57</sup> Agreement between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Willet E. Bennett. John Hackett, Attorney at Law, 22 July 1911, FDR Family, Business, and Personal Subject File, Hyde Park Matters, Roosevelt Estate, Deeds, Surveys, Title Searches, Box 22, FDRL.
- <sup>58</sup> Indenture between Willet E. Bennett and Annie M. Bennett, his wife, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, 5 September 1911, FDR Family, Business, and Personal Subject File, Hyde Park Matters, Roosevelt Estate, Deeds, Surveys, Title Searches, Box 22, FDRL.
- <sup>59</sup> Richard M. Cain, *Eleanor Roosevelt's Val- Kill: Images of America* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 30. Cain, who's grandfather was Clifford M. Smith, a former employee of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, and who's great-grandfather, Moses Smith, used to live in the farmhouse, described that the farm produced typical crops and livestock in the caption of a photo of the old farmhouse. This is also corroborated by George Brown, who used to work for John Roosevelt in the 1960s. He lived nearby as a child and remembered the activities of Val- Kill and its neighboring properties.
- <sup>60</sup> Based on information of George Brown, who remembered activities of later tenants of the home. Interview by Lisa Nowak on 17 March 2003.
- <sup>61</sup> Clifford and Joan Smith Oral History, 12 December 1979, 14, ROVA Archives 1979.09.
- <sup>62</sup> A Lease between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Patrick E. Morris, 9 March 1917, FDR Family, Business, and Personal Subject File, Hyde Park Matters, Roosevelt Estate, Deeds, Surveys, Title Searches, Box 22, FDRL.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>64</sup> Moses Smith Oral History, 15 January 1948, 1, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>68</sup> Clifford and Joan Smith Oral History, 14.
- <sup>69</sup> Charles Curnan lived in the house for a time during his long employment with the Roosevelt family. He lived in many houses throughout the estate and rehabilitated the structures for other tenants. Charles Curnan Oral History, 4 November 1979, 20, ROVA Archives, 1979.08.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.
- <sup>71</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and Hyde Park: Personal Recollections of Eleanor Roosevelt," Printed by the Hyde Park Historical Association, 15, as cited in Baker, 88.
- <sup>72</sup> John Auwaerter, "Land- Use History Summary of the Roosevelt Estate Lands Between Routes 9 and 9G, "Interim findings of the Historic Resource Study, July 2003, 4.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>74</sup> Thomas Patton, "FDR's Trees," *Conservationist* (1995): 28.
- <sup>75</sup> "Forestry Practice on the Roosevelt Farm." Appearing in a brochure for Society of American Foresters meeting, printed August 1931, Hoverter Memorial Archives, SUNY ESF.

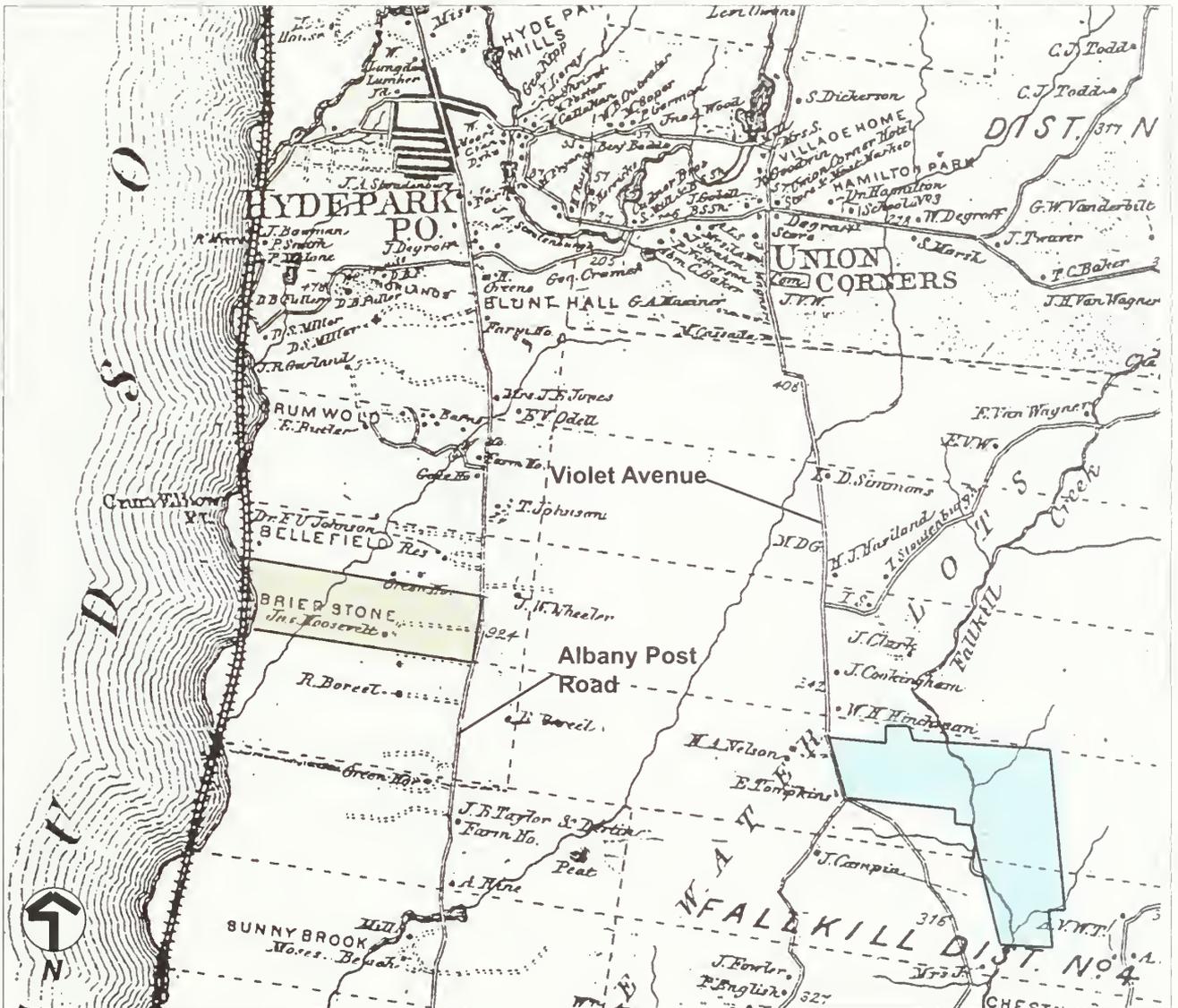


Figure 2.1. "Map of Dutchess County," 1867, Beers, Ellis and Soule. James Roosevelt's Springwood estate is shaded tan. The Val-Kill study area is shaded blue. Not to scale. ROVA park files.

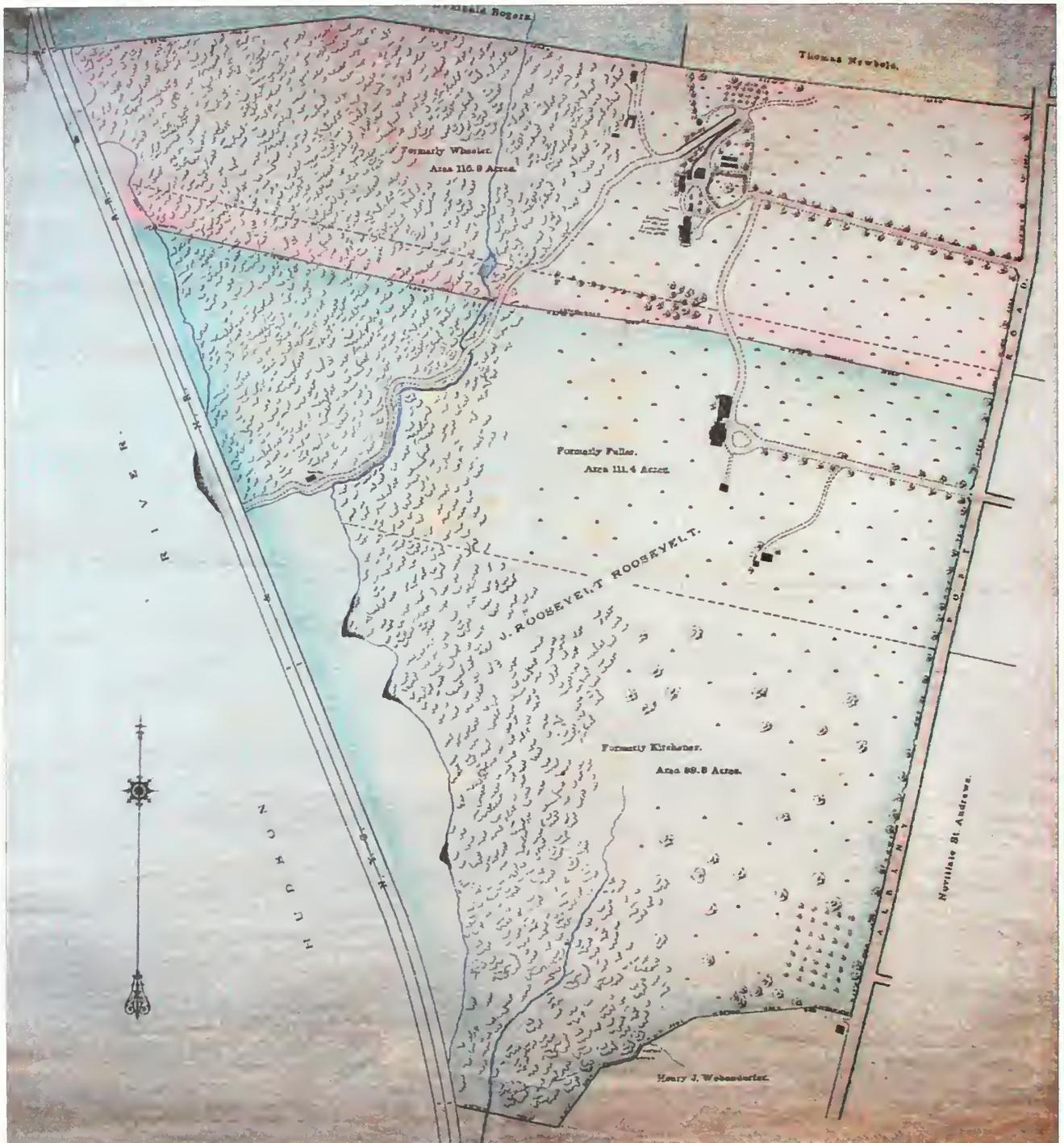


Figure 2.2. "Springwood, Late Residence of James Roosevelt, deceased, near Hyde Park, Dutchess Co., NY." James Roosevelt estate lands west of the Albany Post Road. Drawn in 1906. Not to Scale. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL), 15 2 13 b.



Figure 2.3. "Springwood, Late Residence of James Roosevelt, deceased, near Hyde Park, Dutchess Co., NY." James Roosevelt estate lands east of the Albany Post Road. Drawn in 1906. Not to scale. FDRL, 15 2 13 a.



Figure 2.4. This undated photo taken from the rear of the tenant house looking toward the entry road depicts the working landscape. Cook-Dickerman Collection, Negative Collection. ROVA Archives.



Figure 2.5. Undated photo of the bridge that spanned the Fall-Kill creek prior to Val-Kill improvements. Notice the dense woody growth surrounding the creek and the design and appearance of the rough log bridge. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 789. ROVA Archives.



Figure 2.6. The Val-Kill site just before construction of the Stone Cottage, 1925. Note the birch and cedar trees and relatively little undergrowth. FDRL 48 22 4039 (3).



Figure 2.7. Val-Kill creek looking north, 1925. Both banks were heavily vegetated with wetland plants, though mostly shrubs and small trees. The east bank that became the site of the Stone Cottage, image right, was fairly flat and without large trees. FDRL 4822 4039 (7).

# Cultural Landscape Report for Eleanor Roosevelt NHS

## 1924 Period Plan

Figure 2.8

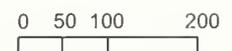


**National Park Service**  
**Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation**  
 99 Warren Street  
 Brookline, MA 02445

### SOURCES

1. Eleanor Roosevelt NHS Survey, April 2004
2. Historic and contemporary maps and photographs

### LEGEND



-  Contour
-  Tree/Shrub
-  Building/structure
-  Water
-  Wetland
-  Meadow
-  Former Pasture
-  Road/Path

Cultural  
Landscape  
Report for  
Eleanor  
Roosevelt NHS

1924 Period  
Plan

Figure 2.8

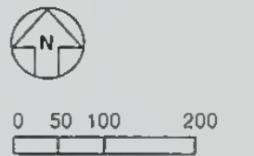


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LEGEND



- Contour
- Tree/Shrub
- Building/structure
- Water
- Wetland
- Meadow
- Former Pasture
- Road/Path



## **PARTNERSHIP OF ELEANOR ROOSEVELT, NANCY COOK, AND MARION DICKERMAN, 1924-1945**

*Here we are back at Hyde Park. Peace and quiet reign.*

*Eleanor Roosevelt, 17 July 1936<sup>76</sup>*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Prior to the 1920s, specifically 1921 when Franklin D. Roosevelt contracted polio, Eleanor Roosevelt devoted much of her time and energy to raising her five children and running the household. The family continued to split their time between a townhouse in New York City and Springwood. Many things changed after 1921 when FDR, virtually unable to use his legs, sought to reinvigorate his political aspirations relying on assistance from others like never before. Mrs. Roosevelt, unused to asserting herself in a political arena, or even at home, began to reinvent herself to aid FDR in markedly different ways than before his illness.

Several people helped focus her intellect and foster self-confidence. One was Louis Howe, a former journalist who became FDR's campaign manager and Roosevelt family confidant. Two other individuals who added to Mrs. Roosevelt's transformation and played a vital role in the creation and development of Val-Kill were Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman. Mrs. Roosevelt first met Cook at a meeting of the Women's Division of the New York State Democratic Committee in 1922 and the two became friends. Soon after, Cook introduced Mrs. Roosevelt to Dickerman and the three women formed a friendship based on shared political beliefs and common activities. Cook and Dickerman soon became regular guests at the Roosevelt home, joining the close circle of family, friends, and advisors that frequently gathered at Hyde Park.

Regular picnics at the former Bennett Farm during the 1920s served as the catalyst to establish a permanent place for recreation and relaxation away from Springwood. Through Mrs. Roosevelt's writings, particularly her *My Day* syndicated newspaper columns that appeared daily from 1935 to 1962, her love of nature, the Hudson Valley landscape, and the beauty of Val-Kill became evident. She expressed this in a letter to FDR, written shortly after the completion of the Stone Cottage, the central building of the site in early years, saying, "the peace of it is divine."<sup>77</sup> Though other commitments often kept her away from Val-Kill during FDR's governorship and presidency, she enjoyed returning to the country to enjoy the slower pace and the opportunity to relax in the company of close friends and family. In 1938 she wrote, "We entered our cottage at Hyde Park on

Friday night, sat on our porch, looked at the reflection of the sunset on the water and basked in a feeling of complete peace and quiet."<sup>78</sup> Val- Kill became a retreat for Mrs. Roosevelt and the place she felt truly at home.

Val- Kill was created from agricultural land on the Bennett and Tompkins Farms, two parcels of FDR's large Hyde Park estate. In the late 1800s, James Roosevelt's estate flanked both sides of the Albany Post Road, stretching from the Hudson River to the Mariches Creek. FDR expanded the estate east, beginning with the Bennett Farm. He continued to purchase agricultural land east of the traditional estate in the 1920s and 1930s, eventually owning parcels that stretched approximately three miles east from the Hudson River. Though Val- Kill was created as a place apart for Mrs. Roosevelt, the property functioned within the larger Roosevelt estate from its inception until after FDR's death in 1945.

### **THE IDEA FOR VAL-KILL IS BORN**

The idea for a Val- Kill retreat was conceived when Cook and Dickerman joined the Roosevelts for a summer picnic at the Bennett Farm in 1924, as they commonly did. Dickerman later claimed that Mrs. Roosevelt lamented about the impermanence of their picnic spot, as Sara Roosevelt closed Springwood during the winter months. In response, FDR reportedly replied that the three women should build a cottage on their favorite picnic spot so they could enjoy the peace and solitude year round. Since the land was his to lend, as the Bennett Farm was his only independently owned parcel at the time, planning went forth. Construction of the Stone Cottage, a small year- round house that the women would share during free time, became their primary concern. Yet, the women and FDR envisioned the site as a place for outdoor recreation to capitalize on the beautiful setting and planned several outdoor improvements almost concurrently with the cottage.

FDR was evidently not concerned about the women's legal use of his land as he waited approximately a year and a half to prepare a lease. Indeed, planning and construction of several features took place prior to the land being legally leased to the tri- owners of the building. By January 1926, a contract outlined the terms of the women's rights to Val- Kill. It allowed Mrs. Roosevelt, Cook, Dickerman, and their heirs use of the site for residential, industrial, or manufacturing purposes, on a "portion of the so- called Bennett Farm on the east side of the Creek Road."<sup>79</sup> The agreement outlined an approximately square area centered on the east bank and bridge of the Fall- Kill that ran through the center of the portion of the Bennett Farm east of Creek Road. Roughly, the boundary began on the west side of the creek at the border of the Bennett and Tompkins Farms, traveled north along the west side of the creek and entry road to where the road veered westward, turned east, crossing the Fall- Kill creek and wetland for about

700 feet, turned south until meeting the boundary of the Bennett and Tompkins farms, and returned to the point of beginning.<sup>80</sup> As described in the lease, Mrs. Roosevelt, Cook, and Dickerman were responsible for paying the taxes and keeping the property in good repair.

## **EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF VAL-KILL, 1925-1936**

### **The Pre-Construction Landscape**

Prior to construction, the Val- Kill landscape was dominated by dense wetland vegetation along the Fall- Kill and sparsely vegetated grazing land. Birch and cedar trees dotted the banks of the creek that were kept relatively clear of large trees by grazing livestock. A rustic log bridge and rudimentary dam traversed the creek, most likely pre- dating development of the site as the three women paid to have the bridge and dam repaired, not created, in subsequent years.<sup>81</sup> As seen in period photographs, the east bank of the Fall- Kill proved an excellent location to site the cottage. The terrain was relatively level, already devoid of large trees, close to the creek, and far enough from Creek Road, the Smith farm, and the tenant house to feel secluded and private. Agricultural activities continued in the farm's west fields that were cleared of trees, devoted to crops and livestock grazing. East of the proposed construction site, sparsely vegetated pasture land ran along the creek and forests in varying stages of succession grew in higher elevations.

### **Early Site Improvements**

Though Val- Kill was primarily to be a retreat for Mrs. Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, and Marion Dickerman, FDR played a major role in developing plans for the Stone Cottage. He employed Henry Toombs, the cousin of Mrs. Roosevelt's friend Caroline O'Day, who was employed at the New York City architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White. Cook and FDR gave Toombs design input throughout the fall, winter, and spring of 1924- 1925, and plans were completed by mid- summer 1925.<sup>82</sup> The design was based on a Dutch Colonial aesthetic that FDR felt was so appropriate to the Hudson Valley.

Improvements were made to the primitive circulation system in anticipation of the cottage construction when a more secure bridge and road system would be needed to support trucks and heavy loads. William Plog, the Roosevelt estate superintendent, recorded finishing the "road on Mr. Franklin's farm to pool, also built bridge by pool" in 1924.<sup>83</sup> Plog rebuilt the existing bridge and completed a road on either side of the creek leading to the area slated for the cottage construction. Period photographs indicate that the new bridge spanned approximately the same distance as the old one, possibly using the same supports.

The new deck was made from planks instead of unfinished logs, though still without a railing. Road work continued from March through September 1925, when Plog's records show that the employee living in the tenant house, "rebuilt road from Peter's house through swamp to pool."<sup>84</sup>

Plans for a swimming pool emerged early in the process as a central feature for the Val- Kill retreat. FDR described it in saying, "My missus and some of her female political friends want to build a shack on a stream in the back woods and want instead of a beautiful marble bath, to have the stream dug out so as to form an old- fashioned swimming pool."<sup>85</sup> FDR wished to construct a formal pool, possibly on the grounds of Springwood to be used for recreation and therapy, but Mrs. Roosevelt's idea for an informal pool on the east bank of the Fall- Kill prevailed.<sup>86</sup> Work began on the pool in August 1924, when William Plog and the contractor for the cottage, Henry Clinton, cleared brush from the creek bed and pool site and began excavation (Figures 3.1 and 3.2).<sup>87</sup> According to Plog's record book they, "cut brush [on] both sides of creek" but only in a small area abutting the pool site and directly west of the Stone Cottage footprint.<sup>88</sup>

Construction of the pool was delayed by the winter of 1924- 1925, with work resuming in the spring.<sup>89</sup> The rectangular, concrete pool was located close to the creek and bridge and recirculated creek water. The pool's west- facing side remained level with the gradual slope to the creek while the east side abutted an earthen bank southwest of the Stone Cottage (Figure 3.3).

With the road, bridge, and pool completed, construction of the cottage progressed. The contractors concentrated construction activities south of the Stone Cottage site, stacking construction materials in the vicinity, including fieldstone collected from stone walls found throughout the Roosevelt estate (Figures 3.4 and 3.5).<sup>90</sup> The footprint of disturbance was limited to the west and south sides of the cottage, while other areas remained in their natural state (Figure 3.6 and 3.7).

By the spring of 1926 final grading and site work took place around the Stone Cottage. To compensate for grade changes created during construction, workers built a low fieldstone retaining wall perpendicular to the creek edge, traveling along the Stone Cottage's north side (Figure 3.8). Toward the west, the lawn was graded gently to the level of the Fall- Kill and more brush was removed from the east bank. Yet, clearing took place in a selected areas, as areas upstream remained as wetland (Figures 3.9 and 3.10). Views to and from the Stone Cottage were obscured by dense vegetation on almost all sides.

The site became fully operational by the spring of 1926 and quickly became a favorite spot, used often by the three Val- Kill partners, their friends, and family to enjoy the natural beauty and uncomplicated landscape for outdoor activities

and relaxation (Figures 3.11 and 3.12). During this period, the area remained roughly landscaped with early site improvements limited to seeding the lawn, transplanting cedar trees to the Stone Cottage south and west lawns, and planting a line of lilac shrubs along the retaining wall.

## **VAL-KILL BECOMES A FUNCTIONING RETREAT AND BUSINESS**

### **Stone Cottage and Factory Landscape**

Shortly after the idea to build a cottage emerged in 1924, the Val- Kill partners and FDR discussed starting a cottage industry. They created Val- Kill Industries to offer seasonal employment to local workers, encouraging them not to abandon farming for economic opportunities in urban areas. This type of business complemented FDR's political sensibilities and concern for rural sustainability. He and the women based the need for such an industry on the changing demographics of the area, marked by a loss of population in Dutchess County in the early twentieth century due to declining farm profitability.<sup>91</sup>

Since Nancy Cook was a skilled craftswoman, she, Mrs. Roosevelt, Marion Dickerman, and their friend Caroline O'Day planned to run Val- Kill Industries as a woodworking shop, reproducing early American furniture.<sup>92</sup> Though plans were initially made to include a work shop in the rear of the Stone Cottage, construction of a separate shop building commenced in 1926.<sup>93</sup> Cook and Henry Toombs designed the structure as a two- story, concrete- block, rectangular building with a stucco exterior. It originally included a two- bay garage, a shop room, dormitory space for guests, and a caretaker's apartment.<sup>94</sup> Cook and Toombs sited the building, known as the Factory, in a clearing in a birch- cedar stand, northeast of the Stone Cottage. The landscape treatment engaged at the Factory alluded to the purpose and aesthetic of the building. Roughly mowed grass, naturalized birch and cedar trees, and loose, informal foundation plantings created a rustic, relaxed outdoor appearance that complemented the structure's function.

Val- Kill Industries expanded after its first few years to include more workers and other crafts, notably pewter making. To accommodate the new functions, the Val- Kill partners built an additional structure adjacent to the Factory to house a metal forge.<sup>95</sup> The new structure, built in sympathy with the first Factory almost doubled the total shop space, yet retained the previous landscape treatment.<sup>96</sup> Birch, lilac, and cedar trees grew close to the foundation in a random, naturalized pattern and wisteria vines covered a trellis on the addition's west façade (Figure 3.13). As time progressed the foundation plantings grew large and slightly overgrown, contributing to the rustic, casual appearance of the Factory.

Around the time the women expanded the Factory, a one- story, wood frame building was constructed east of the Factory to serve as a garage and tool shed.<sup>97</sup> The Val- Kill caretaker, Nellie Johannsen, raised chickens and turkeys in fenced enclosures behind the new garage, tucked into the edge of a birch- cedar stand (Figure 3.14).

By the late 1920s, Val- Kill had changed markedly from its pre- development appearance, evidenced by the 1928 property assessment. Prior to retreat developments, the Bennett Farm was worth \$6,000. By 1928, the assessment increased to \$15,000.<sup>98</sup> The property now included agricultural buildings and land associated with the Bennett Farm as well as the Stone Cottage, Factory, garage, and swimming pool. The improved landscape was characterized by lawn and plantings surrounding the Stone Cottage and Factory that were cared for without being formalized or manicured. Foundation plants with loose, natural growth habits, such as spirea and lilac, bordered the Stone Cottage, vines climbed the stonework and screened porch, and long grass grew at the edge of the unpaved driveway (Figure 3.15).

A system of pedestrian and vehicular paths evolved to connect the resources at Val- Kill. The main access to and from the site occurred from the entry road that was established decades before to serve agricultural activities. The road led from Violet Avenue, traveled through the west farm fields of the Smith farm, past the tenant house, to the Stone Cottage and Factory. Near the Val- Kill retreat, the road crossed the bridge, swung south of the pool, and met the east façade of the Stone Cottage (Figure 3.16). A large driveway circle at the east door provided vehicular access and parking. East of the driveway circle, two single- lane, earth roads traveling roughly parallel, led to the Factory and garage, separating the residential and business components of Val- Kill. The west driveway branch connected the Stone Cottage driveway circle to the Factory's garage, while the east branch skirted the Stone Cottage entirely and led from the entry road to the east side of the Factory.

Pedestrian connections were established throughout the site using flagstone paths; typically two pavers set side- by- side. Paths connected the driveway circle to the Stone Cottage and the Stone Cottage and Factory. Elsewhere, more informal stepping stone paths, one paver wide, were used including between the Stone Cottage and pool (Figure 3.17).

To accommodate frequent outdoor guests, Mrs. Roosevelt, Cook, and Dickerman built a bathhouse in 1930.<sup>99</sup> The only known documentation about the location and appearance of the bathhouse is in a 1932 photo of the pool that pictures the small, square, hipped- roof building at the edge of the woods, across the entry road from the pool (Figure 3.18).<sup>100</sup>

In 1933, Nancy Cook and Henry Toombs designed an outdoor fireplace, placing it west of the Factory in a dense stand of cedar trees, at a corner of land created by the elbow of the Fall- Kill creek. The fireplace was a large fieldstone structure with a five- foot- long iron grill and two warming shelves on either side. Several log benches located near the fireplace provided informal seating.<sup>101</sup> Rough- cut grass and densely spaced cedar trees gave the fireplace environs a casual and rustic appearance, while blocking views to the pond (Figures 3.19 and 3.20).

As FDR's political career intensified as Governor of New York and President of the United States in the 1930s, Roosevelt gatherings for friends, family, and political guests continued at Val- Kill, often focused around outdoor recreation, notably the pool and outdoor fireplace. The pool area was landscaped informally with stabilizing shrubs on the eastern slope, roughly cut grass, and cedar trees similar to ones located throughout the site (Figure 3.21). Several pieces of play equipment were associated with the pool, including a diving board, rings apparatus, and horseshoe pits (Figure 3.22). A badminton court was positioned slightly diagonal to the Stone Cottage on a terrace south of the building, among the transplanted cedar trees (Figure 3.23).

### **The Larger Landscape and Pond**

In 1925, FDR purchased the Tompkins property, located south of the Bennett Farm, and a portion of this abutting property was incorporated into the Val- Kill complex though it resided outside of the Val- Kill lease boundaries (Figure 3.24). The Val- Kill partners converted a piece of a meadow south of the stone wall dividing the Tompkins and Bennett properties into a garden and orchard in April 1931.<sup>102</sup> The orchard, located southwest of the bridge, across the creek from the Stone Cottage, first took the shape of a slightly irregular rectangle (Figure 3.25). The space was accessed through a gap made in the existing stone wall and marked by two stone pillars and a paling fence with a graceful convex curved top.<sup>103</sup>

According to Charles Curnan, who worked on the Roosevelt Estate from when he was a young man in the 1920s and later at Val- Kill until 1962, the three Val- Kill partners grew raspberries, blueberries, pears, and grapes in the orchard in addition to the apple trees planted by Plog.<sup>104</sup> They grew several varieties of fruit trees, including Bosc and Bartlett pears, Mackintosh, Red and Yellow Delicious, Spy, and Pippin apples. The women also kept bee hives in the orchard.<sup>105</sup>

Long considered a focal point of the property, the Fall- Kill proved to be a dynamic feature from the beginning of Val- Kill developments. The creek was initially enlarged by clearing vegetation from the edges of the main channel in front of the cottage site. However, period photographs show that even after the

shore had been cleared, especially at the east bank by the cottage, vegetation continued to sprout from the shallow water (Figure 3.26). Upstream from the cottage, dense vegetation, including lilies, reeds, shrubs, and good-sized trees, crowded the creek bed outside the small area of open water (Figure 3.27).

Substantial changes to the creek occurred in 1930, marking the time when the creek essentially changed to a pond. From April to August the Shaffer Construction Company dredged the creek for a cost of \$3,905, creating an area of open water from the bridge, past the elbow in the Fall-Kill, and around the north side of the Factory.<sup>106</sup> The 1936 aerial photo displays the area of cleared water as an irregular, crescent-shaped water body with wetland established to the north and northwest (See Figure 3.25). Despite this larger intervention, periodic clearing of wetland growth was still needed to maintain the pond edge. For example, in 1932 Moses Smith recorded in his logbook cutting wood and clearing brush from the swamp.<sup>107</sup>

By the mid-1930s, the bridge that evolved from a crude log structure on fieldstone pilings no longer met the vehicular needs of the site. Subsequently, Cook paid \$1,680 to have the existing bridge rebuilt over the summer of 1934.<sup>108</sup> Workmen constructed new dam foundations, built a new deck, and installed a low, log railing approximately twelve inches high (Figure 3.28).

Superintendent Plog expanded the Val-Kill road system again in 1933. He recorded clearing brush and trees and grading a new road in November of that year.<sup>109</sup> The road traveled east of the Stone Cottage, through the woods to a farm road northeast of the cottage, just off of the original Bennett property. This new road segment created two egress points for Val-Kill and connected the west tracts of the Roosevelt estate with points east. As the road traveled along the east side of the 1914 white pine plantation, it was also useful for FDR's forestry operations (Figures 3.29 and 3.30).

### **Forestry Operations**

FDR continued his forestry activities near Val-Kill in 1930, supplementing the effort begun in 1914, though the plantations at Val-Kill represented a small component of a larger forestry effort throughout the Roosevelt estate.<sup>110</sup> As seen on a 1932 College of Forestry Map, FDR planted multiple experimental plantations along Creek Road and Violet Avenue on former Tompkins land, just southwest of Val-Kill, as well as many plantations between Violet Avenue and the Albany Post Road (Figure 3.31). He had a stand of tulip poplars planted south of the Stone Cottage in 1930 on former Tompkins land, and added northern white cedars, red oaks, and black walnuts to it a year later.<sup>111</sup> Another stand of northern white cedar, red oak, and black walnut was planted in 1931 abutting the

southwest side of the 1930 plantation.<sup>112</sup> FDR shifted from general forestry practices to more commercial crops throughout the estate in the early 1930s and the northern white cedars at Val-Kill were planted for sale as ornamental trees.<sup>113</sup> Both plantations were former pasture lands with limited undergrowth to hinder the planting of seedlings.

Russell Linaka, who supervised FDR's plantations beginning in 1939, described the process of planting the trees. His methods most likely mirrored those used in the early 1930s when some of the Val-Kill plantations were established. To prepare for planting, the workers cut and burned all the brush so the area was "just as smooth as the grass lawn," according to Linaka.<sup>114</sup> Laborers hand planted the trees on a grid pattern in early April, as many as 500- 540 per day by each worker.<sup>115</sup> Undergrowth in the stands was cut yearly for approximately four years until the seedlings became established.<sup>116</sup>

### **Refinements to the Val-Kill Landscape**

Several changes were made to the Val-Kill landscape in 1935 prompted by the construction of a new pool. After an employee's child drowned in the first pool, it was filled in and planning began for a new one on the flat terrace south of the Stone Cottage.<sup>117</sup> Sharing the expenses, FDR, Mrs. Roosevelt, and Cook financed the new pool, built by M.K. Hasbrouck.<sup>118</sup> The new rectangular, concrete pool was sited perpendicular to the Stone Cottage and was surrounded by flagstones with grass joints, rather than a continuous pool deck. They located the equipment room west of the pool, tucked into a hill so only the roof was visible from the pool terrace.

Unlike the first pool that was located directly adjacent to the road with no screening or delineated boundary, a staggered line of red pine trees was planted along the new road segment between the bridge and the Stone Cottage. The line of red pines visually separated the pool terrace from the driveway, creating an enclosed, private space. Directly after the pool's completion, the pool terrace landscape was uncomplicated, dominated by large shrubs at the Stone Cottage main door and clipped lawn abutting the building (Figure 3.32). A second bathhouse was built in 1935 to replace the first one that had been destroyed during the road relocation.<sup>119</sup> They located the second bathhouse in the woods southeast of the pool, connected by a stepping stone path.<sup>120</sup>

**1936-1945**

Throughout the mid 1930s, Mrs. Roosevelt's responsibilities increased with her role as First Lady. She traveled extensively on official business, assisting her husband with activities made difficult for him because of his disability. Subsequently, her visits to Val- Kill, while precious, were less frequent than when FDR served as governor of New York State. However, as full- time residents, Cook and Dickerman continued to devote substantial effort to site improvements. Cook implemented landscape changes between 1936 and 1945 that altered the overall character of the site.

**Changes to the Landscape After Val-Kill Industries**

By 1936, Val- Kill industries, which enjoyed expansion and prosperity in the early 1930s, suffered from the economic downturn of the Great Depression and shut its doors. Though at one time the shop employed eighteen workers engaged in multiple crafts, the endeavor proved unsustainable despite Mrs. Roosevelt's promotion and support.<sup>121</sup> Val- Kill Industries disbanded in May 1936 and components of the former business were leased to three of the craftsmen who continued producing crafts using the same promotional materials, and Val- Kill name.<sup>122</sup> Arnold Berge ran the forge from the converted and expanded garage behind the Val- Kill factory; Otto Berge operated a furniture factory from his barn in nearby East Park, while Nellie Johannsen continued the weaving operation in the original building devoted to the craft at the intersection of Route 9G and Creek Road.<sup>123</sup>

Life at Val- Kill changed with the dissolution of the women's joint business. To utilize the now vacant Factory, Mrs. Roosevelt converted the building into her living quarters, which became known as Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. The two former shop buildings were connected between 1936 and 1937 to create a large, rambling structure that included an apartment for her secretary, Malvina "Tommy" Thompson.<sup>124</sup>

Possibly in anticipation of Mrs. Roosevelt creating her own space in the converted shop building, Cook and Dickerman altered the Stone Cottage between 1936 and 1937. The implemented changes consisted of a dormer built on the north- facing second story and a one- story addition on the building's east side. At approximately the same time, Cook and Dickerman created a brick patio extending from the east side of the new addition.

The driveway system was altered again to accommodate changes to both buildings. The women reduced the size of the driveway circle and shifted it south to allow space for the new patio and lawn area. Several red pines planted in 1935

to screen the pool were transplanted to frame the new driveway. Mrs. Roosevelt wrote of the improvements in a March 20, 1936 *My Day* column:

*When I arrived at Hyde Park I had to go right out to see the lilac bushes budding, and the tulip leaves poking their heads through the mulch that is still over them. Then there was much excitement, for Miss Cook is adding a room to her cottage, changing the drive and moving some pine trees. We were very busy looking at the cellar and going to look at the little apartment [in the factory] for one of the workmen which is being done over.*<sup>125</sup>

Connection to Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage was retained as a modified loop road, the same configuration created in the 1920s. One of the packed earth driveway spurs traveled between the Stone Cottage driveway circle and Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage garage, and the other connected the entry road to the east-facing door of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, now considered the building's main door.

### **Nancy Cook's Landscape Plan at the Stone Cottage**

A period of substantial change occurred between 1936 and 1937, evidenced by the \$1,244 spent on outdoor improvements.<sup>126</sup> These included the driveway reconfiguration as well as many other changes that marked the beginning of the evolution of the site from an informal retreat to a more designed and conscientiously managed landscape. Nancy Cook took interest in developing a landscape plan for Val-Kill, specifically on the grounds surrounding the Stone Cottage that she and Dickerman alone shared as of 1937. She took pride in designing and redesigning the landscape many times, often performing the labor herself.<sup>127</sup>

After the Stone Cottage addition was complete, Nancy Cook redesigned the surrounding landscape to add decorative gardens and enclosed, private spaces. While her landscape design preferences reflected relaxed patterns of varied, layered plant material, her new designs represented a significant departure from the previous Val-Kill landscape treatment. Whereas lilacs, birches, cedars, and non-descript foundation plantings were used in the previous ten years, she now introduced seasonal color and many native and exotic species not formerly found on site. The gardens were visually and spatially linked using repeated plant material, similar fencing, and common design elements.

Cook created an irregular U shaped garden that wrapped around the south, east, and north sides of the Stone Cottage, bounded by a five-foot tall cedar paling fence. Along the building's south facade, the paling fence and dark green tops of the red pines planted in the driveway circle created a backdrop for a bed of flowering shrubs, climbing vines, annuals and perennials.<sup>128</sup> The varied plant palette included wisteria, clematis, silver lace vines, morning glories, boxwood,

spirea, dogwoods, mockorange, roses, salvia, phlox, petunias, zinnias, iris, and daylilies (Figure 3.33).<sup>129</sup> Cook created a defined, undulating edge between the narrow swath of grass and planting beds with a small, closely clipped boxwood hedge.

The curvilinear bed pattern continued east of the Stone Cottage, where a larger amount of open lawn was maintained (Figure 3.34). Similar patterns were repeated on the north side of the Stone Cottage, with a few exceptions. Though comparable plants were layered by height, the boxwood border hedge in this narrow space took on a rectilinear shape (Figure 3.35).

Within this garden on the south, east, and north sides of the Stone Cottage, Cook created a small inner garden adjacent to the new brick patio and Stone Cottage addition. The small space was bounded by a four-foot brick wall extending from the Stone Cottage south wall, a painted board fence to the east, and a three-sided wooden shade structure called the loggia to the north.<sup>130</sup> The loggia was a white, open structure on a brick base, supported by four rounded columns, up which roses climbed. Several louver doors, painted a dark contrasting color, opened to the east and north gardens. Cook planted ornamental beds along the brick wall and board fence and complemented the plant material with lawn furniture, statuary, a small goldfish pond, and a hammock to create a quiet, peaceful retreat (Figure 3.36).

Just north of the loggia through the louver doors, Cook laid out a flagstone path in the same configuration as the pool edging to connect the cottages (Figure 3.37). An evergreen hedge, possibly arborvitae, lined the back side of the paling fence, dividing the east garden from the path. Additional lilac shrubs were placed along the stone retaining wall that divided the cottages to supplement the existing shrubs planted circa 1927.<sup>131</sup>

Cook also extended her landscape plan to the west side of the cottage, facing the pond. Here she added new foundation plants including shrubs and annuals. The screened porch became a showcase for annual color and climbing vines. Silver fleece vine, azalea, and marigolds adorned the porch, which was a focal point for visitors approaching on the entry road.

Also in 1936, Cook designed a new landscape plan for the pool terrace. Central to the plan was a flagstone patio built along a portion of the west façade and the south side of the Stone Cottage. Cook and Dickerman placed potted plants and moveable garden furniture on the patio, which became an outdoor extension of the screened porch (Figure 3.38). Using the pool as a central feature, Cook planted shrub and perennial borders on the east and west sides of the terrace that included azaleas, phlox, and impatiens for seasonal color (Figure 3.39).<sup>132</sup> The pool was flanked by mowed lawn where a badminton net was occasionally

erected (Figure 3.40). The double line of red pine trees planted in 1936 screened the pool terrace from the entry road immediately to the south. Similar red pines planted around the Stone Cottage driveway circle punctuated the eastern edge of the pool terrace and created a continuous backdrop of color and texture.

Adjacent to the pool terrace, the main entry to the Stone Cottage was dominated by the red pines planted around the driveway circle and large lilac shrubs that Mrs. Roosevelt referred to so often in her writings. These two plants accompanied a few other- low growing foundation plants and climbing vines to frame the entry in a relaxed and pleasant, yet unremarkable design (Figure 3.41).

### **The Landscape of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage**

A much different landscape approach unfolded at Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. Mrs. Roosevelt preferred a simple planting scheme of foundation plants, loose, natural looking shrubs and spring bulbs that complemented her appreciation of the native landscape (Figure 3.42). The cottage environs appeared rustic and relaxed, with birch and cedar trees scattered throughout the lawn (Figure 3.43). Mrs. Roosevelt added seasonal bulbs and annuals to the low- maintenance planting scheme in the warm months, as recalled by Tubby Curnan, Mrs. Roosevelt's chauffeur, who planted tulips, daffodils, pansies, and lily- of- the- valley along the cottage foundation.<sup>133</sup> Climbing roses that Mrs. Roosevelt enjoyed so much also grew along the building. In 1938, she wrote, "I know nothing more exciting than coming back to the country after having been away for two or three weeks, and finding all of your plants and bushes growing so fast that you hardly recognize them. We have five new climbing rose bushes planted around the house and they have shot up a couple of feet since I was here last."<sup>134</sup>

Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage was accessed through a door at the northeast corner of the building. Vehicular circulation flowed through an elliptical turn- around near the door that was dominated by a large oak tree in the center. Petunias were often planted around the base of the tree in summer.<sup>135</sup>

During the mid- 1930s, a double row of Norway spruce trees was planted north of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage (Figure 3.44). Though documentation was not found about the specifics of their origin, it can be surmised that the trees visually screened the pond and wetland as well as acted as a windbreak from cold northern breezes. The trees appear recently planted in a circa 1938 photo taken of the area from the pond, helping date their installation (Figure 3.45).

The grounds west of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage were used frequently for summer gatherings due to the location of the outdoor fireplace, picnic area, swing set, and see- saw.<sup>136</sup> No formal planting beds or gardens were located nearby to disrupt recreational activities. Mrs. Roosevelt kept the area informal, with closely cut

grass maintained in the immediate building environs and longer grass near the picnic area and pond (Figure 3.46). Brush and wetland plants were kept cleared from the pond edge near her cottage, but long grass grew within the naturalized birch and cedar grove that characterized the area.

Major landscape improvements continued into 1937. They established a cutting garden east of the forge building to provide cut flowers throughout the spring and summer months. The large rectangular garden contained wood-edged raised planting beds running the width of the garden and was surrounded by an arborvitae hedge (Figure 3.47). The women planted Mrs. Roosevelt's favorite tea roses, as well as peonies, asters, zinnias, marigolds, lantana, and phlox.<sup>137</sup> Tubby Curnan remembered a wide trellis with climbing roses marking the garden entry near the forge in later years.<sup>138</sup> It is possible that this was constructed as part of the cutting garden in 1937 but no other documentation of the trellis has been discovered.

To stock the cutting garden, a greenhouse was constructed east of the forge in the birch grove where Nellie Johannsen formerly raised chickens (Figure 3.48). Charles Curnan remembered building the structure, which was a rectangular wooden building with a slanted, south facing roof. Marion Dickerman's records show that a hot frame with electric heat and a cold frame were constructed in 1937, presumably located near the greenhouse.<sup>139</sup>

### **Changes to the Larger Landscape and Pond**

Mrs. Roosevelt developed an interest in horseback riding and rode often over the Roosevelt estate, including in back of Val-Kill.<sup>140</sup> By the 1930s, she sought to have stables located closer to Val-Kill instead of at Springwood. Henry Toombs drew plans for a stable as early as 1934, only to have them put on hold for financial reasons.<sup>141</sup> Yet, in 1937 designer Henry Osthagen and contractor William Matthews brought Mrs. Roosevelt's dream to fruition by building a combined garage and horse stable in the woods east of the Stone Cottage.<sup>142</sup> They constructed a one and a half story, unpainted concrete block structure with a gable roof and located the horse paddock in a clearing northeast of the structure.

In 1935, Superintendent Plog supervised the construction of a road through the east woods of Val-Kill.<sup>143</sup> Neighbor Peter Rohan sold his farm located east of Val-Kill to FDR in 1935, who retained the property as a working farm. The new road, which branched from the Val-Kill entry road southeast of Stone Cottage and traveled through the woods and up some rather steep terrain, connected the Roosevelt properties, via the Val-Kill retreat. About the road construction, Mrs. Roosevelt wrote:

*At 8:00 I rode over to see how the new road was progressing. They hope to have this road clear enough and sufficiently built up so the President can get through in his little car to a point from which he can settle the direction to be followed for the last climb up a rather steep hill. Just as I reached the opening of the road I saw some one gesticulating wildly and shouting something I could not hear. I could not find a place to start my horse up the hill, which was fortunate, for suddenly there was a report like a gun and I realized that they were blasting out stumps on top.<sup>144</sup>*

In 1938, FDR coordinated construction of a retreat of his own called Top Cottage, an informal stone cottage in the woods on Dutchess Hill. The retreat straddled the Dumphy Farm and Lent and Briggs wood lots - properties adjacent to Val-Kill that FDR purchased in the 1930s. FDR accessed Top Cottage by expanding the 1935 woods road to the Rohan Farm that traveled past the Val-Kill cottages, reinforcing his presence and involvement at Val-Kill.

FDR continued to influence developments near the Val-Kill retreat, by directing the construction of an informal, two-track, packed earth loop road through the forest southeast of the cottages circa 1940.<sup>145</sup> The road departed and returned from a spur of the 1935 road to the Rohan Farm. He used the secluded road as a way to experience the more remote areas of his estate with the aid of his car, stopping often at a pond at the top of the hill, deep in the woods of the former Tompkins Farm.<sup>146</sup> Mrs. Roosevelt also used the loop road for recreational purposes. She made a habit of walking her dogs around the loop trail on a regular basis.

Mrs. Roosevelt loved her rides and walks through the Roosevelt estate, especially the woods of Val-Kill that were full of spring dogwood blooms.<sup>147</sup> She transplanted flowers including violets, Dutchmen's breeches, and jack-in-the-pulpits, to the Val-Kill woods to beautify the landscape.<sup>148</sup> Mrs. Roosevelt's love for the native landscape was also evident through her observations of the pond, marshland, and meadows on site. "The lovely purple loose-strife, which grows in marshy ground, is just beginning to come out. It makes the marsh adjoining our little pond a blaze of color, reflected in the water. I remember it all through the year as one of the most brilliant of nature's shows."<sup>149</sup>

The pond was enlarged again in 1937 to encompass the wetland upstream of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage.<sup>150</sup> The dredging created a large, roughly circular area of open water connected to the existing elliptical pond by a narrow neck. Mrs. Roosevelt wrote about enlarging the pond in a July 1938 *My Day* column:

*Even a little pond can give you all the joys of a large lake. Miss Cook has spent two years or more planting trout and bass in our brook, but when we came to*

*dig up the swamp and deepen the channel, we probably let most of these little fishes swim away!*<sup>151</sup>

Clear views became available across the pond where shrub and tree growth formerly stood in the way (Figure 3.49). A few mature weeping willows were left standing on the northwest bank, but most other vegetation was removed to create a well-defined shoreline on all sides (Figure 3.50).

Cook planted flowering shrubs such as azalea and rhododendron, and spring bulbs across the pond from the Stone Cottage near a rock outcropping.<sup>152</sup> Mrs. Roosevelt remembered Cook planting "masses of red and white phlox," to supplement the colorful display of spring, summer, and autumn foliage seen from the Stone Cottage.<sup>153</sup> These improvements opened pastoral views from the Stone Cottage toward the west farm fields and managed vegetation on the pond's opposite shore.

The women continued to augment the outdoor resources at Val-Kill with the construction of a wooden dock on the newly enlarged and defined pond in 1939.<sup>154</sup> This new feature, located on the east side of the bridge, provided better access to the pond than the wooden stairs that formerly led from the Stone Cottage lawn to the water (Figure 3.51). The women used the dock for sunbathing, boat launching, and boat storage.

Outside of the core area, the former Bennett property continued to function as a farm by Moses Smith. As established in the mid-1800s, structures were clustered on the west side of Route 9G and much of the surrounding land on both sides of the road was cleared of trees for grazing and crops (Figure 3.52). The large shade trees around Smith's farmhouse and a line of evergreens on the north side of the Val-Kill entry road represented the few trees on the west and central region of the old Bennett Farm.

Although the farm and Val-Kill functioned independently of one another, some interaction occurred. For example, FDR on at least one occasion asked Nancy Cook to attend to maintenance at the tenant house along the entry road.<sup>155</sup> As he was in Washington D.C. and often indisposed, FDR relied on those who were on site to assist in management of his estate lands. In another example, Mrs. Roosevelt described attempting to utilize Mr. Smith's rented farm land. "Another long ride this morning and negotiations with our neighbor, Mr. Moses Smith, who rents the nearby farm from my husband, for permission to put the horses out occasionally to pasture with his cows."<sup>156</sup> Additionally, Moses Smith and FDR made an agreement that Smith could cut trees on the property to make fence posts for use on the farm. However, on one occasion FDR balked at the arrangement and ordered Russell Linaka to stop Smith from cutting the trees that were possibly from his plantations. Linaka recalled a letter from FDR saying,

"For the love of Mike, Linaka, don't let Mo Smith cut any of my cedar trees down."<sup>157</sup>

The orchard stood on the border of Smith's working acreage and the Val- Kill retreat landscape. The three Val- Kill partners continued to maintain the orchard, replanting trees as necessary and expanding it slightly. A 1940 aerial photo of the area shows the orchard as a complete rectangle, without the forested area in the southeastern corner (Figure 3.53). Close examination of the photo displays an orderly grid of small trees that may have been replacements from the original 1931 planting.

Mrs. Roosevelt recognized that Val- Kill, set back from the main road, could be difficult for guests to locate. In the summer of 1940, she employed a local stonemason to erect two stone gateposts at Route 9G. "Our lane leading off from the main highway has always been unmarked, so now I am planning two low stone gateposts and some wrought iron letters from Mr. Denny's forge in Poughkeepsie, which should make it easier to identify the entrance to these cottages."<sup>158</sup> However, the posts were apparently placed too close together and Mrs. Roosevelt hit them with her car on several occasions. Charles Curnan removed them several years after they were installed.<sup>159</sup>

### **CONTINUED EVOLUTION OF THE LANDSCAPE**

Nancy Cook continued to refine the landscape of the Stone Cottage in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Additions to the space included a canvas awning over the pool terrace patio in 1938 and new garden configurations at the Stone Cottage entry and pool terrace east lawn. A white and yellow striped awning shaded the patio, making the space more comfortable in the heat of summer. Climbing vines were trained along the awning supports, adding color to the area adorned with flower borders and potted plants. The canvas awning was replaced by a wood awning in 1943.<sup>160</sup> A similar landscape treatment was engaged at the west side of the Stone Cottage, where silver fleece vines, potted annuals, and azaleas grew abundantly along the screened porch (Figure 3.54 and 3.55). By 1942, the west lawn of the Stone Cottage had been transformed into a manicured landscape, with a carefully tended lawn, flowers and shrubs at the Stone Cottage, and flagpole, hammock, and dock at the pond edge (Figure 3.56 and 3.57).<sup>161</sup>

At the Stone Cottage main entry, Cook altered the scheme to physically and visually connect the area with the redesigned pool terrace (Figure 3.58). Prior to her changes, the entry was dominated by large lilac shrubs and the red pines along the northeast side of the driveway circle. No connection existed between the pool terrace and the flagstone entry walk. She changed this to include a path between the two sub- areas, removing some of the large overgrown shrubbery,

enlarging the grass area, and planting seasonal flowers that complemented those of the pool terrace. New lilac shrubs and annual flowers marked the path between the pool terrace and the Stone Cottage entry, contrasting with the larger, informal evergreens and lilacs of the previous plan (Figure 3.59). Cook strengthened the separation between the Stone Cottage driveway circle and the pool terrace by enhancing the shrub and flower beds between them (Figure 3.60). Red pines at the driveway circle provided a green, feathery backdrop to the lower trimmed hedge and flower border. The sycamore tree that survived the Stone Cottage construction of 1925- 1926 flourished on the pool terrace east lawn, partially shading the area.

Cook continued to alter the formal gardens east of the Stone Cottage in the early 1940s. To facilitate maintenance of the now expanded gardens surrounding the building, an underground sprinkler system was installed in 1939.<sup>162</sup> Around the same time, the white board fence that encompassed the Stone Cottage walled garden was replaced by a more permanent brick wall.<sup>163</sup> The wall connected the southern- most side of the enclosure to the loggia, bowing into a graceful, concave half- circle at its middle (Figures 3.61 and 3.62).

A potting shed and tool shed were built behind the forge in the early 1940s to supplement the existing garden structures.<sup>164</sup> Mrs. Roosevelt added vegetables to the cutting garden, departing from the prior planting plan that featured only flowers. Writing in July 1940, Mrs. Roosevelt said, "We are very proud of our garden this year. The vegetables seem to be thriving with plenty of rain, even though the sun visits us fitfully and the weather is nearly like autumn than mid-summer."<sup>165</sup>

Just west of the cutting garden, the former forge building was converted to living space and renamed the Playhouse in 1941.<sup>166</sup> The adapted building now served as a picnic location in the event of rain, children's playroom, and a space for square- dancing.<sup>167</sup>

## **LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION IN 1945**

Life at Val- Kill continued largely uninterrupted during the years of World War II. While events of the war played a heavy role in the Roosevelt family, including FDR's stress as commander- in- chief and the military service of all of the Roosevelt sons, Mrs. Roosevelt continued to draw strength from her Val- Kill retreat. Val- Kill served as a central location where her friends and family gathered comfortably during uncertain times.

From 1924 to 1945, FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, and Marion Dickerman transformed the Val- Kill site from an infrequently used agricultural landscape to a consciously designed residential landscape. The site began as

pasture land dominated by native birch and cedar trees, grasses, and wetland vegetation and over the course of twenty years evolved into a country retreat with multiple buildings, a well- established circulation system, a manipulated water feature, and extensive gardens. While very different approaches to the landscape were engaged at the immediate environs of the Stone Cottage and Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, they shared common elements. The repetition of plant material, such as lilacs, cedars, red pines, roses, and annual flowers, throughout the site visually linked the discrete areas. The Stone Cottage had a highly developed landscape characterized by clipped lawn and planting beds with a variety of shrubs, trees, and flowers. Gardens surrounded all sides of the cottage, most notably at the south and east sides.

The landscape of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage was less formal and less maintenance intensive than at the Stone Cottage. Higher grass and native red cedars and birches were located throughout the area; typified by the fireplace and picnic area that were heavily used for seasonal entertaining. Though bounded by water on two sides, views to the pond were few from Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage due to the double row of Norway spruce trees and the many- low growing trees and shrubs.

A cutting garden east of the Playhouse provided a variety of cut flowers and vegetables for year- round consumption. This was surrounded by a tall arborvitae fence and several structures, including the greenhouse, potting shed, and tool shed, that supported the many gardens on site.

Dredged in 1937, the pond would have been largely open water in 1945. New growth taking root in the shallow water was cut below the surface and vegetation was cleared on both sides of the pond. Views across the pond to the northwest, formerly heavily vegetated with wetland growth, were also kept clear.

The landscape in 1945 represented what the Val- Kill retreat meant to Mrs. Roosevelt, Cook, and Dickerman. The three women invested in the site to create a private get away, a place for relaxation from their otherwise busy lives. While Val- Kill Industries temporarily created a dual purpose for the site, the area primarily remained as a country haven for the women and their friends and family. The sub- areas around Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage and the Stone Cottage characterized the specific preferences of their occupants; Mrs. Roosevelt favored a loose, natural landscape with bursts of seasonal color, while Cook, the avid gardener, created a more formal and extensive system of gardens and lawns. Importantly however, the site reflected the collective vision of the three friends who seized an opportunity to create an environment of their choosing on the bank of the Fall- Kill (Figures 3.63 and 3.64).

## Endnotes: 1924- 1945

- <sup>76</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 17 July 1936, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>77</sup> Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of Their Relationship, based on Eleanor Roosevelt's private papers*, 305, as cited in Louis Torres, "Historic Resource Study for Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York," National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Mid- Atlantic/North Atlantic Team, Branch of Historic Preservation, August 1980, 88, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>78</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 6 June 1938, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>79</sup> Lease between Franklin D. Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, Marion Dickerman, and Anna E. Roosevelt, 26 January 1926, FDR Papers, Family, Business, and Personal, Financial Matters, Val- Kill, 1924- 1926, Box 60, FDRL.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>81</sup> Torres, 80.
- <sup>82</sup> Torres, 33- 34.
- <sup>83</sup> Plog Memorandum Book, 28, as cited in Charles Snell, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and Forestry at Hyde Park, New York, 1911 to 1932," National Park Service, 20 May 1955, 26, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, citing a letter from FDR to Elliott Brown, 5 August 1924, FDR Collection, FDRL.
- <sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.
- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 57, citing letter from Plog to FDR, 13 August 1924, FDR Papers, FDRL.
- <sup>88</sup> Plog Memorandum book, 28, as cited in Snell, 27.
- <sup>89</sup> Torres, HRS, 58.
- <sup>90</sup> Clifford and Joan Smith Oral History, 12 December 1979, 13, ROVA archives, 1979.09.
- <sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 26- 27. By 1920, eighty- five percent of land in Dutchess County was devoted to agriculture, while ninety- five percent had been agricultural in 1880. Martha Bayne Collins, *Dutchess County Farmer* (Poughkeepsie, NY: The Women's City and Country Club and Vassar College, 1936), 31.
- <sup>92</sup> Torres, 11.
- <sup>93</sup> Torres, 51.
- <sup>94</sup> Barbara E. Pearson, "Historic Structure Report, Val- Kill Cottage (The Factory Building), Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," National Park Service, North Atlantic Historic Preservation Center, North Atlantic Region, National Park Service. September 1980, 2.
- <sup>95</sup> Correspondence with Franceska Macsali Urbin, Supervisory Park Ranger, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, 24 December 2003.
- <sup>96</sup> Pearson, "Historic Structure Report, Val- Kill Cottage (The Factory Building)," 3.
- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, citing an interview of Roy Johannesen, former Val- Kill Industry worker, to NPS employee Emily Wright, 1978.
- <sup>98</sup> Letter from FDR to Eleanor Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, and Marion Dickerman, 27 January 1928, FDR Papers, FDR Family Business, and Personal subject files, Financial Matters, Val- Kill 1924- 1926, Box 60, FDRL.
- <sup>99</sup> List of improvements to the property, Marion Dickerman Papers 1918- 1975, Val- Kill Founding and Dissolution 1924- 1947, Box 12 Folder 6. ROVA Archives.
- <sup>100</sup> Tubby Curnan Oral History, 4 May 1982, 19, ROVA Archives, 1982.01.
- <sup>101</sup> Tubby Curnan Oral History, 7.
- <sup>102</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 4 November 1979, 112, ROVA Archives 1979.08 and William A. Plog's Farm Ledger, November 1928- November 1932, as cited in Snell, 38- 39. Superintendent William Plog recorded planting the "apple orchard on Tompkins place" in April 1931.
- <sup>103</sup> This fence was seen in a clip from the Marion Dickerman films. ROVA Archives.
- <sup>104</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 112.
- <sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.
- <sup>106</sup> Marion Dickerman Papers 1918- 1975, Val- Kill Financial Statements and Lease: Val- Kill Cottage, Outside Improvements 1930- 1936. Box 12 Folder 5, FDRL.
- <sup>107</sup> Moses Smith Journal, 1932, FDR Papers, FDR Family, Business, and Personal Subject File, Hyde Park Matters: Roosevelt Estates, Tompkins Farm, FDRL.

- <sup>108</sup> Hackett Legal Papers, Box 26, Cook- Dickerman Folder, FDRL.
- <sup>109</sup> William A. Plog to FDR, 10 November 1933. FDR Papers, FDR Family, Business, and Personal subject files, Financial Matter, Val- Kill 1924- 1926, Box 60, FDRL.
- <sup>110</sup> The 1914 white pine plantation was thinned in 1931. NYSCF "Forestry Practice on the Roosevelt Farm," Brochure for a Society of American Foresters meeting, printed August 1931, Hoverter Memorial Archives, SUNY ESF.
- <sup>111</sup> John Auwaerter, Notes from "Land Use History Summary of the Roosevelt Estate Lands Between Routes 9 and 9- G, 5 November 2003.
- <sup>112</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>113</sup> Russell W. Linaka Oral History, 27 January 1949, 3, ROVA Archives 1949.03.
- <sup>114</sup> Russell W. Linaka Oral History, 3.
- <sup>115</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid, 5.
- <sup>117</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 35.
- <sup>118</sup> Louis Torres, "Historic Structure Report, Historical Data, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site." National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Mid-Atlantic/North Atlantic Team, Branch of Historic Preservation, 76.
- <sup>119</sup> Marion Dickerman Papers. Val- Kill financial Statements and Lease, Val- Kill Cottage Out- Side Improvements 1930- 1936, Box 12 Folder 5, FDRL.
- <sup>120</sup> Tubby Curnan Oral History, 4 May 1982, 19, ROVA Archives, 1982.01.
- <sup>121</sup> Torres, HRS, 96.
- <sup>122</sup> Torres, HRS, 135- 137.
- <sup>123</sup> Torres, HRS, 135.
- <sup>124</sup> Pearson, "Historic Structures Report for the Val- Kill Cottage (The Factory Building)," 4.
- <sup>125</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 20 March 1936, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>126</sup> Marion Dickerman Papers 1918- 1975, Val- Kill Financial Statements and Lease, Val- Kill Cottage New Construction and Furnishings, Out- side Work 1936- 1937, Box 12 Folder 5, FDRL.
- <sup>127</sup> Torres, HRS, 62.
- <sup>128</sup> Presumably during this time, a carriage light lantern was erected on a wood post to light the foot paths. The light is wrought iron with eight glass panels, roughly three feet tall, with a tapered octagonal shape and a button cap. The exact location is unknown at this time, yet further examination of historical photographs may yield results. The park is in possession of the lantern and further discussion should be given to this feature during the treatment phase of the cultural landscape report.
- <sup>129</sup> Kane and Carruth, "Comprehensive Report on Historic and Cultural Landscape, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," Pleasantville, NY, Draft May 1980, 7.
- <sup>130</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 82.
- <sup>131</sup> Ibid, 63.
- <sup>132</sup> Ibid, and Clifford and Joan Smith Oral History, 19.
- <sup>133</sup> Tubby Curnan Oral History, 1- 2.
- <sup>134</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 31 May 1938, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>135</sup> William Turner Levy, *The Extraordinary Mrs. R.: A Friend Remembers Mrs. Roosevelt* (New York: John Wiley, 1999), 9.
- <sup>136</sup> Sometime in the late 1930s Mrs. Roosevelt placed a metal relief statue of a young boy eating a hot dog over the outdoor fireplace. Charles Curnan remembered hanging it in approximately 1939. The swing set and see saw were placed in 1937. Barbara E. Pearson, "Historic Structures Report, Miscellaneous Structures, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," National Park Service, North Atlantic Historic Preservation Center, North Atlantic Region, 1980, 8.
- <sup>137</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 59 and Clifford and Joan Smith Oral History, 2.
- <sup>138</sup> Tubby Curnan Oral History, 24.
- <sup>139</sup> Marion Dickerman Papers 1918- 1975, Val- Kill Financial Statements and Lease, Val- Kill Cottage 1936, Box 12 Folder 5, FDRL.
- <sup>140</sup> John Roosevelt, Interviewed by Dr. Thomas F. Soapes at the FDRL, 8 December 1977, as cited in Torres, HRS, 6.
- <sup>141</sup> Torres, HRS, 68.

- <sup>142</sup> Barbara E. Pearson, "Historic Structures Report, Garage- Stable, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," National Park Service, North Atlantic Historic Preservation Center, North Atlantic Region, 1980.
- <sup>143</sup> FDR to William Plog, 7 November 1935. "I am delighted that Frank Draise and John DeGroff, Jr. have been working on the wood road east of the Val- Kill Cottage..." FDR Papers, Family, Business, and Personal, Financial Matters, Val- Kill 1924- 1926, Box 60, FDRL.
- <sup>144</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 13 August 1936, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>145</sup> Nelson Brown, "Memorandum of Forestry Program Winter and Spring, Season of 1940- 1941...", dated 24 September 1940, Brown Papers, FDRL, cited in John Auwearter's Historic Resource Study for Roosevelt Estate, draft February 2004.
- <sup>146</sup> Nelson Courtlandt Brown, Papers, 1930- 1951, "Personal Reminiscences of F. D. R.," (unpublished manuscript, c.1946), 30, Collection 75- 511, boxes 1 and 2, FDR Library, Hyde Park, New York.
- <sup>147</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 31 May 1943, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>148</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 126.
- <sup>149</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 21 June 1938, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>150</sup> Kane and Carruth, 7.
- <sup>151</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 8 July 1938, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>152</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 57.
- <sup>153</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 3 August 1943, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>154</sup> Marion Dickerman, Other Investments in the Property [Val- Kill], Hackett Legal Papers, Box 26 Folder Cook- Dickerman, FDRL.
- <sup>155</sup> Letter from FDR to Nancy Cook, 3 February 1933. FDR asked her to look after "Pete's house." The structure needed repairs but it was so dilapidated he couldn't justify devoting much money to it. He recommended spending about one hundred dollars on painting and cleaning to prepare it for renters. The house rented for five dollars a month. FDR Papers, Family, Business, and Personal Affairs, Hyde Park Matters, Box 31, FDRL
- <sup>156</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 6 June 1938, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>157</sup> Russell W. Linaka Oral History, 27 January 1949, 13, ROVA Archives 1949.03.
- <sup>158</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 5 July 1938, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>159</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 115.
- <sup>160</sup> Marion Dickerman, Original Investments in the Val- Kill Cottage, Hackett Legal Papers, Box 26, Folder Cook- Dickerman, FDRL.
- <sup>161</sup> Pearson, Barbara E., "Historic Structures Report, Miscellaneous Structures, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," 10.
- <sup>162</sup> Torres, HRS, 62, citing correspondence between Nancy Cook and Henry Hackett in 1962.
- <sup>163</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 65.
- <sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.
- <sup>165</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 5 July 1940, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>166</sup> Pearson, Barbara, "Historic Structures Report, The Playhouse, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," 4, National Park Service, North Atlantic Historic Preservation Center, North Atlantic Region, 1981, citing receipt of 25 June 1941 from William Matthews.
- <sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 3.1. A 1925 photo looking southwest from the Stone Cottage site after brush clearing of the area was complete. Notice the stone wall in the background that separated the Bennett and Tompkins Farms. FDRL 48 22 4039 (6).



Figure 3.2. A 1925 photo looking northeast across the Fall-Kill towards the Stone Cottage construction site. Notice the improved bridge with a new plank deck and the cleared creek banks. FDRL 48 22 4039 (2).



Figure 3.3. A 1925 photo of the newly completed pool located southwest of the still incomplete Stone Cottage. Notice the driveway behind the pool, connecting the bridge and Stone Cottage. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 827. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.4. Stacking the foundation of the Stone Cottage, 1925. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 776. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.5. Henry Toombs, Henry Clinton, Marion Dickerman, and George Van Aken discussing plans for the Stone Cottage, 1925. The stones that they sat on were used in the construction of the cottage. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 774. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.6. Stone Cottage under construction in 1926. Areas north of the cottage remained undisturbed, witnessed by the birch and cedar trees in the foreground. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 779. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.7. Stone Cottage as seen from the south in 1926. Notice the stumps in the foreground and cleared landscape. Only a sycamore tree remained in the vicinity of the house. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 780. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.8. Stone Cottage, 1926. The stone retaining wall can be seen north of the Stone Cottage, or image left. A large elm tree and the line of lilacs at the stone wall dominate the landscape plantings. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 755. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.9. The Fall-Kill remained a wetland with a narrow channel north of the Stone Cottage in 1926. Newly planted cedar trees can be seen south of the house. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 778. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.10. Mary Drier, Molly Goodwin, and Marion Dickerman canoeing on the Fall-Kill, circa 1927. Notice the wetland vegetation emerging from the surface of the water. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 740. ROVA Archives.



Cultural  
Landscape  
Report for  
Eleanor  
Roosevelt NHS

1926 Period  
Plan

Figure 3.11



National Park Service  
Olmsted Center for  
Landscape Preservation  
99 Warren Street  
Brookline, MA 02445

SOURCES

1. Eleanor Roosevelt NHS Survey, April 2004
2. Historic and contemporary maps and photographs

LEGEND



0 50 100 200

- Contour
- Tree/Shrub
- Building/structure
- Water
- Wetland
- Meadow
- Former Pasture
- Road/Path



Cultural  
Landscape  
Report for  
Eleanor  
Roosevelt NHS

1926 Period  
Plan  
Enlargement

Figure 3.12

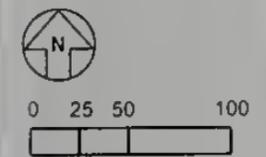


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SOURCES

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LEGEND



- Contour
- Tree/Shrub
- Building/structure
- Water
- Wetland
- Meadow
- Former Pasture
- Road/Path





Figure 3.13. Informal landscape treatment surrounding the Factory, 1930. Cedar and birch trees are scattered across the lawn and lilacs, clematis, and other foundation plants line the building. FDRL 55 430.



Figure 3.14. Nellie Johannsen in the turkey pen located east of the Factory, circa 1930. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 1118. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.15. Stone Cottage and pool seen from the southwest, circa 1929. Notice the growth of many informal shrubs and trees near the cottage. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 756. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.16. Pool and bridge, circa 1928. The photo displays the layout of the pool and entry road. The driveway in the foreground illustrates the sharp turn of the driveway as it curved around the pool to meet the Stone Cottage east door, outside of image frame to the right. Cook-Dickerman Collection, Negative Collection. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.17. Marion Dickerman standing in a bed of cosmos, southeast of the Stone Cottage, circa 1928. This photo documents the stone path that led from the driveway, past the south side of the Stone Cottage, and to the pool. Cook-Dickerman Collection, Negative Collection. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.18. The pool, 1932. The bathhouse can be seen in the background, tucked into the edge of the woods behind the pool. It appears to have had a peaked cedar roof. Cook-Dickerman, 817. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.19. Outdoor picnic, 1934. The picnic fireplace was located next to a cluster of cedar trees that blocked views to the pond nearby. Notice the unclipped lawn and informal character of the area. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 1224. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.20. Ernest Lindley and Marion Dickerman, 1934. The picnic fireplace was closely surrounded on the north side by cedar trees. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 811. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.21. Stone Cottage and pool, circa 1927. Shrubs were planted on the slope between the pool and Stone Cottage. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 822. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.22. The pool, 1932. Notice the diving board and rings apparatus at the pool. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 899. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.23. Badminton Court, circa 1934. The badminton court was located south of the Stone Cottage and east of the pool. It was erected between the cedar and birch trees on the flat lawn. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 914. ROVA Archives.

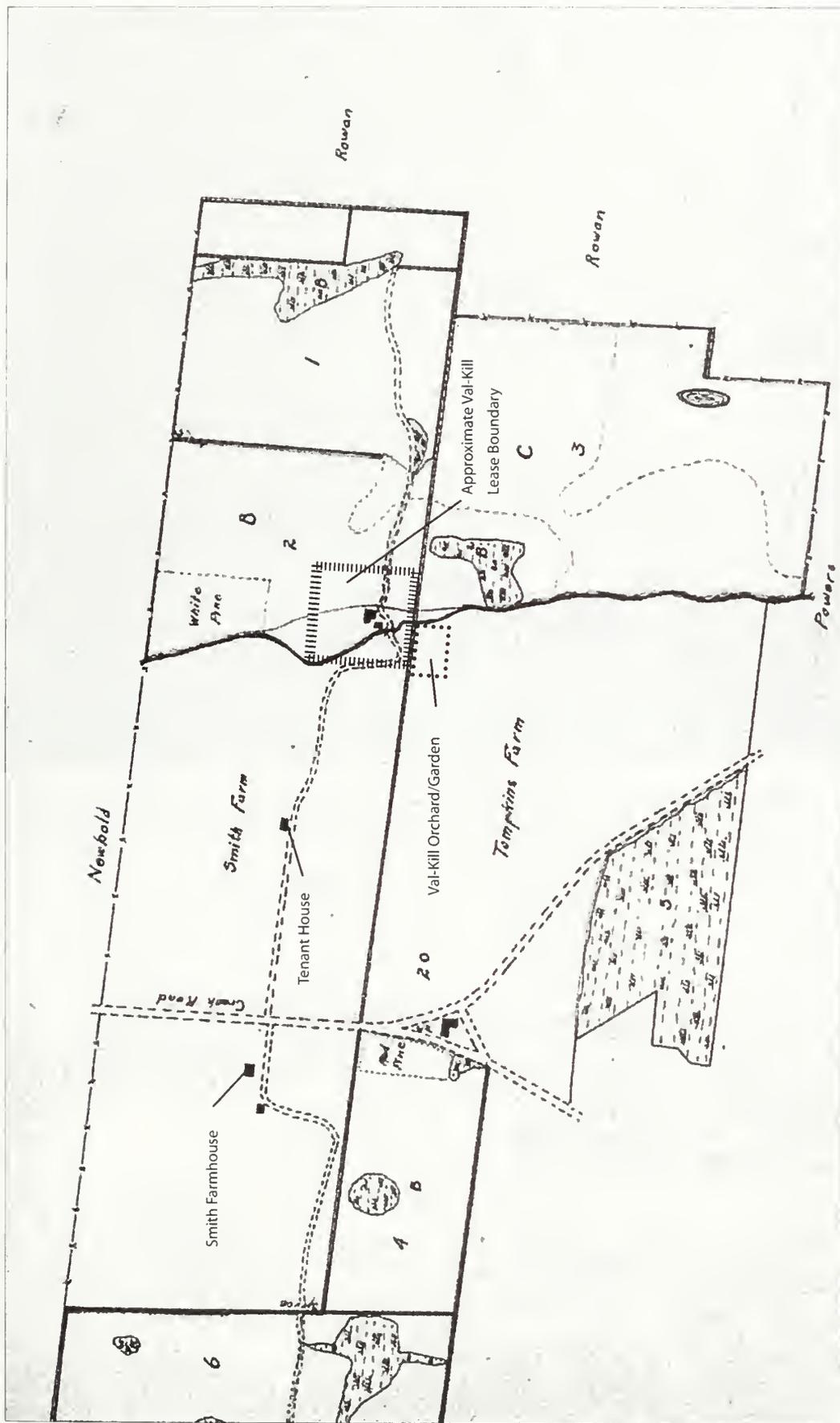


Figure 3.24. 1931 map of the former Bennett Farm, then known as the Smith Farm. The orchard was planted southwest of Val-Kill on the west side of the creek on former Tompkins land. Compartment Map of Kromelbooge Woods, August 1931, Map 3. FDRL.



Figure 3.25. Enlargement of the 1936 aerial photo of Val-Kill. The orchard appears as a white shape at the bottom of the image. Notice that at this time it was almost rectangular with a cut-out in the bottom right corner. ROVA park files.



Figure 3.26. Val-Kill pond and Stone Cottage, circa 1927. This image displays the rapid growth of vegetation in the creek. Cook-Dickerman Collection, Negative Collection. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.27. Nancy Cook in a row boat, circa 1927, looking north from the bridge. Substantial wetland growth crowds the channel. Cook-Dickerman Collection, Negative Collection. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.28. The updated bridge, circa 1935. A new deck and a low wooden railing were installed. Cook-Dickerman, 842. ROVA Archives.

Cultural  
Landscape  
Report for  
Eleanor  
Roosevelt NHS

1935 Period  
Plan

Figure 3.29

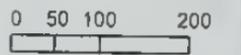


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SOURCES

1. Eleanor Roosevelt NHS Survey, April 2004
2. Historic and contemporary maps and photographs

LEGEND



- Contour
- Tree/Shrub
- Building/structure
- Water
- Wetland
- Meadow
- Former Pasture
- Road/Path



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Report for  
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Roosevelt NHS

1935 Period  
Plan  
Enlargement

Figure 3.30



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LEGEND



- Contour
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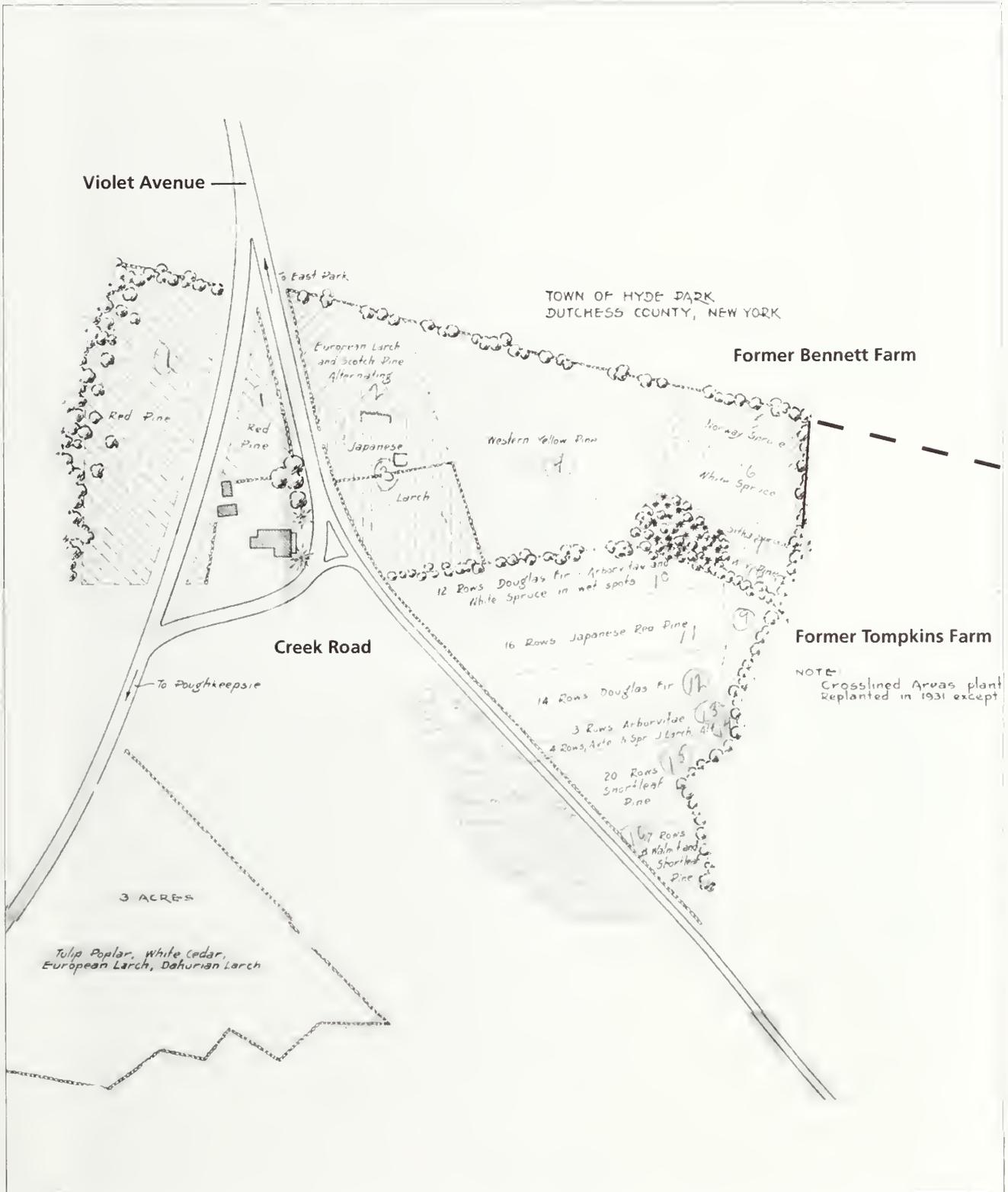


Figure 3.31. Detail of the "Plantations on the Estate of Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt, Established by the New York State College of Forestry, Syracuse, NY," 1932. The plantations shown were on the former Tompkins Farm just south of the Bennett Farm. FDRL.

Figure 3.32. The new pool looking north towards the Stone Cottage, 1935. The newly constructed pool was surrounded by a flagstone walkway. Cook-Dickerman Collection, Negative Collection. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.33. Formal gardens along the south side of the Stone Cottage addition, 1939. The cottage main door lies behind the fence in the middle ground. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 829. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.34. Formal gardens east of the Stone Cottage, circa 1939. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 790. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.35. Planting beds on the north side of the Stone Cottage. Photo by Clifford M. Smith, courtesy of Richard R. Cain.



Figure 3.36. Enclosed garden and loggia east of the Stone Cottage, circa 1940. Notice the white board fence behind the shrubs and garden statuary. Photo by Clifford M. Smith, courtesy of Richard R. Cain.



Figure 3.37. Shirley Temple (center) at Val-Kill with Sistine and Buzzie Dall and two unidentified adults, 1938. This photo highlights the north side of the loggia and the connection between the Stone Cottage and Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. Photo by Clifford M. Smith, courtesy of Richard R. Cain.



Figure 3.38. Pool terrace patio, circa 1936. Outdoor furniture and potted plants decorated the outdoor room. Notice the Stone Cottage covered in climbing vines. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 830. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.39. Flower beds on the pool terrace, circa 1938. Taken from the diving board looking west, the shrub border and low boxwood hedge form a linear edge to the west side of the pool terrace. Cook-Dickerman Collection, as seen in Torres, Historic Structure Report, Historical Data, p. 99.



Figure 3.40. Pool and terrace, looking south, circa 1939. Notice the red pine screen behind the pool. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 810. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.41. Stone Cottage main entry, circa 1938. Large lilac shrubs, loose foundation plants, and climbing vines created an informal approach to the cottage. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 1135. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.42. South side of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, 1936. Long grass, scattered cedar trees, and informal foundation plantings characterized the area. FDRL 72 168 3.



Figure 3.43. West side of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, 1937. Few formal plantings existed at the building's foundation or within the lawn. FDRL 60 226 2.



Figure 3.44. Norway spruce tree line north of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, circa 1940. Notice the uniform white pine plantation in the background. FDRL 51 88 1159.



Figure 3.45. Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage as seen from the pond, circa 1938. This photo, taken from a boat in the pond, shows the line of recently planted Norway spruce trees at image left and the scattered trees on the lawn surrounding Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. This image also shows the extent of open water that existed after the dredging project of 1936. Photo by Clifford M. Smith, courtesy of Richard R. Cain.



Figure 3.46. The lawn of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, 1938. Notice the grass is cut short near the house and is kept longer on the perimeter. FDRL 61 32 7.



Figure 3.47. Cutting garden with the tool shed in the background, circa 1942. Notice the wood-edged raised planting beds and perimeter hedge. FDRL 59 181 (a).



Figure 3.48. Greenhouse, circa 1940. The greenhouse was located north of the cutting garden. Nancy Cook partially supported her gardens with plants grown here. Photo by Clifford M. Smith, courtesy of Richard R. Cain.



Figure 3.49. Val-Kill pond in winter as seen from the Stone Cottage west lawn, circa 1938. Marion Dickerman and her dog Dean stand on the wood stairs that led from the lawn to the pond. Notice the expansive views available to the west side of the pond. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 1114. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.50. Val-Kill pond, looking northwest, 1940. Notice the expanse of open water, cleared banks, and views across the pond. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 803. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.51. Val-Kill bridge, dock, and Stone Cottage, circa 1942. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 747. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.52. A 1947 aerial photograph of Val-Kill. Moses Smith farmed land flanking both sides of Route 9G. Most agricultural activities, including the farm house and livestock barns, were clustered on the west side of the road (image left). Tenants rented the house along the Val-Kill entry road. ROVA park files.



Figure 3.53. A 1947 aerial photo of Val-Kill. Close examination of the orchard shows that small trees were planted in an orderly grid. Many of them were presumably replacements from the original 1931 planting. ROVA park files.



Figure 3.54. Stone Cottage screened porch, circa 1941. Silver fleece vine, azaleas, and potted annuals decorated the west-facing porch. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 1134. ROVA Archives.

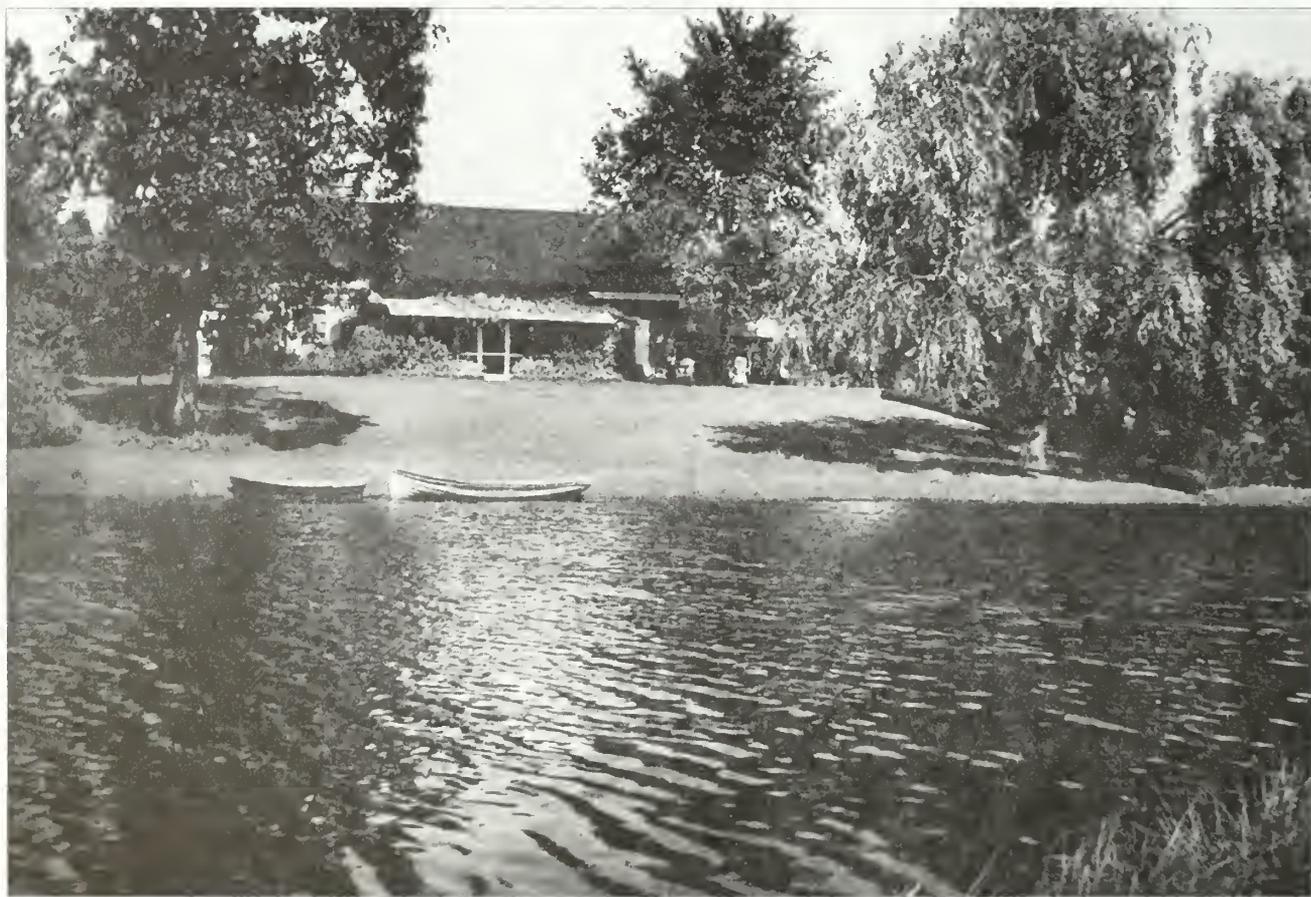


Figure 3.55. Stone Cottage and Val-Kill pond in summer, circa 1938. Graceful elms and weeping willows shade the west lawn. Cook-Dickerman Collection, as seen in Torres, Historic Structures Report, Historical Data, p 95.



Figure 3.56. Stone Cottage viewed from the west, circa 1942. The flowers planted by Nancy Cook on the west bank of the pond are visible in this image, as well as the 1939 dock. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 1099. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.57. Val-Kill pond, circa 1940. Taken from the dock looking north, this photo shows the clipped lawn and mature shade trees that characterized the Val-Kill landscape. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 840. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.58. Stone Cottage and pool in summer, 1942. Nancy Cook's landscape plan that included flowering shrubs, annuals, and perennials can be seen in this image. The redesigned gardens near the Stone Cottage main door are visible at image right. FDRL 47 96 3828.



Figure 3.59. Pool terrace patio as seen from the Stone Cottage main door, circa 1942. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 746. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.60. Pool terrace garden, circa 1942. Notice the formal, rectilinear gardens east of the pool, outside of frame at image right. FDRL, as appearing in Torres, Historic Structures Report, Historical Data, p 98.



Figure 3.61. Stone Cottage enclosed garden, circa 1942. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 745. ROVA Archives.



Figure 3.62. Outdoor fireplace built into the brick wall of the Stone Cottage enclosed garden, circa 1942. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 744. ROVA Archives.

Cultural Landscape Report for Eleanor Roosevelt NHS

1945 Period Plan

Figure 3.63

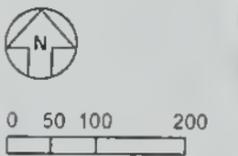


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SOURCES

1. Eleanor Roosevelt NHS Survey, April 2004
2. Historic and contemporary maps and photographs

LEGEND



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- Building/structure
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- Wetland
- Meadow
- Former Pasture
- Road/Path



Cultural  
Landscape  
Report for  
Eleanor  
Roosevelt NHS

1945 Period  
Plan  
Enlargement

Figure 3.64

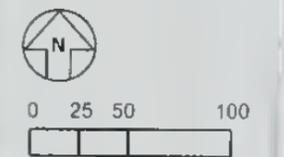


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## VAL-KILL AS ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S HOME,

1945-1962

*Along the edge of the road for long stretches there are clumps of delicate fern-like growth with a little orange colored flower almost like a tiny slipper. Then there is the golden rod and blue and white cornflowers which grow in such profusion through the fields at this season. Finally I saw part of an old log which had been left to rot at the edge of the road. . . . It was covered with the most beautiful fungus just the color of the little orange lizards that go slithering across the road when they hear anyone coming. How grateful we should be who have eyes to see!*

*Eleanor Roosevelt, 12 September 1945<sup>168</sup>*

### INTRODUCTION

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the 32nd President of the United States and legal owner of Val- Kill died on April 12, 1945. As stipulated in his will, Springwood was deeded to the federal government for inclusion in the National Park system, after Mrs. Roosevelt waived her lifetime occupancy rights to the home. Though she retained her apartment in New York City, Mrs. Roosevelt now made Val- Kill her permanent home, spending as much time in the country as her commitments allowed. Writing in 1952, Mrs. Roosevelt reiterated her love for the beauty and peace of Val- Kill, explaining her attachment to the place:

*I hated to leave the country on yesterday morning. The dogwood tree, which reaches up to my bedroom window was just bursting into bloom. . . . I picked daffodils and narcissus to my heart's content, filled bowls in the house with them and brought some down to New York City, and all were lovely.<sup>169</sup>*

By the mid- 1940s Mrs. Roosevelt was recognized as a notable public figure in her own right. After FDR's death she continued to be active in the Democratic Party, maintaining a busy schedule of speaking engagements, and serving as the United States representative to the United Nations between 1945 and 1953. Mrs. Roosevelt continued to use Val- Kill as a retreat from her public life and often invited others to share in the calm of the surroundings. She hosted foreign dignitaries and her United Nations colleagues at Val- Kill along with the frequent presence of her children and grandchildren.

Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman, the women who created Val- Kill with Mrs. Roosevelt, left the site in 1947. This shift in residency stimulated changes in the way the site was used and managed. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Mrs. Roosevelt kept an active schedule and delegated many of the management decisions for Val- Kill and several other parcels of FDR's estate that she purchased in the late 1940s to her family and employees. Mrs. Roosevelt's son Elliott accompanied her in the permanent move to Hyde Park in 1945, taking up residence at FDR's Top Cottage, east of Val- Kill atop Dutchess Hill.<sup>170</sup> Elliott took on the responsibility of looking after the unsettled estate lands, tenant farmers, and various employees, relieving his mother of this burden.<sup>171</sup> She wrote, "I will be very glad to have you [Elliott] here to supervise some of the men on the place. They are getting me down and I can not keep track of what everybody ought to be doing and I know I am not doing the right thing."<sup>172</sup> Both Elliott and his brother John assisted her in running the property during their non-concurrent residences at Val- Kill and Top Cottage, altering the character of the landscape to reflect the current needs and tastes of Val- Kill's residents.

### **FRIENDSHIPS COOL**

Signs of rifts in the relationship between Mrs. Roosevelt and Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook emerged as early as 1936. Kenneth Davis, author of *Invincible Summer: An Intimate Portrait of the Roosevelts Based on the Recollections of Marion Dickerman*, asserted that tension arose with the dissolution of the Val- Kill Industries.<sup>173</sup> This event marked a shift in the nature of the three women's relationship, as Mrs. Roosevelt then spent a considerable amount of time away from the Stone Cottage, residing in the converted Factory building that was large enough to accommodate her many friends and family members. Other hypotheses have been proposed about the true nature of the disagreement, yet, whatever the origins, conflict certainly strained the friendships through the early and mid- 1940s as Mrs. Roosevelt spent large proportions of her time attending to her many tasks as First Lady and as the president's close advisor.

Evidenced in 1944, Cook became frustrated with Mrs. Roosevelt's frequent entertaining:

*I do not see the necessity for grown- ups to play games on the lawn since it invariably means rough playing and the throwing of things in the beds thereby breaking the flowers and shrubs that I have nursed for years. It also troubled me to have the dog dig up the flowers in the borders.*<sup>174</sup>

Cook also mentioned that although she did not use the pool much, she was still part owner. Apparently Mrs. Roosevelt's pool parties that took place directly outside of the Stone Cottage exacerbated the tension between her and Cook and Dickerman.

To contain the dog Fala, and resolve Cook's discontent about her vulnerable gardens, Mrs. Roosevelt enclosed the land around her cottage with wire fencing used from Fala's old pen. Yet, this did not work, for Fala simply entered the pond to get around the edge of the fence.<sup>175</sup> Mrs. Roosevelt later built a run on the lawn of her cottage.<sup>176</sup>

When FDR died and Elliott moved to Top Cottage, Dickerman and Cook felt that the Roosevelt presence at Val- Kill became overpowering. Dickerman remembered, "When Elliott came into the place, it became more difficult. . . . One day Nan and I looked up and said, 'When will we go?'"<sup>177</sup> She even claimed that Elliott used to have parties at night right underneath their windows.<sup>178</sup> Whereas Val- Kill used to be a collective retreat for the three women and their common friends, by the mid- 1940s Mrs. Roosevelt dominated use of the site with her many family parties and frequent guests. Writing of the incident some years later, Mrs. Roosevelt said, "I am afraid the many children we have with us in the summer were too much for their peace and quiet."<sup>179</sup>

Cook and Dickerman decided to leave Val- Kill in the summer of 1947, entering an agreement with Mrs. Roosevelt to sell their interest in the property for \$17,500.<sup>180</sup> With their departure, so left much of the energy and knowledge that created the Val- Kill landscape. They removed plant material and fences from the Stone Cottage gardens that they had purchased independently of Mrs. Roosevelt, including yews, azaleas, euonymous, viburnum, perennials, asparagus, raspberries, and strawberries.<sup>181</sup> They also removed the statue from the enclosed patio and the boat- saw used to cut plants below the level of the pond.<sup>182</sup> While they promised to leave the area "attractive," the missing features presumably detracted from the landscape's cohesive design.<sup>183</sup>

### **SETTLING FDR'S ESTATE**

After FDR's death, the Roosevelt estate that included 1,283 acres stretching from the Hudson River to Dutchess Hill, including the Val- Kill retreat, Top Cottage, and numerous working farms, ceased to be managed as a cohesive unit. While Mrs. Roosevelt inherited FDR's income from the estate, a trust comprised of their son John Roosevelt and lawyers Basil O'Connor and Henry T. Hackett became responsible for selling the estate lands for the highest profit.<sup>184</sup>

Settling FDR's estate proved to be a long and complicated task occupying approximately three years.<sup>185</sup> The estate trust sought to divide the estate into smaller tracts for easier sale and consequently did not renew the leases of the numerous tenant farmers, including Moses Smith of the Bennett Farm and Harry Johannsen of the Tompkins farm.<sup>186</sup> However, trust member Henry Hackett involved Mrs. Roosevelt's secretary, Malvina Thompson, to inform her that he didn't wish to remove the tenants from their properties until the will reached

probate court.<sup>187</sup> Initially, all tenants were given the choice to remain as tenants-at-will after their leases expired if the properties had not been sold.<sup>188</sup>

In response to this interpretation of how to settle the estate, Mrs. Roosevelt leased ten properties from the estate to continue running them as they were prior to FDR's death. The Bennett, Tompkins, Dumphy, Rohan, and Hughson farms, which surrounded the Val-Kill retreat were included, as well as Top Cottage, the Briggs Wood Lot, the Jones land, and the Wright land (Figure 4.1).<sup>189</sup> She later leased the Bracken Farm as well, adding 298 acres to her leased properties.<sup>190</sup> After leasing the above properties, she wrote to the estate trust wishing to be offered the first chance to buy any lands east of the Albany Post Road, or Route 9.<sup>191</sup> She later refined her request, and expressed interest in purchasing all former estate lands east of Violet Avenue, or Route 9G.<sup>192</sup> Mrs. Roosevelt planned to reinvest any future profits back into the estate to keep it running as a working farm.<sup>193</sup>

Mrs. Roosevelt discussed her views about the estate at length in a May 1945 *My Day* column:

*The results of the years during which my husband bought woodland and planted trees are now beginning to show. While trees are never a spectacularly profitable crop, they certainly are an interesting one, and I think ours should begin to produce some more adequate returns. During the last years of my mother-in-law's life, she never wanted my husband to interfere in any way with her running of the place and the farm: she wished to run it just as her husband had run it. It was to be a gentleman's county place, not a farm run for profit!*

*I have never felt in any way interested in a country place just as a country place. I feel that land should produce. . . . The custom which existed for a time in this country, of having large places which cost a great deal of money and produced nothing beyond what one family used on their table, has always seemed to me a very wasteful tradition, and I am glad that it is rapidly disappearing.<sup>194</sup>*

Despite Mrs. Roosevelt's ambition to run a commercial farm, a 1946 assessment of the estate did not bode well for immediate profitability. The Fulton Trust Company sent an assessor to the estate to determine the extent and condition of the resources. After traveling around the "home farm," or property across Route 9 from Springwood, and the two other rented farms on the estate the assessor concluded that "it will cost a considerable amount of money to put into shape all of the farm buildings, as well as the houses which are rented to tenants. . . . The entire property is very much in need of a lot of work done on it."<sup>195</sup> He went on to say that the Christmas tree operation looked neglected and would need several men working for a few years to return it to working order.<sup>196</sup> In response, the

Fulton Trust Company recommended that Mrs. Roosevelt employ a farming expert to return it to profitability.

The Fulton Trust Company's assessment was mirrored by Mrs. Roosevelt as well. Just prior to the assessor's visit, she and her son Elliott walked the estate:

*Yesterday Elliott took me out at a quarter before seven with an old friend of ours whose advice we are always anxious to obtain. We looked over the old barns and realized anew that when a farm has not been kept up for a number of years there is bound to be a great deal of work to do when you start out to rehabilitate it.*<sup>197</sup>

Mrs. Roosevelt purchased 842 acres of the former estate in July 1947 to keep them from being sold outside the family.<sup>198</sup> Her purchase consisted of most of FDR's former estate lands lying east of the Mariches Creek, including the Bennett and Tompkins farms (See Figure 4.1). She and Elliott formed a company called Val-Kill Farms and planned to run a commercial agricultural operation on the newly acquired acreage. Mrs. Roosevelt described the venture in an August 1947 *My Day* column:

*Last week I acquired from my husband's estate about two-thirds of the land which he owned here in Hyde Park. My son Elliott and I have gone into partnership and we are going to farm the land on a commercial basis. . . . My husband and I used to talk of doing this some day and of making our land useful to the other farmers in the vicinity by trying out certain experiments. Whether that is possible I have no idea, but Elliott and I feel strongly that one should not own land unless it produces.*<sup>199</sup>

One month after purchasing the land, Mrs. Roosevelt sold the 842 acres to Elliott, retaining a life tenancy for the Val-Kill cottages.<sup>200</sup> Mrs. Roosevelt sold Elliott the Tompkins, Bennett, Dumphy, Hughson, and Rohan farms, the Jones and Wright lands, the Briggs and Lent wood lots, and the east end of the Boreel farm for one dollar, ending her short ownership of the estate lands, including Val-Kill.<sup>201</sup>

#### **OPERATION OF VAL-KILL FARMS**

Beginning in 1946- 1947 Mrs. Roosevelt and Elliott focused their energy on the fledgling Val-Kill Farms. They ran the partnership equally until December 31, 1948, when seventy-five percent of the company reverted to Elliott with Mrs. Roosevelt retaining a twenty-five percent interest.<sup>202</sup> Val-Kill Farms utilized much of the existing agricultural and forestry infrastructure of the former estate. They focused on the Christmas trees planted at FDR's direction, a pig farm on the Rohan property, and dairy cows, and laying hens at the Bennett farm.<sup>203</sup> Mrs. Roosevelt wrote of visiting the various farm operations:

*I visited all the new-born calves. Little Guernsey calves are very lovely. . . . Up on top of the hill there are many little families of pigs. And though I can't be as interested in the chickens, they too, are rather cunning as they emerge from their shells and fluff into little balls.*<sup>204</sup>

While most effort was devoted to raising livestock, some crops were grown. Val-Kill Farms cultivated hay, corn, oats, and wheat in the front field of the former Bennett Farm, along Route 9G.<sup>205</sup>

While Elliott and his farm manager, H.A. Hutchinson, ran the agricultural operations, Mrs. Roosevelt served as a key promoter. She embraced her role in the relationship as she had with Val-Kill Industries of the late 1920s and early 1930s. She frequently referenced the farm in her daily *My Day* columns and reportedly brought Val-Kill hams to the King of England and the Queen of the Netherlands during a European visit.<sup>206</sup>

Val-Kill Farms capitalized on the forestry work begun by FDR decades earlier. In 1948, Elliott purchased 60,000 Christmas tree saplings of varied species to supplement the existing trees. Many were planted on the Val-Kill property, as noted in correspondence between Elliott and Nelson Brown, the New York State College of Forestry professor who helped FDR establish his experimental tree plantations, and continued to be employed on a limited basis by Val-Kill Farms to offer forestry expertise.<sup>207</sup> Elliott wrote, "I am clearing approximately 20 areas to make way for these plantings in the wooded area which you and I drove over on the loop road on the south end of the place."<sup>208</sup> He most likely was speaking about areas on the old Tompkins Farm, south of the developed area of Val-Kill. However, most of the plantings were done on land east of the Val-Kill property. Elliott reported to the *Poughkeepsie New Yorker* in 1948 that Val-Kill Farms grew approximately 450,000 Christmas trees, of which they harvested 50,000 a year.<sup>209</sup>

Signs of Elliott's mismanagement of the farm became evident through his handling of the Christmas tree operation. He made deals with Grand Union grocery store to purchase trees from Val-Kill Farms and when the contract fell through, thousands of trees, already cut and loaded on trucks, had to be burned.<sup>210</sup> Another unsuccessful forestry effort of Val-Kill Farms was a short-lived plan beginning in 1947 to sell small potted trees as souvenirs. Elliott planted several thousand seedlings in the Val-Kill orchard and only sold a few hundred.<sup>211</sup> The rest languished in the orchard from neglect. It is not known when they were removed.

Other operations at the farm proved unprofitable as well, yet Mrs. Roosevelt remained hopeful. In 1950, she wrote to her *My Day* readers, "I hope some day we will have a really first-class dairy."<sup>212</sup> Despite her eagerness, Elliott and his farm manager continued to make poor decisions like purchasing cattle

unaccustomed to the cold winters that consequently did not thrive.<sup>213</sup> This and other failures caused Elliott to lose enthusiasm for the whole venture. By 1951, he began to sell portions of the farm for profit. He sold tracts to family friends like Joseph and Trudy Lash as well as to real estate developers who ceased farming operations to build residential houses.<sup>214</sup>

### **THE VAL-KILL RETREAT AFTER VAL-KILL FARMS**

Elliott moved from Top Cottage in 1951 as Val- Kill Farms dissolved. John Roosevelt resumed the overseeing responsibilities that Elliott once held. He looked after site maintenance and supervised staff a year after moving into the Stone Cottage.<sup>215</sup> Mrs. Roosevelt appreciated having assistance with these tasks and wrote about the complexities of running the expansive property. "There is so much work to be done at this season, however, that my youngest son, John, who has the responsibility of running the place here, finds it difficult to realize from week to week what are the needs. He thinks he has everything planned and then he finds something more that has to be done."<sup>216</sup>

### **Landscape Changes at the Val-Kill Cottages**

Around the grounds of the Val- Kill cottages, changes occurred both consciously and inadvertently with the change in residents. Maintenance of landscape features such as the Stone Cottage gardens and the pond waned as other recreational features were introduced.

John Roosevelt made additions to the Stone Cottage in 1951 to suit the needs of his family. He added a dormer on the west side of the roof and a laundry room at the east side of the house. There is no evidence that the walled garden was affected by the additions to the Stone Cottage and as late as 1950 Mrs. Roosevelt continued to maintain and use the space. For in June 1950, Mrs. Roosevelt placed a statue made by her niece at the small goldfish pond and added new fish to the small pond.<sup>217</sup>

To accommodate her many guests and grandchildren, Mrs. Roosevelt added a blacktop tennis court, backstop fence, and badminton court, to the lawn in front of her cottage in 1950.<sup>218</sup> Mrs. Roosevelt had a children's playhouse, known as the Doll House, moved from Springwood to Val- Kill in 1945 before the government began managing the mansion. The structure was originally built at the direction of Sara Roosevelt for her great- grandchildren and Mrs. Roosevelt kept it for their use.<sup>219</sup> It was placed near the outdoor fireplace on the lawn east of Mrs. Roosevelt's cottage.

The lawn west of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage retained its informal character despite the addition of the new recreational features (Figures 4.2, 4.3, 4.4). An excerpt from Mrs. Roosevelt's 1961 autobiography describes the flurry of activity that occurred at Val-Kill in the 1940s and 1950s and the outdoor features that made it possible:

*My picnic ground is a large one and in summers it is used perhaps once or twice a week by some school or social group and, if I am there, I always try to stop by to speak to them for a few minutes. . . . There is a pool where they can swim, a tennis court, a stream full of water lilies and a boat, and plenty of room for walking over the countryside.<sup>220</sup>*

Though Mrs. Roosevelt was not as avid a gardener as Cook, she loved bulbs, flowers, and flowering shrubs and played an active role in beautifying the landscape. She read seed catalogues, requesting Charles Curnan to purchase and plant her old favorites as well as new varieties.<sup>221</sup> Grape hyacinth, snow drops, and roses comprised part of her favorite plant palette.<sup>222</sup> As she wrote in 1948:

*The azaleas came to me last autumn from Dr. Herman Baruch's nurseries and somehow I didn't expect that they would bloom so luxuriantly this spring. When I went out and walked around yesterday morning they were an unbelievably lovely splash of color against the gray stone of the house and the dark evergreen hedge.<sup>223</sup>*

Mrs. Roosevelt supplemented the flowers already around her cottage in 1955 when she ordered an additional \$123.50 worth of spring bulbs.<sup>224</sup> Additionally, Tubby Curnan remembered transplanting peonies and lilac whips from the nearby Vanderbilt mansion to the Val-Kill landscape at Mrs. Roosevelt's request, illustrating how Mrs. Roosevelt continued to alter the landscape after Cook and Dickerman left Val-Kill.<sup>225</sup>

The cutting garden behind the Playhouse, once lovingly cared for, also changed after Cook and Dickerman's departure. Though the garden was still utilized, it was not maintained with the same rigor.<sup>226</sup> The vegetables added circa 1940 now comprised a large portion of the garden. In 1946 Mrs. Roosevelt wrote, "We are planting a big garden this year to give us all the vegetables we need this summer and to let us put away a great deal in our deep freeze for the next winter."<sup>227</sup> Yet, maintenance of the vegetable garden declined further by the late 1950s and early 1960s. As Mrs. Roosevelt entered her 70s, she had less energy for outside improvements and the gardens that once bore fruit and vegetables were largely neglected, only producing harvests from perennial plants, including raspberries, strawberries, and asparagus.<sup>228</sup> With fewer flowers for cutting and transplanting, the potting shed built in the 1940s was converted into a dog kennel.<sup>229</sup>

Around the Stone Cottage, the once abundant flower borders were moderately maintained, but without the skilled eye of Nancy Cook the gardens lost some brilliance. Photographs show evidence of this gradual decline south of the Stone Cottage, like the shrubs surrounding the pool terrace and Stone Cottage main entry that lost their characteristic neat and orderly shape (Figure 4.5 and 4.6). Little is known about the gardens west, east, and north of the Stone Cottage in the 1950s, yet knowing that Cook and Dickerman removed sections of fencing and plant material upon their 1947 departure, it is probable that the formerly cohesive gardens were then exposed and easier to fragment. The gardens likely deteriorated due to a conscious effort to convert the area to grass or just experienced a gradual decline from benign neglect. Further decline of the former ornamental landscape of the Stone Cottage occurred circa 1960 when the wooden loggia that created the northern boundary of the Stone Cottage walled garden was removed after it had begun to rot. It was replaced with a cinder-block wall that lacked the charm and elegant character of the carefully styled loggia.

In contrast to the effort to reduce maintenance throughout much of the property, a rectangular flower garden enclosed with a post and wire fence was added near Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage in approximately 1960. John Roosevelt built the garden east of the tennis court, on the site of the old badminton court so Mrs. Roosevelt could see flowers from her upstairs sleeping porch. Charles Curnan planted zinnias, dahlias, peonies, and several varieties of Mrs. Roosevelt's favorite roses in the new garden.<sup>230</sup>

#### **Changes to the Pond and the Larger Landscape**

By the 1950s the pond had not been dredged for almost twenty years. In place of larger interventions to control the growth of wetland vegetation, Mrs. Roosevelt's staff "mowed" the pond once a year. Tubby Curnan remembered towing sickle bars behind a small motor boat to manage the growth.<sup>231</sup> Though mowing and copper sulfate were sometimes used, the latter of which inadvertently killed the fish, wetland vegetation grew quickly in the shallow, slow moving water.<sup>232</sup> As early as 1943, just six years after the dredging, Mrs. Roosevelt noticed the wetland growth encroaching on the open water near her cottage. "My friend, Miss Cook, who has great taste with flowers, has planted masses of red and white phlox, which reflect the water around her pond, a bit of water which is far clearer than the water we see from our porch."<sup>233</sup> Charles Curnan remembered planting water lilies at Mrs. Roosevelt's request, only to remove them a few years later because they multiplied so quickly.<sup>234</sup> These effects are visible in period photos that depict increasing vegetation on the shoreline and surface of the water (Figures 4.7, 4.8, 4.9).

After the canvas awning over the pool terrace patio was replaced with a wood awning around 1943, Charles Curnan used the extra pipe supports to create new railings for the bridge (Figure 4.10). Curnan recalled that the metal railings lasted for approximately ten years before the wooden planks that supported them collapsed as neighborhood children fished off of the bridge.<sup>235</sup> He replaced them with high wooden rails, contrasting with the low wood railing of previous years.

Outside of the immediate area surrounding the Val- Kill cottages, no marked changes occurred in the management of the Val- Kill landscape. The east portion of the former Bennett property continued to operate as a commercial farm, leaving the fields adjacent to Route 9G largely cleared of forest growth and devoted to agricultural purposes. FDR's plantations on the Val- Kill property had grown to maturity by the 1950s. Though they were no longer actively managed as a forestry operation, Mrs. Roosevelt valued the Val- Kill stands for their intrinsic scenic qualities, passing the white cedar, Scots pine, tulip poplar, red oak, and black walnut stands on her daily walks around the loop road. She especially enjoyed the 1914 white pine plantation north of her cottage, where tall trees formed a dark green backdrop to the north side of the pond, creating an intriguing space underneath, dominated by the columnar, uniform tree trunks and high canopy. She wrote of it fondly in a September 1946 *My Day* column:

*This pine plantation, which we can see from the cottage, was planted many years ago by my husband. It has now become a dark and mysterious wood, with a floor of pine needles thick beneath the branches. It has an atmosphere in which the children can play Indians or any other mysterious game and really feel that they are miles away from civilization.*<sup>236</sup>

Mrs. Roosevelt and John valued the forest resources of the site and maintained the woodlands around the cottages. "My son, John, has done a great deal of clearing through parts of the woods near the house this winter, and that will allow the trees that remain a much better opportunity for growth."<sup>237</sup> One impetus for the forest thinning was to clear enough undergrowth to pasture sheep. John and Charles Curnan kept sheep on the property, sheltering them in a barn near the old tenant house and grazing them in the front fields and in the woods south of the Stone Cottage.<sup>238</sup> There is evidence that the Roosevelts maintained the orchard through the 1950s as well. Aerial photography from 1960 shows a fairly strong and continuous grid of large and small trees, suggesting that aged trees were routinely replaced to keep the orchard productive (Figure 4.11).

The roads at Val- Kill including the entry road and driveways near the cottages remained packed earth and were oiled once a year to control dust and potholes.<sup>239</sup> Along the entry road, the tenant house remained occupied, at times by Charles Curnan and his family. Curnan explained that multiple people rented the house and immediate grounds, including many Roosevelt employees.<sup>240</sup> When Curnan

lived at Val- Kill he kept chickens, turkeys, pheasants, pigs, sheep, and cows for his family's consumption.<sup>241</sup> The animal enclosures were located in the proximity of the house in the low- lying areas west of the pond.

Suburban development of the Hyde Park area began to change the local landscape toward the middle of the 1900s. Decreasing farm profitability and increasing property values made the subdivision of rural land attractive for local land owners and large scale developers. Mrs. Roosevelt forecast the trend as early as 1939, writing, "I was struck by the number of new small houses which have sprung up around us. Before we know it, this is going to be a real suburban development."<sup>242</sup> Former Roosevelt estate lands, including portions of the Tompkins and Rohan Farms that sold after FDR's death and after the dissolution of Val- Kill Farms, became prime parcels for residential development. Beginning in the mid to late- 1950s, new neighborhoods began to spring up at Val- Kill's southwest, north, and northeast boundaries. Indeed, some of these neighbors built a small dam along the Fall- Kill at the southeast boundary of the property around 1955 to create a small pond area. Additionally, a development east of Val- Kill blocked the woods road between Val- Kill and Top Cottage by 1960, altering the historic connection between these features of the former Roosevelt estate.

To meet the increased demand for electrical service, Central Hudson Electric Corporation (Central Hudson) constructed a new power line between Pleasant Valley and Rhinebeck around 1955, cutting through the Val- Kill property several hundred yards east of the cottages.<sup>243</sup> The power lines ran north- south through the forested eastern area of the site, turning approximately ninety degrees at the northeast extent of the site and traveled west along the northern boundary (Figure 4.12). Central Hudson maintained a 100- 150 foot right- of- way under the lines and cleared a noticeable swath through the eastern woods (Figure 4.13).

Mrs. Roosevelt died on November 7, 1962. Before she was laid next to her husband in the rose garden at Springwood, one last gathering occurred at Val- Kill on her behalf. Her body was brought to Val- Kill for a reception for family members, friends, and visiting dignitaries including President John F. Kennedy, Vice President Lyndon Johnson, and former presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and Harry Truman.<sup>244</sup>

#### **LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION IN 1962**

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, Mrs. Roosevelt left most property management decisions to her son John who maintained the site to suit the straightforward needs and preferences of his mother and his family. Into her old age, Mrs. Roosevelt always retained her love for the beauty and calm of the diverse landscape of Val- Kill, taking the most pleasure from the natural elements of the

site, including the cultivated west fields, the pond and wetland that blazed with seasonal color and interesting wildlife, and the native forests east of her cottage.

At the time of Mrs. Roosevelt's death, Val- Kill changed considerably from when she shared the site with Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman in the 1940s. Mrs. Roosevelt and her son John relaxed the maintenance regime and elements that required frequent upkeep, like the Stone Cottage gardens and cutting garden, lost their defining character. The Stone Cottage landscape changed to resemble the uncomplicated and natural style that always characterized Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. The south, east, and north gardens of the Stone Cottage, once carefully designed and tended by Nancy Cook, declined due to the removal plant material and fencing in 1947 and reduced maintenance in subsequent years. Few shrubs existed along the building's foundation and the once profuse wisteria was removed from the north-facing façade (Figure 4.14).

Siltation continued to alter the character of the pond, providing shallow water for wetland plants to flourish. This process accelerated when underwater plants were cut less frequently with the boat mower. John maintained the east shoreline of the pond in front of the cottages, yet wetland plants grew abundantly on the opposite shores, notably the upstream portion of the pond.<sup>245</sup>

The site's land use changed appreciably as well. Cook and Dickerman designed the Stone Cottage grounds largely for relaxation and passive recreation. When Mrs. Roosevelt's family came into residence, children were a constant presence, swimming in the pool and pond, playing on the lawn, and utilizing the see-saw and swing set. The later addition of the tennis court, badminton court, and Doll House contributed to the collection of recreational features. The lawn west of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage retained its informal character, though the grass was kept short to provide access to the recreational features. Where only a small part of the lawn was used in previous years, a larger percentage was actively used for recreation by 1962.

The trend toward creating a less maintenance intensive landscape began after Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman left Val- Kill and continued during the last years of Mrs. Roosevelt's life. John remained at Val- Kill after his mother's death, keeping the retreat in the family for several more years, and continued to alter the land use and landscape character of the site (Figures 4.15 and 4.16).

## Endnotes: 1945- 1962

- <sup>168</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 12 September 1945, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>169</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 30 April 1952, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>170</sup> Hackett Legal Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Real Estate and Legal Papers, Hilltop Cottage. FDR - US Gov't Agencies, Local Taxes, Box 19 FDR Estate, Folder: Elliott Roosevelt, Hilltop Cottage, Rent Control, FDRL.
- <sup>171</sup> Louis Torres, "Historic Resource Study for Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York," National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Mid-Atlantic/North Atlantic Team, Branch of Historic Preservation, August 1980, 160.
- <sup>172</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, cited in Torres, HRS, 160.
- <sup>173</sup> Kenneth Davis, *Invincible Summer*, 143- 157, as cited in Torres, HRS, 139.
- <sup>174</sup> Nancy Cook to Eleanor Roosevelt, 4 July 1944, Eleanor Roosevelt Collection, FDRL, as cited in Torres, HRS, 153.
- <sup>175</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 17 May 1945, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>176</sup> Irene Reiterman Sandifer, *Mrs. Roosevelt As We Knew Her* (Silver Spring, MD: Sandifer, 1975), 18.
- <sup>177</sup> Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor: The Years Alone* (New York: Norton, 1972), 173.
- <sup>178</sup> Marion Dickerman Oral History 2- 3 May 1981, ROVA Archives 1981.04.
- <sup>179</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt to Henry Toombs, 10 June 1949, Henry Toombs Collection, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta Georgia, as cited in Torres, HRS, 154.
- <sup>180</sup> Agreement between Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, and Marion Dickerman, 25 August 1947, Hackett Legal Papers, Box 26, Folder: Cook, Dickerman, FDRL
- <sup>181</sup> Agreement between Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, and Marion Dickerman, 25 August 1947, Schedule "A," Hackett Legal Papers, Box 26, Folder: Cook, Dickerman, FDRL
- <sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>183</sup> Letter from Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook to Henry Hackett, 8 July 1948. Dave Hayes, ROVA Combined Resources Manager files, "Deeds." Marion Dickerman told Hackett that they would leave the grounds attractive even though they planned on removing plant material.
- <sup>184</sup> Torres, HRS, 161.
- <sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>186</sup> Summary of Leases Prepared by the Estate, Hackett Legal Papers, Box 20, FDR Estate, Folder "Leases, Berge, Rohan, Smith," FDRL.
- <sup>187</sup> Letter from Henry Hackett to Malvina Thompson, 26 June 1945, Hackett Legal Papers, Box 26, Folder: Mrs. F. D. Roosevelt, FDRL.
- <sup>188</sup> Summary of Leases Prepared by the Estate, Hackett Legal Papers, Box 20, FDR Estate, Folder "Leases, Berge, Rohan, Smith," FDRL.
- <sup>189</sup> Agreement between Eleanor Roosevelt and executors of FDR's estate, March 1945, O'Connor and Farber Papers, Box 13, Folder: Estate- Val- Kill, agreements with Eleanor Roosevelt, FDRL.
- <sup>190</sup> Agreement between Eleanor Roosevelt and FDR's estate trust, 1 April 1946. O'Connor and Faber Papers, Box 13 Folder: Estate- Val- Kill, Agreements with Eleanor Roosevelt, FDRL.
- <sup>191</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt to the estate trust executors, James Roosevelt, Basil O'Connor, and Henry T. Hackett, 3 May 1946, O'Connor and Faber Papers, Box 13, Folder: Estate- Val- Kill, Agreements with Eleanor Roosevelt, FDRL.
- <sup>192</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt to Mr. Koons, 15 May 1946, O'Connor and Faber Papers, Box 13, Folder: Estate- Val- Kill, Agreements with Eleanor Roosevelt, FDRL.
- <sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>194</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 1 August 1945, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>195</sup> B. A. Kennedy to Mr. Morris of the Fulton Trust Company, 9 May 1946, O'Connor and Faber Papers, Box 13, Folder: Estate- Val- Kill, Agreements with Eleanor Roosevelt, FDRL.
- <sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>197</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 10 April 1945, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.

- <sup>198</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 19 August 1947, *My Day*, ROVA Archives, and "Elliott Roosevelt Outlines Five- year Program for Development of Val- Kill Farms Enterprises," 8 April 1948, *Poughkeepsie New Yorker*, O'Connor and Faber Papers, Box 9, FDRL.
- <sup>199</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 19 August 1947, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>200</sup> Memo: Re Set- up of Partnership between Mrs. Anna Eleanor Roosevelt and Mr. Elliott Roosevelt to operate Val- Kill Farms, O'Connor and Faber Papers, FDR Estate, Box 10, Folder: Estate, Hyde Park Contract with Elliott Roosevelt for sale of East Tract, FDRL.
- <sup>201</sup> Deed of 15 August 1947 between Anna Eleanor Roosevelt and Elliott Roosevelt. Liber 669, Page 410, Dutchess County Records, Dave Hayes, ROVA Combined Resources Manager files, "Deeds."
- <sup>202</sup> Harry V. Welch to Eleanor Roosevelt and Elliott Roosevelt, 23 September 1947. O'Connor and Faber Papers, Box 13, Folder: Estate- Val- Kill, Agreements with Eleanor Roosevelt, FDRL.
- <sup>203</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 4 November 1979, ROVA Archives 1979.08 and "Elliott Roosevelt Outlines Five- year Program for Development of Val- Kill Farms Enterprises," 8 April 1948, *Poughkeepsie New Yorker*, O'Connor and Faber Papers, Box 9, FDRL.
- <sup>204</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 23 March 1949, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>205</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 113.
- <sup>206</sup> "Elliott Roosevelt Outlines Five- year Program for Development of Val- Kill Farms Enterprise," *Poughkeepsie New Yorker*, 8 April 1948, O'Connor and Faber Papers, Box 9, FDRL.
- <sup>207</sup> Nelson Brown to Elliott Roosevelt, 17 March 1948, Nelson Brown collection, FDRL.
- <sup>208</sup> Elliott Roosevelt to Nelson Brown, 12 March 1948.
- <sup>209</sup> "Elliott Roosevelt Outlines Five- year Program for Development of Val- Kill Farms Enterprise," *Poughkeepsie New Yorker*, 8 April 1948, O'Connor and Faber Papers, Box 9, FDRL.
- <sup>210</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 28.
- <sup>211</sup> Russell W. Linaka Oral History, 27 January 1949, 9, ROVA Archives, 1949.03.
- <sup>212</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 21 March 1950, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>213</sup> George Brown interview, 17 April 2003.
- <sup>214</sup> Elliott sold a parcel of his land to Joseph and Trudy Lash, 1 November 1951, Liber 791 page 136. He then sold another parcel to William H. Kay, Jr., 24 June 1952, Liber 807 Page 238, Dave Hayes, ROVA Combined Resources Manager files, "Deeds."
- <sup>215</sup> Torres, HRS, 157.
- <sup>216</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 24 March 1953, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>217</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 3 June 1950, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>218</sup> Barbara E. Pearson, "Historic Structures Report, Miscellaneous Structures, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," National Park Service, North Atlantic Historic Preservation Center, North Atlantic Region, 1981, 6.
- <sup>219</sup> Barbara E. Pearson, "Historic Structures Report, The Doll House, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," National Park Service, North Atlantic Historic Preservation Center, North Atlantic Region, 1981, 2.
- <sup>220</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, as cited in [www.cr.nps.gov/NR.twhp/cirriculumkit/lessons/Roosevelt/6facts1/htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/NR.twhp/cirriculumkit/lessons/Roosevelt/6facts1/htm)
- <sup>221</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 121.
- <sup>222</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>223</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 3 May 1948, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>224</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt to G.W.T. Gori, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, 1933- 1962, Box 4863- Miscellaneous Business Matters re: Hyde Park Cottage, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>225</sup> Tubby Curnan Oral History, 18, August 1978, ROVA Archives, 1978.04.
- <sup>226</sup> George Brown Interview, 17 March 2003.
- <sup>227</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 10 April 1946, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>228</sup> George Brown interview, 17 March 2003.
- <sup>229</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 104.
- <sup>230</sup> Ibid., 4.
- <sup>231</sup> Tubby Curnan Oral History, 25.
- <sup>232</sup> Interview with George Brown, 17 April 2003.

- <sup>233</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 3 August 1943, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>234</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 125.
- <sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>236</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 7 September 1946, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>237</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 9 March 1954, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>238</sup> George Brown interview, 17 March 2003.
- <sup>239</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 135.
- <sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.
- <sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.
- <sup>242</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 11 July 1939, *My Day*, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>243</sup> OCLP correspondence with William F. Cotting, New Business Services Supervisor, Mid- Hudson Division, Central Hudson Gas and Electric Corporation, 9 July 2003.
- <sup>244</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 37.
- <sup>245</sup> George Brown Interview, 17 March 2003.

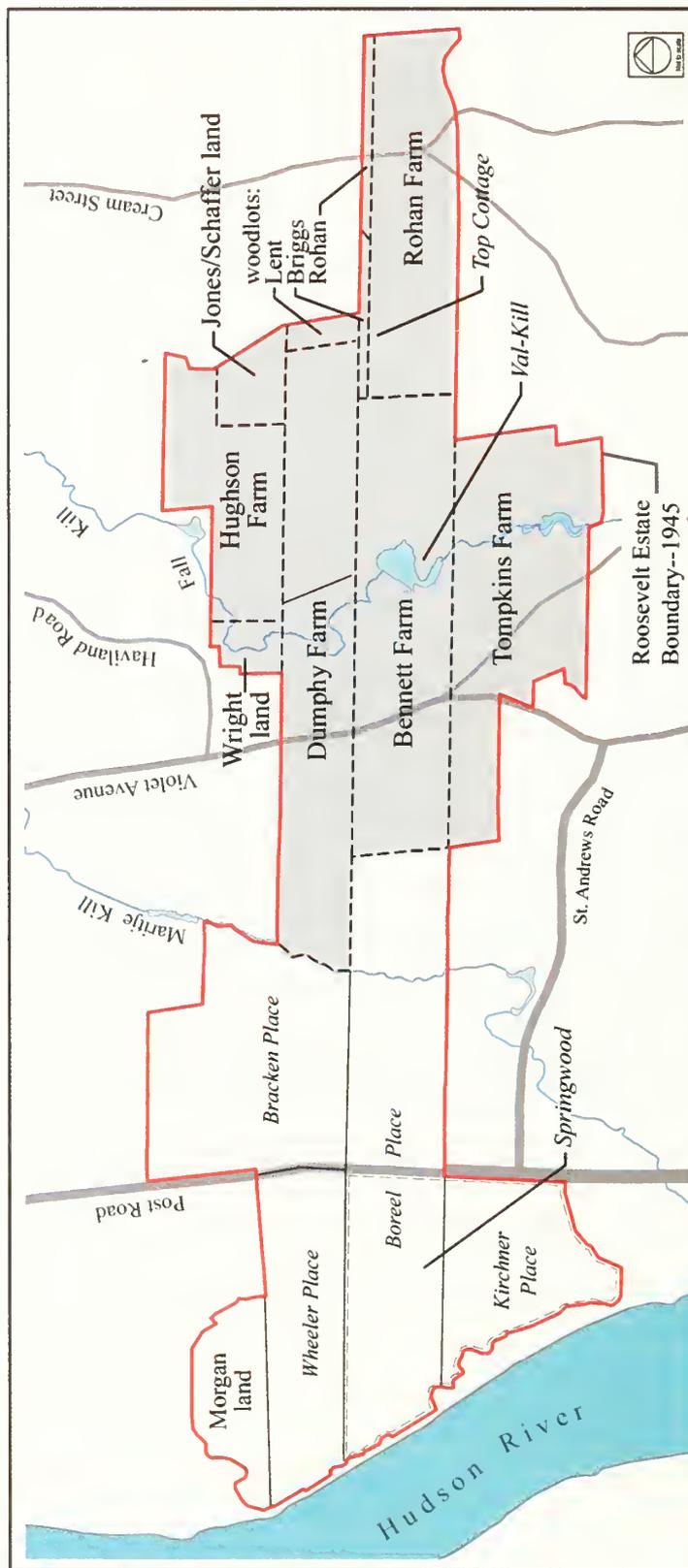


Figure 4.1. Roosevelt estate map, 1945. The properties Mrs. Roosevelt rented from FDR's estate trust in 1945 and later purchased are shaded gray. The 1945 Roosevelt estate boundary is outlined in red. Not to scale. Drawn by John Auwerter, SUNY ESF, 2003, manipulated by OCLP.



Figure 4.2. Pond and lawn west of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, circa 1952. This image shows the swing set, a floating dock in the pond, and the vegetation that grew in the water and along the shores of the pond. FDRL 77 25 (8).



Figure 4.3. Circa 1952 photo taken from the west side of the pond, looking east towards Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. FDRL 917 15.



Figure 4.4. Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, circa 1952. Informal plantings characterized the area. FDRL 62 172.



Figure 4.5. Nancy Cook on the pool terrace patio, circa 1944. The flowering shrubs east of the pool appear clipped and well maintained, in contrast to later years. Cook-Dickerman Collection, 1140. ROVA Archives.

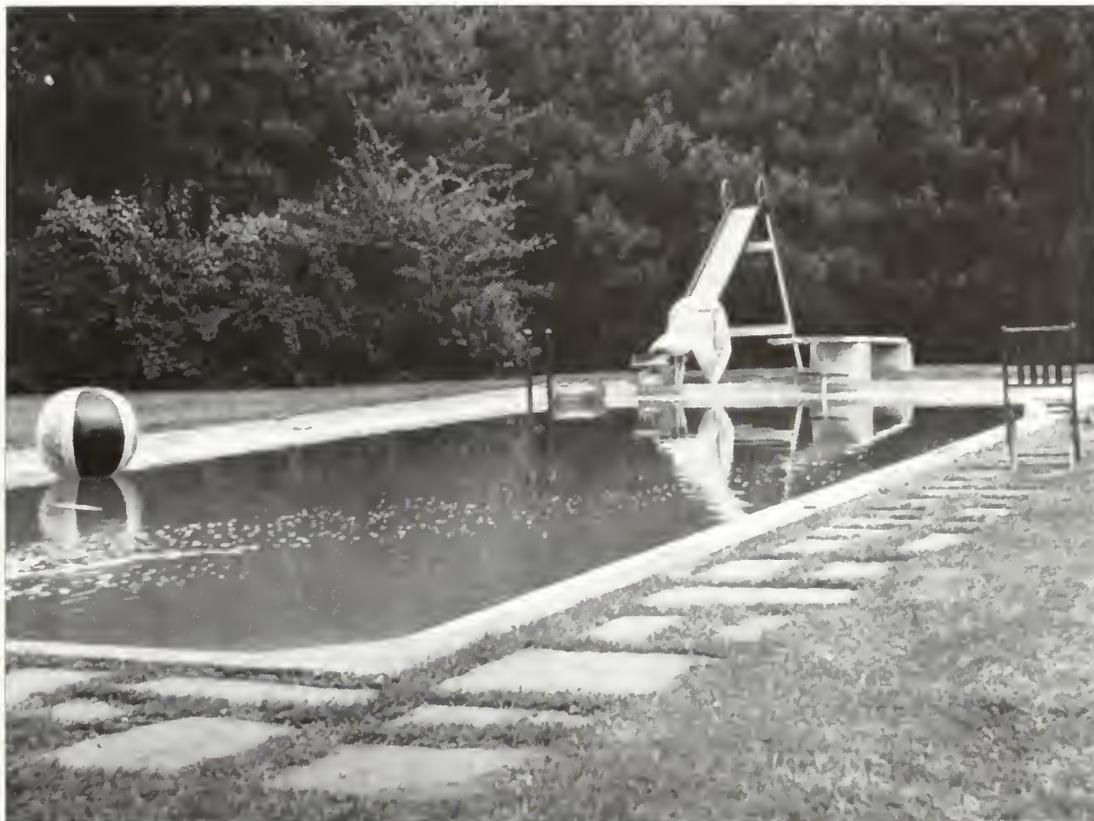


Figure 4.6. Pool, circa 1949. Notice the large shrubs at image left and the size of the red pine screening trees in the background. FDRL 98 35 5.



Figure 4.7. The pond, looking north from Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, circa 1945. Notice the white pine plantation behind the pond. Surface vegetation collected along the top of the pond. FDRL 53 116 (1).



Figure 4.8. Unidentified boy in a boat on the pond, circa 1952. Vegetation grew tall on the west bank of the pond and surface plants gathered on top of the water. FDRL 67 121 6.



Figure 4.9. Picnic with the Wiltwyck boys on the lawn of Val-Kill, 1952. The photo, taken from the picnic area west of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, depicts the pond and pond edge in the early 1950s. Short grass was maintained in the foreground, or the east shore, and long grew along the west shore. The pond remained largely open with some vegetation growing on the surface of the water. Notice the split rail fence on the opposite site of the pond. FDRL 64 171.



Figure 4.10. The bridge during a 1953 flood. Notice the pipe railings installed by Charles Curnan from supports from the old canvas awning of the pool terrace. FDRL 81 90 5.

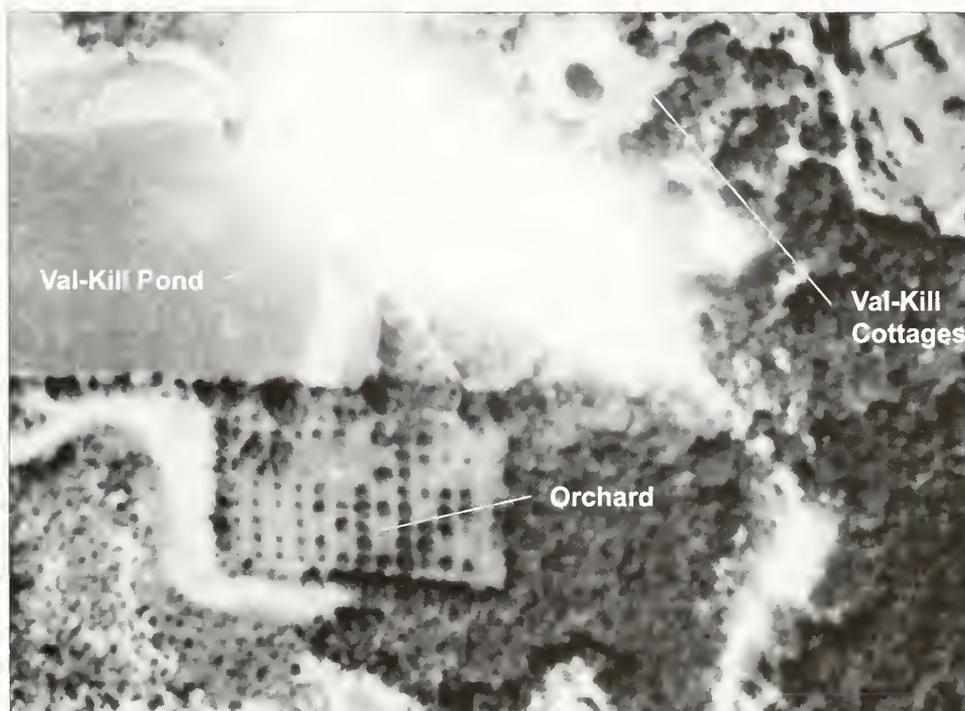


Figure 4.11. 1960 aerial photo of Val-Kill. A fairly continuous orchard grid is visible. ROVA park files.





Figure 4.13. A 1960 aerial photo of Val-Kill. The Central Hudson power line right-of-way is clearly visible in the photograph, as it cuts through the eastern woodland then turns west, running toward Route 9G. ROVA park files.



Figure 4.14. Stone Cottage, 1961. This photo, taken a year before Mrs. Roosevelt's death, shows the laundry room addition and concrete-block wall installed by John Roosevelt. The formal gardens designed by Nancy Cook no longer remain along the north side of the cottage. FDRL 65 332 (a).

Cultural Landscape Report for Eleanor Roosevelt NHS

1962 Period Plan

Figure 4.15

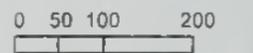


National Park Service  
 Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation  
 99 Warren Street  
 Brookline, MA 02445

SOURCES

- 1 Eleanor Roosevelt NHS Survey, April 2004
2. Historic and contemporary maps and photographs

LEGEND



- Contour
- Tree/Shrub
- Building/structure
- Water
- Wetland
- Meadow
- Former Pasture
- Road/Path



Cultural  
Landscape  
Report for  
Eleanor  
Roosevelt NHS

1962 Period  
Plan  
Enlargement

Figure 4.16



National Park Service  
Olmsted Center for  
Landscape Preservation  
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SOURCES

1. Eleanor Roosevelt NHS Survey, April 2004
2. Historic and contemporary maps and photographs

LEGEND



- Contour
- Tree/Shrub
- Building/structure
- Water
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- Meadow
- Former Pasture
- Road/Path



## **LATE ROOSEVELT AND NON-ROOSEVELT**

### **OWNERSHIP OF VAL-KILL, 1962-1977**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

After Mrs. Roosevelt's death in 1962, her son John and his family continued to live at Val-Kill as they had since 1951. Despite changes made in the 1950s and early 1960s, the site was largely organized around features established during the partnership of Mrs. Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, and Marion Dickerman, between 1924 and 1947. Reduced maintenance and changing priorities between the late 1940s and Mrs. Roosevelt's death altered the character of the site to more closely reflect Mrs. Roosevelt's sensibilities and the needs of her son's family rather than the more ornamental, managed landscape created in the 1930s by Nancy Cook.

After renting units of the Val-Kill buildings for eight years, John sold the 173-acre site in 1970. This represented the sale of the last segment of the once expansive Roosevelt estate that was partitioned and sold over a period of twenty-five years. The new owners brought an alternate view about the value of the land and its resources that translated into different management of the landscape.

#### **PHYSICAL CHANGES TO VAL-KILL**

Shortly after Mrs. Roosevelt's death, John converted her cottage into four apartments and the Playhouse into a single rental unit, while he and his family resided at the Stone Cottage.<sup>246</sup> Renters now utilized the site that had previously been used exclusively by Roosevelt friends and family.

To lower his tax burden, John began a small farming operation, perpetuating the continuous agricultural use of the property. He and Charles Curnan, who remained the site supervisor, added to the small flock of sheep that John obtained prior to his mother's death. John also kept chickens, pheasants, and a few cows, housing them in barns near the old tenant house along the entry road.<sup>247</sup> Curnan often pastured the animals in the front fields along Route 9G on both sides of the entry road. Both areas were fenced and two animal shelters were built, one in the orchard and another farther west in the field south of the entry drive (Figure 5.1).<sup>248</sup> Around this time, Curnan and John built a small pond near old tenant house to water the sheep (See Figure 5.1).<sup>249</sup> Sheep were also allowed to forage in an enclosed area of woods directly south of the Stone Cottage.<sup>250</sup> At times, John Roosevelt rented the west field south of the entry road

to neighbor Bob Gilbert to plant corn, while otherwise the field was leased to local farmers for grazing.<sup>251</sup>

John sold Charles Curnan a small piece of land north of the old tenant house in 1964 where Curnan built a home approximately one hundred yards north of the entry road near the edge of the wetland.<sup>252</sup> The old tenant house burned down around this time, but several barns remained.<sup>253</sup> Curnan and John continued to utilize the outbuildings for their own livestock, including chickens, pheasants, pigs, and cows, and to store equipment.<sup>254</sup>

The landscape of the Val- Kill cottages remained well cared for but became less ornamental than in years past. Presumably by the 1960s, the gardens south, east, and north of the Stone Cottage no longer existed. Trees grew at the periphery of the Stone Cottage lawn, leaving a cleared area between the Stone Cottage and the pond. John maintained cut grass up to the water's edge in this area, while letting longer grass and wetland plants spread nearer to Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage.<sup>255</sup> Trees scattered throughout the lawn obstructed most views between the water and Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage.

During the 1960s, John abandoned the cutting garden that had become untended and overgrown and built a road through it, connecting the Playhouse and rear of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage with the eastern access road. As seen in a 1970 aerial photo of the site, the new road cut across the southern portion of the garden, though sections of the perimeter arborvitae hedge remained (See Figure 5.1). The road exited the east side of the garden and passed through the former paddock northeast of the garage/stable. John most likely built this so renters would not drive across the bridge and past the Stone Cottage to get to their units. In contrast to their lack of interest in the cutting garden, John's wife adopted the rose garden between the cottages. She changed the formerly mixed flower palette to a smaller variety of flowers, notably zinnias that she showed at the county fair.<sup>256</sup>

Around 1965, John inquired about dredging the pond, which had become overgrown and misshapen from its prior form. Since no major clearing or dredging took place after the late 1930s, many decades of silt accumulated on the shallow pond floor. Water lilies, introduced decades earlier for their aesthetic value, and other surface plants grew throughout the pond and larger shrubs rooted themselves on marshy islands in the northern section. However, the cost proved prohibitive and no action was taken.<sup>257</sup>

After retaining the property for eight years after Mrs. Roosevelt's death, John sold the property, minus a small parcel at the intersection Roosevelt Road and the eastern access road, to new owners.<sup>258</sup> Charles Curnan also sold his Val- Kill parcel to create a contiguous tract of land. In addition to the apartments

previously rented by John Roosevelt, the new owners rented the Stone Cottage and Charles Curnan's house. As absentee landlords, the owners proved to be poor stewards of land. They did not invest in the existing infrastructure to keep the resources in good condition, allowing structural and aesthetic deterioration of the site to occur. Over time, deferred maintenance and lack of care resulted in trash strewn around the site, the Factory garage doors hanging precariously on their hinges, water collecting in the basement of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, and neighbors using the west woods of the property as a garbage dump.<sup>259</sup> Period photographs show the poor condition of the agricultural buildings near the tenant house site that had boarded up windows and uncertain structural systems (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). The stone walls, stone pillars, and fencing surrounding the orchard had also been neglected. The boundary that was once marked by orderly stone walls and an attractive paling gate now stood as damaged wire fencing, deteriorated stone walls, and a broken metal fence (Figures 5.4 and 5.5).

The new owners purchased the property for its development potential after recognizing the changing dynamic of the local landscape that was shifting from primarily agricultural uses to residential. By the mid-1970s, the landowners proposed to build a nursing home and condominium units on site, both of which were turned down by the town for their potential impact on the local water supply. Interestingly, no discussion of Mrs. Roosevelt's significance to the site was mentioned in the town's ruling, only that the high water table in the Fall-Kill recharge area would be affected by sewage discharge from the proposed developments.<sup>260</sup> Fortuitously, concerns about the water supply saved Val-Kill from being lost to development and stimulated local citizens to advocate for the site's protection.

#### **HYDE PARK VISUAL ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE AND ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S VAL-KILL, INC.**

After Mrs. Roosevelt's death, money was raised to preserve Val-Kill as a memorial, but these efforts did not materialize and the collected funds contributed to the new Eleanor Roosevelt wing at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library.<sup>261</sup> During the 1970s, independent researchers and citizens visiting the FDR library often asked to see Val-Kill, appreciating Mrs. Roosevelt's strong connection to the site. However, no formal relationship existed between the library, the home of FDR, and the new owners. Often the superintendent of the home of FDR informally arranged for the Val-Kill caretakers to show people around the site.<sup>262</sup>

Noticing the spontaneous and unsolicited interest in Mrs. Roosevelt and Val-Kill, a group of local citizens on the Hyde Park Visual Environment Committee began to focus their attention on Val-Kill. The Visual Environment Committee

was formed by a group of local citizens and the Cornell Cooperative Extension to help bridge the gap between business owners and government agencies. They sought to involve people in the planning and zoning process in Hyde Park.<sup>263</sup> Some of the committee's early successes included forcing chain store like McDonalds and the ShopRite grocery store to conform to local design standards by building stone walls along Route 9 and regionally erecting appropriate signage.<sup>264</sup>

The Visual Environment Committee formed the Cottage Committee to discuss how Val- Kill could be utilized and managed for the public good. A diverse group of local citizens and agencies participated in the committee meetings including representatives from the National Park Service and the FDR Library. Initially, the Cottage Committee envisioned operating the site as a community resource to educate people about Mrs. Roosevelt's life and to offer educational programs and forums on the issues she cared about most. Early in the planning process it was proposed to create a state park at Val- Kill but this proved to be an unpopular idea, as many people opposed removing land from local tax rolls.<sup>265</sup>

The Cottage Committee had more success when they enlisted several notable people to help further their agenda, including two of Mrs. Roosevelt's grandchildren, Curtis Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt Seagraves. Another advocate for the site was Nancy Dubner, an aide to New York's lieutenant governor who met Mrs. Roosevelt as a college student and became a lifelong admirer. Though turning the site into a state park quickly surfaced as being unfeasible, Nancy Dubner promoted ongoing preservation of the site.

The Visual Environment Committee received its first grant for Val- Kill in 1973, using the funds to make a film about Mrs. Roosevelt's life at the site to spread their preservation message to a wider audience. By 1976, Eleanor Roosevelt's Val- Kill, Inc. (ERVK) was chartered as a not- for- profit group by members of the Cottage Committee. ERVK furthered the work begun by the Cottage Committee and continued to explore ways to raise funds and awareness.

In 1976, the group was assisted by actress Jean Stapleton, who became interested in Mrs. Roosevelt while researching her for an acting role. ERVK utilized Ms. Stapleton's name recognition and willingness to help to stage a community forum at a local school. Reportedly, approximately 1,000 people attended despite terrible weather to watch the Val- Kill film and listen to Ms. Stapleton recite a monologue mimicking Mrs. Roosevelt's voice. The response was so positive that ERVK members remembered being overwhelmed by people looking to contribute. Yet even with strong community support, the group fell short of securing the funds required to purchase the property.<sup>266</sup>

With the backing of Curtis Roosevelt, Eleanor Seagraves, and a supportive local population, ERVK approached the National Park Service and the FDR Library about entering a partnership to operate and manage Val- Kill. At the time, this was largely an unprecedented action because there were no other federally recognized sites dedicated to a First Lady. ERVK found the FDR Library disinterested but the National Park Service became a willing partner.

New York Congressmen Bingham and Fish introduced legislation to congress in 1977 to establish the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site.<sup>267</sup> The subsequent enabling legislation appropriated \$575,000 to the National Historic Site, \$300,000 of which was used to purchase the land.<sup>268</sup>

### **LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION IN 1977**

Val- Kill changed dramatically between 1962 and 1977 (Figure 5.6). At the time of Mrs. Roosevelt's death, her son John kept the site in good condition. Though some features dating from the height of the site's designed landscape had lapsed into poor condition, like the ornamental gardens and the open water of the pond, John and the site's caretaker maintained the structures, roads, lawn, and major landscape elements. After John Roosevelt and Charles Curnan sold their properties, routine maintenance of the property declined dramatically. The absentee landlords did not invest in the property to keep the existing resources in good repair. They purchased the property to develop further into condominiums and elder housing, not to retain it as a country retreat or a small scale rental property. By 1977, the site and the structures were in serious disrepair. None of the gardens remained, shrubs and trees were left unpruned, the pool, tennis court, orchard, and agricultural outbuildings were in poor condition, and residents and neighbors had thrown trash throughout the site. The dilapidated property was in need of dedicated stewardship to honor the memory and spirit of Eleanor Roosevelt (Figures 5.7 and 5.8).

Endnotes: 1962- 1977

- <sup>246</sup> Louis Torres, "Historic Resource Study, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," August 1980, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Mid- Atlantic/North Atlantic Team, 178.
- <sup>247</sup> George Brown interview 17 March 2003.
- <sup>248</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>249</sup> Val- Kill Assessment, undated, circa 1977, 3, Facility Manager Files, ROVA.
- <sup>250</sup> George Brown interview 17 March 2003.
- <sup>251</sup> Tubby Curnan Oral History, 4 May 1982, 6, ROVA Archives 1982.01.
- <sup>252</sup> Liber of Deeds 1160, p 355, November 30, 1964, County Clerk's office, Dutchess County, New York, cited in Torres, HRS, 178.
- <sup>253</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 109, 4 November 1979, ROVA Archives 1979.08.
- <sup>254</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 88.
- <sup>255</sup> George Brown interview 17 March 2003.
- <sup>256</sup> Charles Curnan Oral History, 4.
- <sup>257</sup> George Brown interview 17 March 2003.
- <sup>258</sup> Torres, HRS, 179. The new owners were Doctors Rosario G. Dolce and William J. Squires of Long Island.
- <sup>259</sup> Val- Kill Founders Oral History, 3 November 2000, 26, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>260</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>261</sup> Ibid., 38- 39.
- <sup>262</sup> Interview with Joyce Ghee, 8 May 2003.
- <sup>263</sup> Val- Kill Founders Oral History, 24.
- <sup>264</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>265</sup> Interview with Joyce Ghee, 8 May 2003.
- <sup>266</sup> Val- Kill Founders Oral History, 27.
- <sup>267</sup> Val- Kill Founders Oral History, 12 and Torres, HRS, 179.
- <sup>268</sup> Ibid.

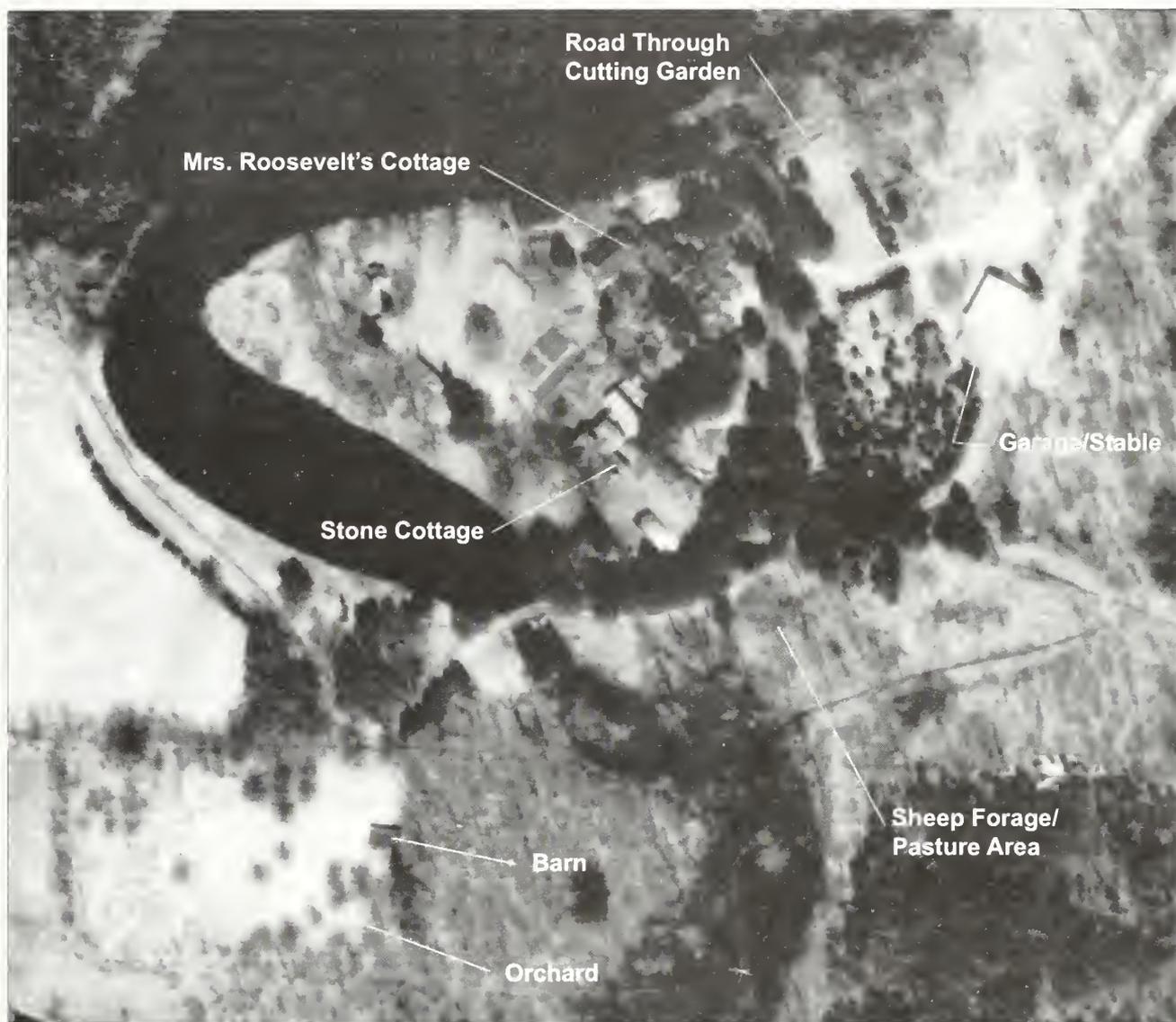


Figure 5.1. A 1970 aerial photo of Val-Kill. The new rear driveway extension cut through the cutting garden and former paddock area and connected with the east access road. ROVA park files.



Figure 5.2. Agricultural building near site of old tenant house, 1976. Les Hyde photo, ROVA Archives.



Figure 5.3. Four-bay barn located near the site of the old tenant house, 1976. Les Hyde photo, ROVA Archives.



Figure 5.4. Orchard, 1976. This image shows that it had been many years since the orchard trees had been maintained to produce fruit. Les Hyde photo, ROVA Archives.



Figure 5.5. Orchard entry pillars, 1976. The stone pillars were deteriorated, one was missing its cap, and a broken metal fence was propped over the opening, replacing the former wooden slat gate. Les Hyde photo, ROVA Archives.



Figure 5.6. 1978 oblique aerial photo of Val-Kill, facing west. This image displays the key characteristics of the site around the time that Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site was established. Historic patterns of agricultural use predominate in the background, or west region of the site, the enlarged pond with successional growth is visible in the center of the image, the 1914 white pine plantation can be seen just below the pond, and site circulation, notably the eastern access road and road through the cutting garden, are clear. ROVA park files.



Cultural Landscape Report for Eleanor Roosevelt NHS

1977 Period Plan

Figure 5.7



National Park Service  
**Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation**  
 99 Warren Street  
 Brookline, MA 02445

**SOURCES**

1. Eleanor Roosevelt NHS Survey, April 2004
2. Historic and contemporary maps and photographs

**LEGEND**



- Contour
- Tree/Shrub
- Building/structure
- Water
- Wetland
- Meadow
- Former Pasture
- Road/Path



Cultural  
Landscape  
Report for  
Eleanor  
Roosevelt NHS

1977 Period  
Plan  
Enlargement

Figure 5.8



National Park Service  
Olmsted Center for  
Landscape Preservation  
99 Warren Street  
Brookline, MA 02445

SOURCES

1. Eleanor Roosevelt NHS Survey, April 2004
2. Historic and contemporary maps and photographs

LEGEND

- 0 25 50 100
- 
- Contour
  - Tree/Shrub
  - Building/structure
  - Water
  - Wetland
  - Meadow
  - Former Pasture
  - Road/Path



## **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S VAL-KILL, INC.,**

### **1977 TO PRESENT**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The establishment of Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site began a new chapter in Val- Kill's history, marking the end of a long period of agricultural and residential land use. Between 1970 and 1977, Val- Kill had been under the stewardship of absentee landlords who allowed the site to deteriorate. The National Park Service faced challenges in developing interpretive programming, resource management policy, and visitor services at a new site in dire need of rehabilitation and maintenance. Planning efforts undertaken in the park's early history and today seek to provide a framework for managing the site to maximize the protection of natural and cultural resources and portray the important connection between the life and accomplishments of Mrs. Roosevelt and the physical environment of Val- Kill.

#### **ESTABLISHMENT OF ELEANOR ROOSEVELT NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE**

Congress passed legislation authorizing the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site (Eleanor Roosevelt NHS) in 1977, establishing the first national park dedicated to a First Lady. The park was mandated to:

*Commemorate for the education, inspiration, and benefit of present and future generations the life and work of an outstanding woman in American History, Eleanor Roosevelt, . . . to provide a site for continuing studies, lectures, seminars, and other endeavors relating to the issues to which she devoted her considerable intellect and humanitarian concerns, . . . and to conserve for public use and enjoyment in a manner compatible with the foregoing purposes an area of natural open space in an expanding urbanized environment.<sup>269</sup>*

A not-for-profit group called Eleanor Roosevelt's Val- Kill, Inc. (ERVK, now known as the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val- Kill) was largely responsible for the designation, having worked for years to gather support from the local community, Mrs. Roosevelt's relatives, and political leaders, and played a key role in achieving goals set forth in the enabling legislation.

The National Park Service and ERVK entered into a cooperative agreement in 1978 to outline the roles and responsibilities of each party. ERVK became

responsible for offering educational programming while the National Park Service took the lead on other aspects of interpretation, maintenance, and stewardship of the site. The site remained closed to the public while early planning efforts and site rehabilitation occurred. After operating briefly from Bellefield mansion, ERVK moved to Val- Kill where they were the only on- site presence.<sup>270</sup> ERVK utilized the site for their headquarters, running seminars and conferences from the Stone Cottage.

### **EARLY PLANNING EFFORTS**

The fledgling park was aided by its listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and by documentation completed by the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) in 1978. The HABS survey represented some of the first efforts undertaken to document the physical resources of Val- Kill in their context to Mrs. Roosevelt. A site plan, building elevations, and floor plans were generated for the historic core, bridge, dam, Stone Cottage, and Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage.

The NPS began their planning process in 1978 by engaging in historical research and studying the site's natural and cultural resources to inform a forthcoming general management plan. Park staff located former employees of Mrs. Roosevelt and recorded oral histories to capture their memories of her and their experiences at Val- Kill. A historic resource study was completed that addressed the evolution of the Val- Kill site and Mrs. Roosevelt's life there. Additionally, all of the buildings were catalogued in historic structures reports in 1981 and a report on the historic and cultural landscape was completed in 1980.

The 1980 general management plan created a framework for shaping the site's future. It outlined a direction to:

*Manage and preserve the historic resources and ambience of Val- Kill for public enrichment and to provide a setting for programs and studies on issues that were of particular interest to Mrs. Roosevelt. . . . The combination of NPS management and interpretation, ERVK programs and seminars, and public use of the entire site for walking, nature study, and personal reflection is intended to stimulate greater understanding of the way Eleanor Roosevelt enjoyed and gained inspiration at Val- Kill.<sup>271</sup>*

The plan stated that interpretation and presentation of the landscape would to reflect her long association with the site, from 1925 to 1962.

Several alternatives were first proposed that offered different approaches to programmatic, interpretive, and site management priorities of ERVK and Eleanor Roosevelt NHS. Key elements of the alternatives included restoring Mrs.

Roosevelt's Cottage, using the Stone Cottage for conferences/educational sessions, restoring the orchard, resurfacing existing entry road, and providing parking for twenty- five cars along the rear entry road northeast of the developed core. The alternatives also outlined various approaches to dredging the pond and improving parking and circulation.

The general management plan created three management zones to match existing resources with intended uses of the site (Figure 6.1). The first was a historic zone surrounding areas historically associated with the Val- Kill retreat in the center of the site, and portions of the west fields along Route 9G. Notably, very few new developments were slated to occur in the historic zone. A development zone was created to accommodate the new parking lots needed for staff, visitors, and conference attendees as well as park maintenance activities. Two parking lots, one northeast of the historic core along the access road and another along the entry road west of the house Charles Curnan built, were proposed. The parking lots were small because it was thought that most visitors would access the site on a shuttle bus from Springwood. The general management plan also identified the electrical line right- of- way as a special use zone to be managed according to Central Hudson policy.

### **PREPARING FOR THE PUBLIC OPENING**

Maintenance responsibilities at Val- Kill proved daunting during the early years of ERVK and NPS stewardship. Early efforts first focused on rehabilitating the buildings, notably Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage that needed substantial repair. Fortunately, Bill Stickles from the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library photographed the inside of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage just after her death, before the furnishings were sold or distributed to family members. Using these photos, the NPS restored the home, removing traces of the four apartments installed in the 1960s. Fewer repairs proved necessary at the Stone Cottage, as it had previously been rented as a single unit. Park staff also repaired the Playhouse, and Doll House, scraping and painting the exteriors and repairing damage from insects and decay (Figure 6.2).<sup>272</sup>

In anticipation of the 1984 public opening, the NPS addressed landscape issues relating to visitor needs and site rehabilitation. Interestingly, many of the actions taken diverged from recommendations made in the 1980 general management plan. One such example was the short duration that visitors were bussed to the park from the Springwood, as recommended in the general management plan. After the contract proved unprofitable for the private bus operator, shuttle service ceased and private vehicles were allowed to park in a lot created in the east side of the orchard. The general management plan did not identify the orchard as a parking lot location, rather as a feature to be restored. A break in the

stone wall that once marked the boundary between the Bennett and Tompkins Farms was made to provide room for the long, narrow parking lot, oriented north-south. A staff parking lot was created as well, east of the garage/stable. Neither new parking lot was paved. Another unrealized component of the general management plan was the location of a maintenance facility at Charles Curnan's former home. Maintenance activities were instead centered at the garage/stable or otherwise housed off site.

The entry drive and bridge needed upgrades to service the expected numbers of visitors and staff. As stated in a circa 1977 assessment of the site, "The Val-Kill roads are in a poor state of repair with substantial potholes serving as a deterrent to anyone who ventures to drive on them. With caution, it is however, possible to reach the buildings from either Route 9-G or from Roosevelt Road."<sup>273</sup> In response, the Federal Highways Administration widened and graded the entry road from the crest of the hill near the site of the old tenant house, to the bridge, leaving it unpaved. Prior to the widening, no culverts existed between the east side of the southwest field and the entry road and one became required to keep storm water from the agricultural field and road from draining into the pond. The NPS installed additional bracing, a new beam, and replaced two cracked joists on the bridge to strengthen the structure.<sup>274</sup>

While the Stone Cottage was in fairly good condition, the grounds had grown shabby and neglected (Figure 6.3). Weeds grew along the foundation and in the flagstone terrace and the mixed flower and shrub beds were either missing or overgrown (Figures 6.4 and 6.5). By the 1970s, the unused and deteriorating swimming pool became a safety hazard and the NPS surrounded it with snow fencing (Figure 6.6).

Select landscape features were restored between 1980 and 1984 to prepare for the public opening. For a Roosevelt family reunion, the NPS repaired the picnic fireplace, re-pointing and resetting loose stones.<sup>275</sup> The row of red pine screening trees planted south of the pool along the entry road in 1936 was replaced because the tall and leggy trees no longer screened the lawn and pool terrace.

As seen on the 1970 aerial photo, agricultural buildings associated with both the old tenant house and Charles Curnan's house were visible from the entry drive, and as such, slated for removal (Figure 6.7). Maintenance workers demolished several buildings including a chicken house, a barn, and a garage that were all in various states of disrepair.<sup>276</sup> Only the Curnan house remained in the former cluster of structures.

Both the cutting garden and the rose garden were restored in 1983 to contribute to the historic scene near the cottages. The work began by removing the driveway built through the cutting garden in the late 1960s and restoring the

driveway built through the cutting garden in the late 1960s and restoring the raised beds and arborvitae perimeter hedge. The cedar fence posts of the rose garden were replaced with posts cut from downed cedar trees from one of FDR's former plantations and the overgrown plant material was removed and replaced with several varieties of roses.

Maintenance workers located a stack of paving stones behind the Playhouse in 1983 and replaced the walkways that once connected the cottages.<sup>277</sup> Rose-of-sharon shrubs were replaced around the Stone Cottage driveway circle as were lily-of-the-valley, daffodils, rhododendrons, and lilies at the pool terrace.<sup>278</sup>

With the most serious maintenance issues resolved, the site opened to the public in 1984, basing visitor contact, including ticket sales and the orientation movie in the Playhouse. ERVK continued to utilize the Stone Cottage as their headquarters and for conferences, hosting educational sessions on various topics including youths against racism, the collaboration of children from different religious backgrounds, and youth and citizenship.<sup>279</sup>

#### **SITE MAINTENANCE AND PRESENT PLANNING NEEDS**

Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, maintenance staff removed trees that had declined due to age or storm damage, including several cedars near the factory, a dogwood near the tennis court, birch trees behind the cutting garden, and a large tree near the Stone Cottage. Substantial tree work occurred after an October storm in 1986 that damaged and knocked down dozens of trees throughout the site. Notably, several orchard trees were lost in the storm.<sup>280</sup>

Until approximately 1996, mowing the east and west sides of the pond edge was included in the yearly mowing schedule. Since that time, vegetation along the pond edge remains uncut due to staffing constraints. Regular mowing now occurs only in areas reached with standard mowing equipment.

Circulation upgrades became necessary in the late 1990s as visitation increased. The visitor parking lot in the orchard was enlarged to accommodate more vehicles and space for a bus turn-around. At the same time, the entry road was paved and then covered with a chip seal-coat to reduce maintenance.

To strengthen the connection between Val-Kill and FDR's Top Cottage on Dutchess Hill, the park acquired a small triangular parcel on the eastern border of Val-Kill in 2002, the same year that the park purchased Top Cottage from the Open Space Institute. Before the Roosevelt estate was divided and sold after FDR's death, a woods road connection existed between the two properties, yet a residential subdivision built in the 1960s and 1970s cut off access between the parcels. The newly acquired land will provide a pedestrian trail, via conservation

land. Also acquired in 2002 was a parcel of land along the park's northern boundary, standing between two residential subdivisions, and includes an upstream portion of the Fall- Kill creek and wetland. This parcel provides additional protected habitat for the state- threatened Blanding's turtle that is known to move throughout the park.

Recognizing the need to address management of the Home of FDR, Val- Kill, Top Cottage, and Vanderbilt Mansion comprehensively, a general management plan was begun in 2003 to provide a framework for the future needs of the combined Roosevelt/Vanderbilt properties. By this time, the existing general management plan for Val- Kill was over twenty years old and no longer provided appropriate direction for present- day and future needs. The selective restoration efforts undertaken over the past two decades did not represent a consistent approach to landscape treatment, nor did the plan take into account the joint management of all the Roosevelt/Vanderbilt properties. The new general management plan, assisted by resource management documentation including the cultural landscape report, will further the park's agenda and set a course of action for future improvements and stewardship.

#### **LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION IN 2005**

The landscape of Eleanor Roosevelt NHS is maintained largely as it was toward the later years of Mrs. Roosevelt's residence. On a large scale, the west fields remain mostly cleared of woody vegetation as it was during the site's long agricultural history. The west field south of the entry road is kept in hay or meadow while trees and shrubs grow in some areas of the wetter north field. Within the historic core, the Val- Kill buildings and structures resemble the historic appearance of the late 1950s and early 1960s. The lush flower gardens of the Stone Cottage no longer exist and an informal, low- maintenance landscape prevails near the cottages and east bank of the pond. Many decades of wetland plant growth crowds the shorelines and pond surface, creating a smaller, less managed water body. New elements have been added to the landscape to accommodate visitors to the national historic site. Two parking lots, one in the orchard, and one east of the stable/garage provide parking for staff and visitors. Contemporary site amenities including trash cans, signage, benches, and lighting are located throughout the historic core. The eastern woods have reached maturity and host native mixed species as well as the aging single- species plantations planted at FDR's direction between 1914 and the early 1930s. The 1914 white pine plantation retains characteristics that noticeably distinguish it from the surrounding forest, while other stands appear far less distinctive.

## Endnotes: 1977- Present

- <sup>269</sup> "General Management Plan, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," May 1980, 1.
- <sup>270</sup> Val- Kill Founders Oral History Transcript, 3 November 2003, 42, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>271</sup> "General Management Plan, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," May 1980, 19.
- <sup>272</sup> Barbara E. Pearson, "Historic Structures Report, The Playhouse, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," National Park Service, North Atlantic Historic Preservation Center, North Atlantic Region, 1981, 7, and Pearson, "Historic Structures Report, The Doll House, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," National Park Service, North Atlantic Historic Preservation Center, North Atlantic Region, 1981, 5.
- <sup>273</sup> "Val- Kill Assessment," undated, circa 1977, 5, Facility Manager Files, ROVA.
- <sup>274</sup> Barbara E. Pearson, "Historic Structures Report, Bridge and Dam, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," National Park Service, North Atlantic Historic Preservation Center, North Atlantic Region, 1981, 6.
- <sup>275</sup> Barbara E. Pearson, "Historic Structures Report, Miscellaneous Structures, Picnic Fireplace, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site," National Park Service, North Atlantic Historic Preservation Center, North Atlantic Region, 1981, 2.
- <sup>276</sup> Interview with ROVA maintenance employees Ron Galente and Dave Cerasaro at Val- Kill, June 2003.
- <sup>277</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>278</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>279</sup> Val- Kill Founders Oral History Transcript, 16- 19, ROVA Archives.
- <sup>280</sup> Interview with ROVA maintenance employees Ron Galente and Dave Cerasaro at Val- Kill, June 2003.

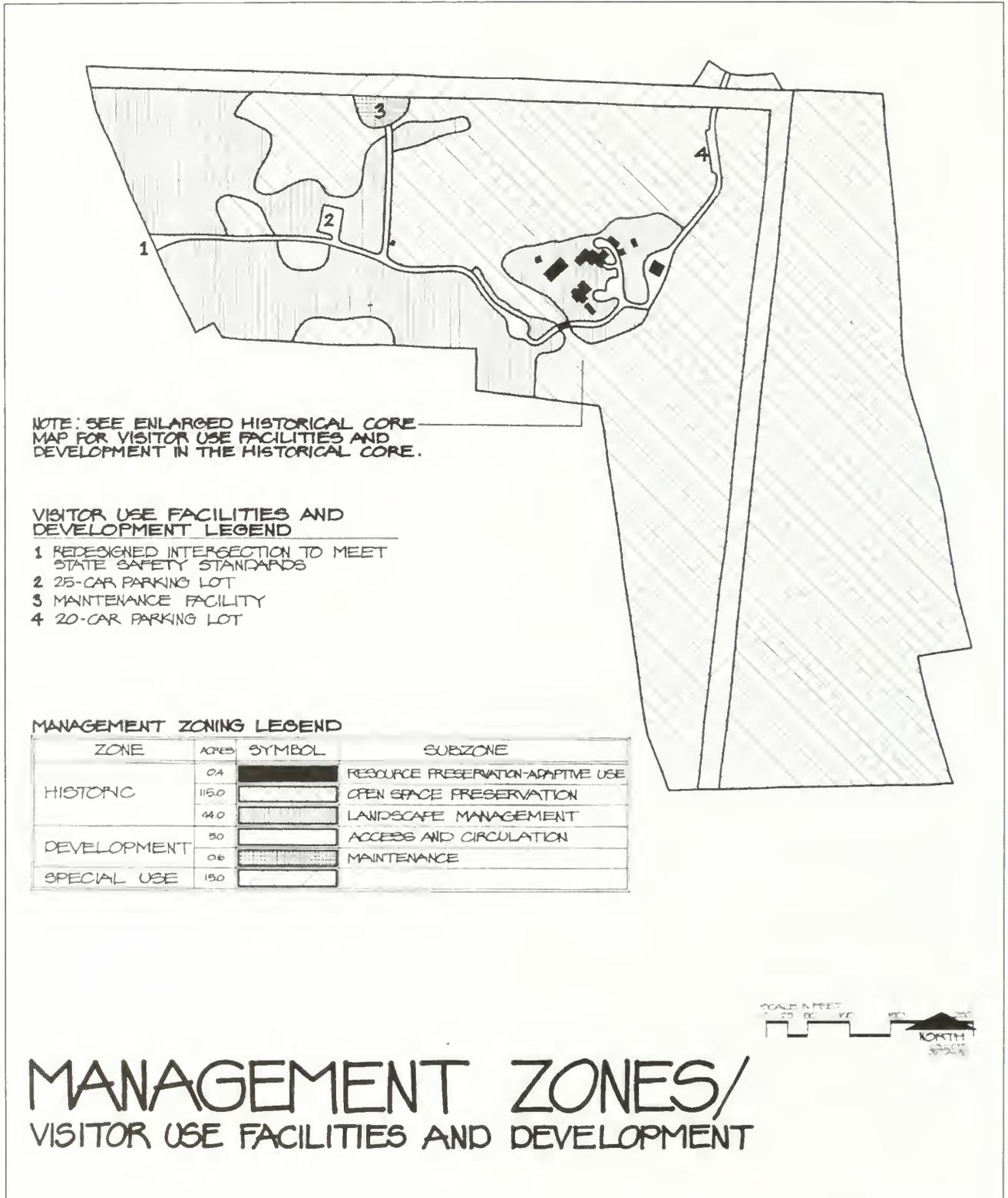


Figure 6.1. Management Zone Map from 1980 General Management Plan. Three zones were created to address visitor needs, natural resource protection, maintenance activities, and the special use of Central Hudson's electric line right-of-way. Notice the maintenance area at Charles Curran's former house and the new parking lots along the west and northeast ends of the entry road. ROVA park files.



Figure 6.2. Playhouse, 1978. Repairs to the interior and exterior of the Playhouse occurred in the summer of 1978. Denver Service Center photo, ROVA park files.



Figure 6.3. Stone Cottage and pool, 1976. Les Hyde photo, ROVA Archives.



Figure 6.4. Stone Cottage, 1978. Vines and weeds grew abundantly on and around the structure. Les Hyde photo, ROVA Archives.



Figure 6.5. Stone cottage, 1978. The stone cottage entry way was surrounded by overgrown shrubs, weeds, and none of the flowers and flowering shrubs that formerly characterized the area. Les Hyde photo, ROVA Archives.



Figure 6.6. Stone Cottage and pool, circa 1978. After the NPS began managing the site, they enclosed the pool with snow fencing to reduce the liability. ROVA park files, unattributed photo.

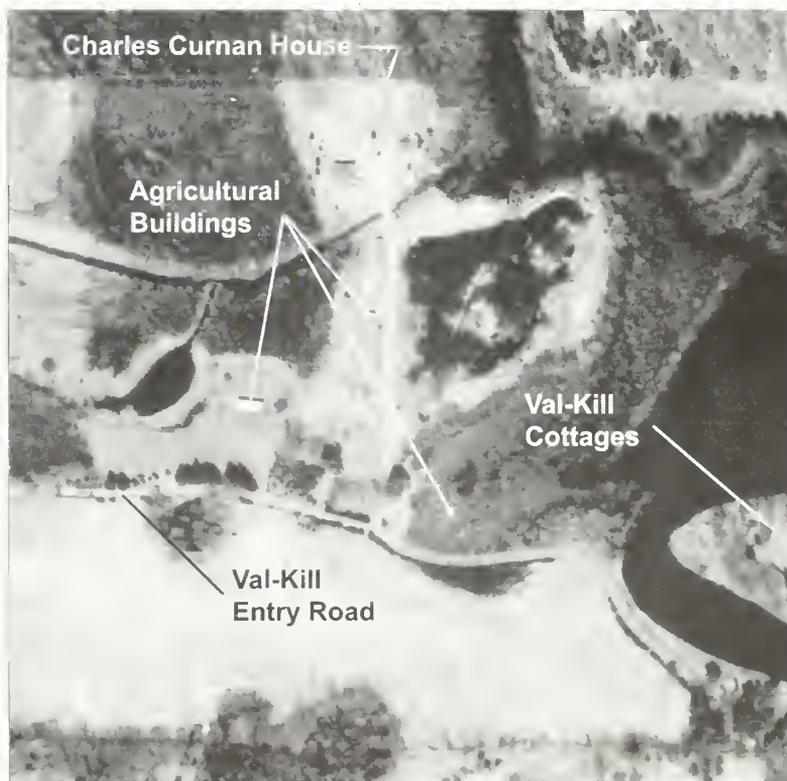


Figure 6.7. A 1970 aerial photo of the area surrounding Charles Curnan's house, west of the historic core. Notice the outbuildings north of the entry road that were removed circa 1984. ROVA park files.



Figure 6.8. Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site and Top Cottage, 2002. The black line represents National Park Service boundaries. A small parcel of land was acquired in 2002 to provide a connection between the two properties. ROVA park files.

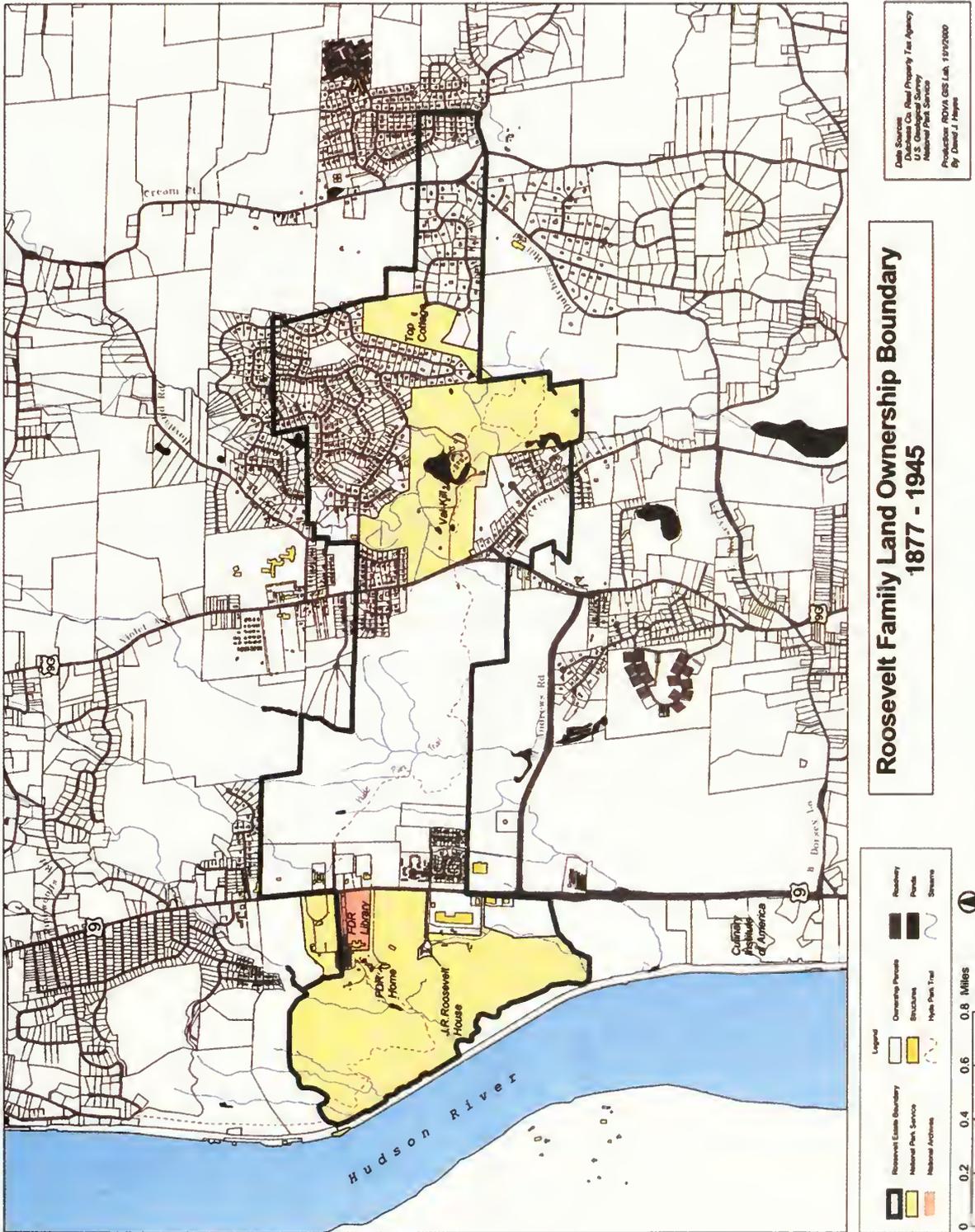


Figure 6.9. Roosevelt Estate Lands, 1877 to 1945. Current National Park Service lands are pictured in yellow. The bounds of the former Roosevelt estate is outlined in green. ROVA park files.





Outdoor gathering at the first Val-Kill pool, 1932. Cook-Dickerman Collection 813, ROVA park files.

# Existing Conditions

**NATURAL SYSTEMS**  
**SPATIAL ORGANIZATION**  
**CIRCULATION**  
**TOPOGRAPHY**  
**VEGETATION**  
**BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES**  
**VIEWS AND VISTAS**  
**SMALL-SCALE FEATURES**  
**ARCHEOLOGY**



## **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The existing conditions chapter of this report provides an overview of the extant landscape characteristics that have been shaped by years of history, as outlined in preceding chapters. The discussion is structured by identifying landscape characteristics that represent the qualities of the physical environment that help describe its uniqueness. These characteristics may be tangible or intangible, created by groupings of like features or the interrelationship between features, and may be created by natural or cultural processes. The essential characteristics to be discussed include natural systems, spatial organization, circulation, topography, vegetation, buildings and structures, and small-scale features.

Eleanor Roosevelt NHS is a 181-acre site located in the mid-Hudson Valley of New York, approximately one and a third miles east of the Hudson River. The park contains varied landforms, ranging from low-lying wetlands on the west side of the site to rocky upland terrain to the east. The Fali-Kill runs through the center of the park, serving as a key feature both historically and today. A dam in the creek impounds a pond around which the landscape is organized. Forests, open fields, an orchard, and designed landscape features survive within the varied site.

The focal point of Val-Kill is the cluster of buildings and landscape features in the center of the site where Eleanor Roosevelt and her friends Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman created a country retreat between 1924 and 1947. Mrs. Roosevelt became the principal steward after 1947 and made Val-Kill her permanent home from 1945 until her death in 1962. The site currently reflects changes made by farming activity, residential improvements made by Mrs. Roosevelt, Cook, and Dickerman, as well as landscape management decisions made by Mrs. Roosevelt's children, private owners, and the National Park Service.

The park is administratively managed as part of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites that include Eleanor Roosevelt NHS, Top Cottage, the Home of FDR, and the Vanderbilt mansion. Eleanor Roosevelt NHS is open year-round and visited by 75,000 people annually (Figures 7.1 and 7.2).

### **NATURAL SYSTEMS**

#### **Geology**

Local soils are differentiated by their proximity to the Hudson River and their topography; areas adjacent to the river are characterized by well-drained loamy

soil, while gravelly soil overlain by sandy loam predominates in areas with steeper slopes.<sup>281</sup> Val- Kill's west fields, north and south of the entry road, have different soil characteristics. The north field contains Fredon silt loam soils and a high water table, while the south field is characterized by Alton gravelly loam soils. Areas along the Fall- Kill wetland contain Wyalusing silt loam soils with a very high water table. The historic core is underlain by a Hoosic gravelly loam. Soils in the eastern region of the park are split between Woodland- Nassau- Rocky outcrop complex soils in the north and Nassau silt loam- Rock outcrop soils to the south.<sup>282</sup>

### **Climate**

Hyde Park has similar conditions to Albany, New York, an area with readily available climate data. The annual mean temperature is 46 degrees F, ranging from an annual winter mean of 22 degrees to a summer mean of 68 degrees. Approximately 36 inches of precipitation fall annually, with the most, 10.51 inches, in summer and the least, 7.53 inches, in the winter.

### **Hydrology**

Surface water plays a key role in understanding the development and spatial organization of Val- Kill. The Fall- Kill runs north south through the center of the site, approximately dividing the site into two regions with low- lying flat lands located west of the creek and a rocky upland areas to the east. The study area contains a high water table, with portions of the northwest region of the site covered with surface water for part of the year. The Fall- Kill was dammed before 1922 creating a narrow, shallow water body. The Roosevelts later rebuilt the dam, expanding the impounded water into a pond, around which they clustered the Val- Kill cottages. The pond was enlarged in subsequent years by dredging the wetland to the north of the pond, resulting in approximately seven acres of open water (Figure 7.3). Currently, between six and nine feet of sediment has been deposited in the pond, supporting large quantities of wetland plants (Figure 7.4). The northern portion, near the mouth of the Fall- Kill and the pond edge, is crowded with vegetation.

A smaller creek feeds into the Val- Kill pond from the northeast, running along the eastern access road. Both streams exit the pond at the dam southwest of the developed core and travel along the park's southwestern boundary. The creek edge is not well defined in the southern region of the park, spilling over into shallow wetlands along the southwest boundary. A dam, dating to the 1950s, in the southwest region of the park creates a small pond from the Fall- Kill. This low concrete block dam holds a small, serpentine pond that abuts several private homes.

Several other notable water bodies exist in the study area. One is a year- round pond near the southeast edge of the site, fed by an underground spring. Another is a vernal pool located along the loop road in the southeast region of the park. A

small pond, created in the mid- 1960s to water sheep, is located north of the old tenant house site. Several pools of standing water exist throughout the site in the wet months, including certain areas in the west field north of the entry road. Another is a small pool surrounded by trees and shrubs south of the entry road in the cultivated west field. Others exist in the woods southeast of the historic core.

### **SPATIAL ORGANIZATION**

Eleanor Roosevelt NHS can be divided into three regions based on land use, topography, and overall character. They are the historic core, the west region of the park, and the east region of the park. The Fall- Kill and pond are the central features around which the site is organized. The creek divides the site into two distinct sections, west and east, into which the historic core nests. The developed core lies just east of the creek and pond to capture views and access to the water. This approximately two- and- a- half- acre area is where most activities associated with Mrs. Roosevelt occurred. It is bounded on the west and north by the water's edge and on the east and south by forest. While the historic core features many trees and moderate canopy coverage, it contrasts with the dense, well- established forests to the east. A narrow driveway connects the Stone Cottage, Playhouse, and Mrs. Roosevelt's cottage, dividing the residential structures and recreational features from the cutting garden and garage/stable.

The west region of the park was traditionally the most intensively cultivated. It is characterized by open fields where meadow grass or hay is grown today, and low- lying, wet areas. The west region is divided into two segments by the Val- Kill entry road. The southern field is higher ground and better agricultural land while the northern field contains large wetland tracts much of the year.

This contrasts with the forested region east of the creek and pond. The land rises beyond the historic core, reaching its highest point at the southeast corner of the park. Heavy forest cover unifies the east region despite significant differences in grade change. The eastern region is divided by electrical power lines that cut a wide and highly visible swath through the forest. The power lines run approximately north- south through the length of the property.

### **CIRCULATION**

The primary vehicular circulation route through Eleanor Roosevelt NHS is the Val- Kill entry road that runs from Route 9G, travels through the west region of the park, past the historic core, through the woods east of the garage/stable, and exits onto Roosevelt Road, a secondary road along the park's northeast boundary (Figure 7.5). The paved entry road is covered with a chip- seal asphalt coat west of the bridge and left as packed earth with a gravel overlay to the east. A gravel- surfaced driveway leads north from the entry road in the west region, connecting to the caretaker's house (Figure 7.6). This road is closed to visitors. A chip- seal-

coated visitor parking lot is located in the orchard west of the bridge, while a packed- earth employee parking lot stands east of the stable/garage.

Within the historic core a more complicated system of road and paths exists. A driveway spur departs from the main entry road east of the bridge, and travels north to the Stone Cottage where it terminates in a driveway circle (Figure 7.7). Another segment of the driveway continues past the Stone Cottage and connects to the garage of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. A roughly parallel segment travels between the east side of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage and the Playhouse, leading to the main door of the cottage. The rectangular parking area east of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage is surfaced with gravel. An infrequently used, two- track service road travels from the parking area at Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, past the north side of the building and fades into the lawn north of the Doll House (Figure 7.8). Pedestrian connections between the cottages are made with flagstone pavers.

Outside of the historic core, a packed earth loop road makes a circuit through the wooded southeast region of the site. It is accessed from the main entry road east of the Stone Cottage just past the employee parking lot. A dead- end woods road that once led to Top Cottage shares the same point of beginning. All east woods roads are wide enough for a single vehicle but are most often used as pedestrian paths.

## **TOPOGRAPHY**

Eleanor Roosevelt NHS contains both flat, low- lying land and hilly upland terrain. The north field in the western region of the park is flat and hummocky, with several areas of wetland that average approximately 220 feet above sea level. The west field south of the entry road rises slightly to crest a few feet above the road bed but remains basically flat for its length. The historic core is also level and only approximately seven feet higher than the surface of the pond. Steeper topography predominates in the southeastern area of the park. The land rises to 397 feet above sea level in the far southeast corner and tapers down to the creek level, 219 feet above sea level, on the north and west sides of the hill. The steepest segments exist along the southern most boundary of the park, with as slopes as steep as 30% present.

## **VEGETATION**

The park contains a variety of plant materials and patterns of vegetation. Within the historic core, numerous specimen trees, flowering shrubs, flower gardens, and other domestic plantings exist (Figure 7.9). Most were planted between 1925 and 2004, as the site was manipulated from a semi- wooded pasture to a private residence and later maintained as a national historic site for public education and enjoyment. Clipped lawn surrounds the buildings and mid- sized to tall wetland plants grow at the pond edge. Numerous species of trees are scattered

throughout the historic core. Many are grouped randomly without a strong unifying organization. Several of the trees are mature and large in size due to their age. The area is characterized by informal, low maintenance vegetation, including rose-of-sharon, lilac, peony, day lily, tulip, arborvitae, and gray birch. Several notable plants include a large sycamore between the cottages, a cluster of mid-aged oaks at northwest of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, a double line of Norway spruce north of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, and rows of red pines lining the entry road south of the Stone Cottage and around the Stone Cottage driveway circle (Figures 7.10 and 7.11). Three small garden areas exist on site containing various species of flowers, shrubs, and vines. These include the cutting garden, rose garden, and Stone Cottage walled garden (Figures 7.12, 7.13, and 7.14).

The west region of the park is maintained as open fields and densely vegetated wetland. The north and south fields are kept in meadow grass or hay to retain the agricultural character that existed during Eleanor Roosevelt's time. The north field has several areas that are intermittently wet, hosting a mix of red maples, sphagnums, and sedges. Shrubs and small trees grow along the western side of the pond and Fall-Kill wetland, the center of the south field, and around the caretaker's house. A row of Norway spruce trees travels along the north side of the entry road from Route 9G for approximately 200 yards.

Wetland species, including purple loosestrife, duckweed, water chestnuts, cattails, and water lilies grow along the Fall-Kill creek and other wet areas in the eastern region of the park.<sup>283</sup>

The orchard, lying in the south-central region of the site, contains several varieties of apples, including Early Mackintosh, Northern Spy, Red Delicious, and Early Strawberry, as well as a few pears, and one cherry tree (Figure 7.15).

The east region is characterized by native woodlands and single species plantings. The entire eastern side of the site is forested, from the developed core to the park boundary. In the far east side, native trees, including an upland oak and hemlock forest predominate. Further west are several stands of trees planted at FDR's direction between 1914 and the 1930s. These are defined tracts of single and mixed species plantings, including tulip poplar, white pine, northern white cedar, Scots pine, and black walnut. Most are located between the east bank of the Fall-Kill and the west side of the loop road. One large white pine stand is located northeast of the developed core along the eastern access road. The stands exist in varying degrees of health, with some almost indistinguishable from the native forest while others retain highly visible spacing and organization.

## **BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES**

Most of the buildings and structures in the park are located in the historic core and are associated with Eleanor Roosevelt's tenure on the property. The Stone Cottage and Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, the oldest buildings on site, are located on the east bank of the pond. The Stone Cottage is a one- and a-half story, Dutch

Colonial, stone building (Figure 7.16). It is separated from Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, a large, asymmetrical two-story stucco building, by approximately twenty yards of lawn and gravel driveway. This building sits at the northern terminus of the historic core, at the edge of the pond.

Several other structures surround the two residences that were all once used for recreation or utilitarian purposes by Mrs. Roosevelt. The Doll House, located northwest of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage and facing the pond, is a small clapboard structure built for children's play (Figure 7.17). The Playhouse, once used as a forge, indoor picnic area, and apartment, is a long and narrow wood frame building located directly east of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. A small wood potting shed sits on the edge of the cutting garden. Besides a small utilitarian shed east of the cutting garden that was once used as a dog kennel, the only other structure of note is the stable/garage, located along the eastern access road, east of the Stone Cottage. This structure is a one- and- a- half story un- sided concrete block building that now houses maintenance equipment.

The Fall- Kill is spanned by a wood decked and railed bridge supported on concrete piers southwest of the Stone Cottage (Figure 7.18). A concrete dam, which manipulates the water level of the Val- Kill pond with wooden flashboards, sits directly below the bridge.

Across the pond from the historic core, a structure known as the caretaker's residence stands along the northern boundary of the park. This is a small modern, frame house, built by Charles Curnan in 1964.

## **VIEWS AND VISTAS**

Views within the Eleanor Roosevelt NHS are not expansive and are inwardly focused. The central and west regions of the park are low- lying and largely framed by surrounding vegetation. The west fields are very flat and only short range views to the north of the site are available because of wetland growth and forest at the park's southwest boundary. Mature trees surround the residences in the historic core, obscuring views in many directions. As the Stone Cottage and Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage sit on the edge of the woods, most views are focused toward the pond and west region of the park, instead of to the north, east, and south. Views toward the west were once more extensive than they are today, as wetland vegetation now surrounds the northwest side of the pond. Few views are available from Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, as it sits back from the western shore of the pond and views to the north are blocked by a double row of Norway spruce trees. Views west from the Stone Cottage are slightly more abundant as the building is sited closer to the pond and has fewer surrounding trees to interfere with views to the water.

Although the southwest corner of the property sits high above the historic core and west region of the park, mature forest growth impedes westward views.

Views of the Val- Kill cottages can be seen from the entry road as the road veers south along the west bank of the pond. Views from farther west are obscured by topography and wetland vegetation surrounding the pond.

### **SMALL-SCALE FEATURES**

Many small- scale features are located throughout the historic core of Val- Kill. Aside from the modern National Park Service- era features placed for visitor comfort and safety, including benches, lighting, and trash receptacles, the features reflect the residential character of the site. Several surviving small scale features include the pool, metal see- saw support, swing- set frame, asphalt tennis court, welded wire backstops, walled garden brick enclosure, and the stone outdoor fireplace at the picnic area west of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage (Figure 7.19).

Fewer small- scale features exist outside of the developed core. Most notable among them are the numerous stone walls traveling throughout the east forest region, along the southwestern boundary, and along Route 9G. Most of them are informally constructed vernacular walls that are mostly one or two courses wide, often with rubble centers (Figure 7.20). The condition of Val- Kill's stone walls varies. Some, like the wall bounding the orchard/parking lot are sound, while others, notably walls in the east woods, are hardly discernable on the forest floor. Two stone pillars, constructed in the 1930s to mark the orchard entrance, are among the most formal stone wall features, though even they are constructed with a simple geometric pattern (Figure 7.21). Remnants of wire fencing remain in the woods south of the Stone Cottage, marking abandoned agricultural land.

### **ARCHEOLOGY**

Several archeological sites exist throughout the site relating to different periods of history. Evidence of Native American hunting, gathering, or fishing activities may be found in the field south of the main entry road and in the historic core. Occupation of the site prior to Val- Kill developments may be best evidenced around the location of the former tenant house that burned in the early 1960s. Agricultural buildings and a domestic yard surrounded the house and investigation may yield archeological findings. Roosevelt- era developments are mostly clustered in the historic core. Known sub- surface remains exist at the site of the first pool that was located just northeast of the bridge, and at the site of the greenhouse, northeast of the cutting garden. Recent archeological investigation has found evidence of a stone wall north of the Stone Cottage, possibly dating to Nancy Cook's early and evolving landscape plans around the Stone Cottage grounds. A Roosevelt- era trash dump is located along the loop road in the east portion of the site and may yield interesting findings upon investigation.

Endnotes: Existing Conditions

<sup>281</sup> "Archeological Overview and Assessment for the Home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York," October 2000, citing Dutchess County Soil and Water Conservation Districts Soil Survey Users Guide, 1991.

<sup>282</sup> "Natural Resources Inventory at Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York," Overview Report, 1 November 1979, Pandullo Quirk Associates, 4-

5.  
<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 29.

Cultural  
Landscape  
Report for  
Eleanor  
Roosevelt NHS

Existing  
Conditions  
Plan

Figure 7.1



National Park Service  
Olmsted Center for  
Landscape Preservation  
99 Warren Street  
Brookline, MA 02445

- SOURCES**
1. Eleanor Roosevelt NHS Survey, April 2004
  2. Contemporary maps and photographs

**LEGEND**

- 
- Contour
  - Tree/Shrub
  - Building/structure
  - Water
  - Wetland
  - Meadow
  - Former Pasture
  - Road/Path



Cultural  
Landscape  
Report for  
Eleanor  
Roosevelt NHS

Existing  
Conditions  
Enlargement

Figure 7.2

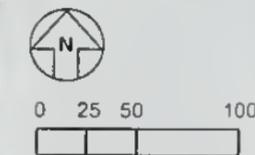


National Park Service  
Olmsted Center for  
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99 Warren Street  
Brookline, MA 02445

SOURCES

- Eleanor Roosevelt NHS Survey, April 2004
- Contemporary maps and photographs

LEGEND



- Contour
- Tree/Shrub
- Building/structure
- Water
- Wetland
- Meadow
- Former Pasture
- Road/Path





Figure 7.3. The Val-Kill pond, seen from the bridge, looking north. The section of water in the foreground, opposite the Stone Cottage, hosts substantially fewer wetland plants than areas upstream, pictured in the background and out of frame on image right (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.4. The pond seen from the north lawn of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. This northern segment of the pond, created after the 1937 dredging of the Fall-Kill, is now overgrown with wetland plants that have taken hold in the shallow water (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.5. The Val-Kill entry road and southwest field, located west of the historic core (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.6. Road to park residence, or former caretaker's house, north of the entry road. The unpaved road is off limits to visitors (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.7. Stone Cottage driveway circle ringed with twenty-year-old red pines (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.8. Gravel driveway north of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage near the double line of Norway spruce trees (OCLP, 2003).



# Cultural Landscape Report for Eleanor Roosevelt NHS

## Historic Plant Inventory, 2005 Update

Figure 7.9



National Park Service  
Olmsted Center for  
Landscape Preservation

99 Warren Street  
Brookline, MA 02445

### SOURCES

Map produced in 1994 by the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation as part of the Historic Plant Inventory for Eleanor Roosevelt National Historical Site. See source map in ROVA park files for enlargement.

### LEGEND



Approximate scale in feet

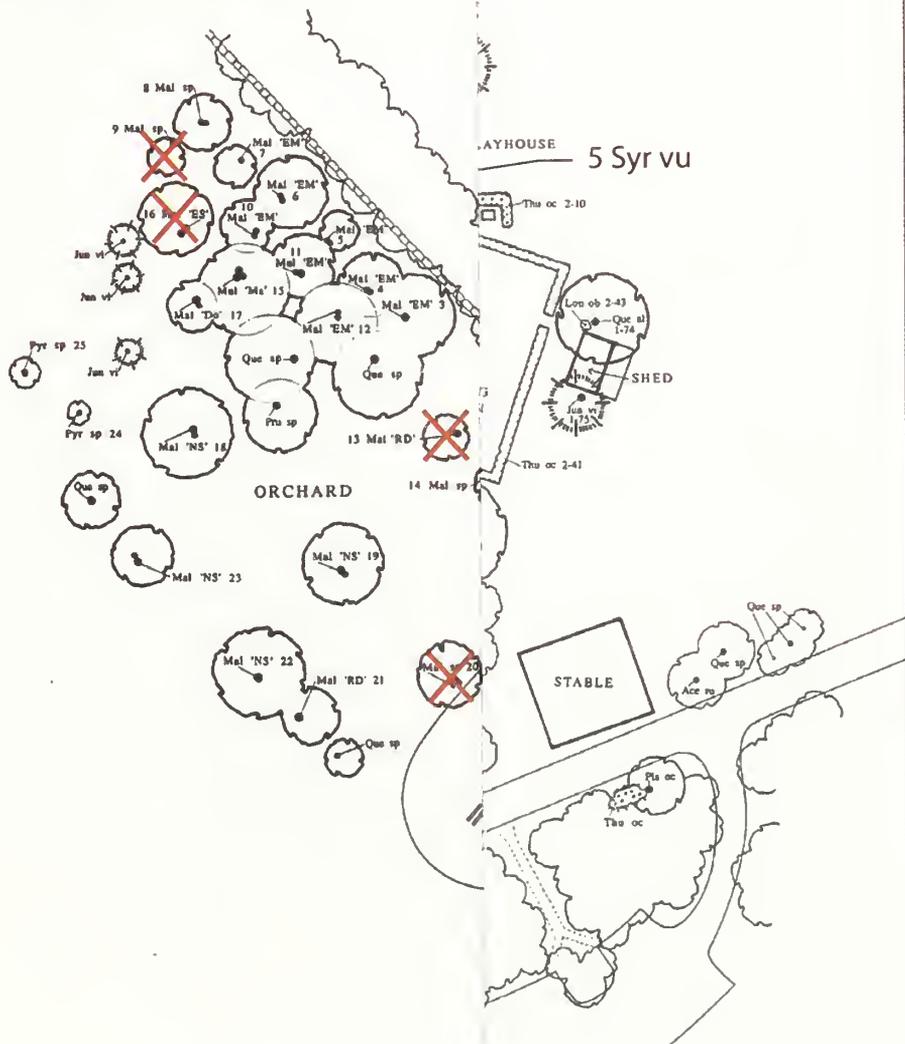
0 30 60 120



Vegetation removed since 1994

Vegetation added since 1994

Map Code	Botanical Name	Common Name	Plant Type
Abi ba	<i>Abies balsamea</i>	Balsam Fir	evergreen tree
Aca st	<i>Acanthopanax sieboldianum</i>	Five-leaved Aralia	
Ace ra	<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red Maple	
Ace sa	<i>Acer saccharum</i>	Sugar Maple	deciduous tree
Ber th	<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>	Japanese Barberry	
Bet po	<i>Betula populifolia</i>	Gray Birch	
Car ov	<i>Carya ovata</i>	Shagbark Hickory	
Cep oc	<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	Butterbush	
Cor fl	<i>Cornus florida</i>	Flowering Dogwood	
Cor sp.	<i>Cornus species</i>	Red-twigged Dogwood	
Cot co	<i>Cotinus coggygria</i>	Smoketree	
Deu le	<i>Deutzia a lemoinei</i>	Lemoinei Deutzia	
Enk ca	<i>Enkianthus campanulatus</i>	Redvein Enkianthus	
Euo al	<i>Euonymus alata</i>	Winged Euonymus	deciduous or evergreen shrub
For la	<i>Forsythia a intermedia</i>	Border Forsythia	
For sp.	<i>Forsythia species</i>	Forsythia	row/hedge of evergreen trees
Hib sy	<i>Hibiscus syriacus</i>	Shrub Althea	
Hyd pe	<i>Hydrangea petiolaris</i>	Climbing Hydrangea	
Jua vi	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	Eastern Red Cedar	
Kal la	<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>	Moussain Laurel	
Kot sm	<i>Kolkwitzia amabilis</i>	Bonnybush	
Lig ob	<i>Ligustrum obtusifolium</i>	Border Privet	
Lom ca	<i>Lonicera tartarica</i>	Tatarian Honeysuckle	
Mal 'Do'	<i>Malus 'Dolgo'</i>	Dolgo Crabapple	
Mal 'EM'	<i>Malus 'Early Macintosh'</i>	Macintosh Apple	
Mal 'ES'	<i>Malus 'Early Strawberry'</i>	Early Strawberry Apple	
Mal 'Ma'	<i>Malus 'Macintosh'</i>	Macintosh Apple	
Mal 'NS'	<i>Malus 'Northern Spy'</i>	Northern Spy Apple	
Mal 'RD'	<i>Malus 'Red Delicious'</i>	Red Delicious Apple	
Mal 'R/P'	<i>Malus 'Radiant' or 'Purple Wave'</i>	Radiant or Purple Wave Crabapple	
Par ir	<i>Parthenocissus tricuspidata</i>	Boston Ivy	
Phi co	<i>Philadelphus coronarius</i>	Mockorange	
Phi fl	<i>Philadelphus floridus</i>	Beadle Mockorange	
Pic ab	<i>Picea abies</i>	Norway Spruce	
Pic gl 'C'	<i>Picea glauca 'Conica'</i>	Dwarf Alberta Spruce	
Pic pu 'O'	<i>Picea pungens 'Glauca'</i>	Colorado Blue Spruce	
Pis re	<i>Pinus resinosa</i>	Red Pine	
Pis st	<i>Pinus strobus</i>	White Pine	



Cultural Landscape Report for Eleanor Roosevelt NHS

Historic Plant Inventory, 2005 Update

Figure 7.9



National Park Service  
Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation  
99 Warren Street  
Brookline, MA 02445

**SOURCES**  
Map produced in 1994 by the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation as part of the Historic Plant Inventory for Eleanor Roosevelt National Historical Site. See source map in ROVA park files for enlargement.

LEGEND



Approximate scale in feet



- Vegetation removed since 1994
- Vegetation added since 1994

Map Code	Botanical Name	Common Name
Am la	<i>Alnus incana</i>	Balsam Fir
Am el	<i>Asplenium adnigrum</i>	Five-leaved Aralia
Am ra	<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red Maple
Am sa	<i>Acer saccharum</i>	Sugar Maple
Am sb	<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>	Japanese Barberry
Am sp	<i>Betula populifolia</i>	Grey Birch
Am sr	<i>Cory aversa</i>	Shagbark Hickory
Am st	<i>Corylus americana</i>	Bitternut
Am td	<i>Cornus florida</i>	Flowering Dogwood
Am te	<i>Cornus spicata</i>	Red-twigged Dogwood
Am tf	<i>Conium maculatum</i>	Jimsonweed
Am tg	<i>Daucus carota</i>	Lamb's Ear
Am th	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	Eastern Blackberry
Am ti	<i>Echinacea sp.</i>	Wild Blackberry
Am tj	<i>Fragaria virginiana</i>	Wild Strawberry
Am tk	<i>Hamamelis virginica</i>	Witch Hazel
Am tl	<i>Hesperis matronalis</i>	Night-blooming Cereus
Am tm	<i>Hydrangea arborescens</i>	Hydrangea
Am tn	<i>Hydrangea paniculata</i>	Panicle Hydrangea
Am to	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tp	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tq	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tr	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am ts	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tt	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tu	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tv	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tw	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tx	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am ty	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tz	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am ta	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tb	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tc	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am td	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am te	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tf	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tg	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am th	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am ti	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tj	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tk	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tl	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tm	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tn	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am to	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tp	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tq	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tr	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am ts	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tt	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tu	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tv	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tw	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tx	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am ty	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea
Am tz	<i>Hydrangea sp.</i>	Hydrangea





Figure 7.10. A cluster of oaks stand northeast of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.11. A large sycamore is located near Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.12. The cutting garden contains several varieties of annuals and perennials in raised beds and is surrounded by an arborvitae hedge (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.13. The rose garden with Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage in the background (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.14. The walled garden at the Stone Cottage contains perennials, potted plants, and climbing vines (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.15. The orchard at Val-Kill contains several old and aged apple trees and two pear trees (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.16. Val-Kill's Stone Cottage, the first structure built on site (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.17. The Doll House sits on the lawn northeast of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.18. The bridge and dam with the Stone Cottage in the background (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.19. The supports for a swing set and see-saw sit on the lawn between the cottages at the bank of the pond (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.20. Typical stone wall at Val-Kill. This is an informal dry-laid wall created from agricultural activities (OCLP, 2003).



Figure 7.21. Stone pillars flank the pedestrian access to the orchard and visitor parking lot, at the historic orchard entrance (OCLP, 2003).



Northwest side of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, 1962. Photo by George Brown, ROVA park files.

# Landscape Analysis

**ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**EVALUATION OF LANDSCAPE INTEGRITY**

**ANALYSIS OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS**

**EVALUATION OF LANDSCAPE FEATURES**



## LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

### ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Analysis of Significance and Integrity chapter of the cultural landscape report explores the significance of the Val-Kill landscape in American history. By discussing broad themes that identify the importance of the site in concert with the integrity of the extant landscape - tangible reminders of Mrs. Roosevelt's life at Val-Kill - a greater understanding of the overall site can be gained. This analysis is based on the National Register of Historic Places program's definitions and criteria.

### NATIONAL REGISTER STATUS AND AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The National Register identifies criteria for determining historic significance. The resource(s), which may be a district, site, building, structure, or object, must meet at least one of the National Register criteria:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history; or*
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or*
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or*
- D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield information in prehistory or history.*

Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site was listed on the National Register in 1979, shortly after its designation as a national park. The documentation supporting the listing finds the property significant in the area of Politics/Government under Criterion B, for its association with Eleanor Roosevelt, a woman who made significant contributions to 20th century American society and politics as an activist for humanitarian and social causes. Val-Kill is directly related to the development of Eleanor Roosevelt's public and private lives, as the place where her social and political views as well as her self-confidence to venture into the public realm blossomed. From the private environment of Val-Kill, where Mrs. Roosevelt surrounded herself with family and friends of her choosing and where she had a buffer from the world of her

husband's political career, Mrs. Roosevelt evolved into a woman of national and international importance.

The National Register nomination emphasizes Val-Kill's importance to Mrs. Roosevelt's life after FDR's death in 1945 when she asserted herself publicly beyond the scope of her marriage. This is when Val-Kill was heavily used to host gatherings for diverse audiences, reflecting Mrs. Roosevelt's wide interests. She welcomed visiting dignitaries, including Nikita Khrushchev and Marshall Tito, United Nations groups, boys from a local residential home, students, and family members to the retreat. As the development of Val-Kill began with Mrs. Roosevelt and continued to play a defining role throughout her later life, the period of significance includes the entire thirty-eight year period she was associated with the site, 1924-1962. Val-Kill is also the place where Mrs. Roosevelt and her friends Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman exercised their political and social convictions in starting a cottage industry. Val-Kill Industries, run from a shop building at the retreat, provided employment for rural craftsmen, enticing them to remain in the country instead of migrating to cities in search of work. This manifestation of their collective social ideals is a significant piece of the history of Val-Kill.

The primary features discussed in the existing National Register nomination are the Stone Cottage and Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage (referred to as the Factory in the nomination). The Stone Cottage was the first building constructed at Val-Kill and was the nucleus of early retreat activities. The building was planned by Mrs. Roosevelt and her two friends Marion Dickerman and Nancy Cook to be shared among them, though FDR took an active role in the design and construction. The Factory was created as work space to house the activities of Val-Kill Industries. After the business failed in 1936, Mrs. Roosevelt adapted the Factory into a residence for herself and her secretary. This became her primary residence after FDR's death in 1945, when Springwood was deeded to the federal government. Mrs. Roosevelt solidified her management of Val-Kill after 1947 when Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman moved from the site.

The National Register documentation form refers to other landscape features dating to the period of significance as contributing to the historic setting including the picnic fireplace, Playhouse, Doll House, tennis court, garage/stable, swimming pool, potting shed, tool shed, and a wooden garage near the tenant house site. Also included as contributing to the period of significance are the trash dump, trails around the historic core, and the surrounding agricultural land that Mrs. Roosevelt and her children leased to local farmers.

#### **EXPANDED STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Though the National Register documentation mentions the agricultural context and selected landscape features, the documentation fails to adequately discuss

the significance of the natural environment and designed landscape of Val-Kill. As documented in Mrs. Roosevelt's writing, including passages from her daily syndicated newspaper column, *My Day*, she valued many aspects of Val-Kill, notably its beautiful setting and the tranquility of the natural landscape. Many aspects of these intangible qualities retain integrity today, which provides a strong association between current conditions and those dating to Mrs. Roosevelt's day. While more ephemeral aspects of the landscape such as plantings and workmanship become harder to identify over time, the site conveys integrity of location, setting, and feeling relating to the agricultural, scenic, and naturalistic contexts that Mrs. Roosevelt valued.

Even prior to Val-Kill developments, Mrs. Roosevelt praised the natural beauty of the area and, indeed, chose the site for its scenic qualities and peaceful atmosphere. At the edge of pasture land, surrounded by farmland and native forest, the Fall-Kill became a central feature around which Mrs. Roosevelt structured her Val-Kill home and sought tranquility from her otherwise active schedule. She wrote in 1938, "We entered our cottage at Hyde Park on Friday night, sat on our porch, looked at the reflection of the sunset on the water and basked in a feeling of complete peace and quiet."<sup>284</sup> Likewise, shortly after completion of the Stone Cottage, Mrs. Roosevelt expressed her contentment with the location and setting by writing FDR, "The peace of it is divine."<sup>285</sup> She expressed a love for simple, natural occurrences and looked forward to cyclical displays of seasonal change. Writing in July 1938:

*The lovely purple loose-strife, which grows in marshy ground, is just beginning to come out. It makes the marsh adjoining our little ponds a blaze of color, reflected in the water. I remember it all through the year as one of the most brilliant of nature's shows.*<sup>286</sup>

Similarly:

*The purple loose-strife becomes more beautiful every day and the swamp maples are turning red. I am afraid I shall miss the most beautiful part of the autumn coloring, for I will not be here in October. The front will come early this year according to the Katydid, so we may have the best of the autumn coloring before we leave.*<sup>287</sup>

The agricultural context of Val-Kill remained important throughout Mrs. Roosevelt's life. The quiet, bucolic setting was essential in the initial site selection and Mrs. Roosevelt actively sought to perpetuate it through her handling of FDR's estate after his death. She and her son, Elliott, purchased land from the FDR's estate trust to continue managing the acreage as producing farms.

*I have never felt in any way interested in a country place just as a country place. I feel that land should produce; and if you have a little extra money, you should try experiments in the hope of benefiting farming as a whole for your neighbors. The custom which existed for a time in this country, of having large places which cost a great deal of money and produced nothing beyond what one*

*family used on their table, has always seemed to me a very wasteful tradition, and I am glad that it is rapidly disappearing.*<sup>288</sup>

Though the number of acres held by Mrs. Roosevelt and her family fluctuated throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, the immediate surrounds of Val-Kill retained its much of its rural character, amidst substantial suburban pressure in Hyde Park.

The rural character at Val-Kill was defined through hay fields and pasture land of the parcel's west regions, numerous informal, dry-laid stone walls created during decades of agricultural activity, the 1931 orchard west of the creek that hosted apple and pear trees, and the Val-Kill pond that was enlarged several times yet slowly yielded to natural succession - a process Mrs. Roosevelt enjoyed witnessing:

*The purple loose-strife is just beginning to bloom around our pond. It makes the marshes a beautiful field of color but the reflection in the water, together with the long gray trunks of trees which seem to reach down toward the bottom, makes the whole pond seem like an enchanted garden.*<sup>289</sup>

The existing National Register documentation fails to include significant landscape resources that contribute to the overall setting and character of Val-Kill. While mention was made of the trails "around the building area," the loop road in the wooded eastern region is an important resource relating to Mrs. Roosevelt's use of the site.<sup>290</sup> She was an avid horseback rider and rode these and other trails throughout the Roosevelt estate. Notably, Mrs. Roosevelt walked the loop road with her dogs on an almost daily basis, passing the experimental tree plantations planted in the woods of Val-Kill by FDR and enjoying the woodland plants and animals she encountered on the way.

The relationship between the forest, the agricultural fields, and the cottage environs was an essential connection, one that is a character-defining aspect of the site. As the scale of Val-Kill was accessible on a pedestrian level, Mrs. Roosevelt experienced each of the definable sub-areas on a regular basis. The presence of each contributed to her greater appreciation of the site.

Around the cottages, outdoor features played a key role in Mrs. Roosevelt's utilization of the site. After 1945, specifically after 1947 when Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman left the site, the grounds were used often by Mrs. Roosevelt, her children, and grandchildren for recreation. They enjoyed the pool, pond with its fixed dock and seasonal floating dock, tennis court, badminton court, and picnic grounds. Mrs. Roosevelt also managed the landscape around the cottages to be beautiful and fruitful. She grew flowers and vegetables in the cutting garden and maintained an informal palette of shrubs, bulbs, perennials, and seasonal flowers around the house environs. Writing in 1939, "I have missed the flowering of our lilacs and lilies of the valley here, but our pansies are still in bloom and the syringa bushes are most luxuriant and very fragrant."<sup>291</sup>

Val-Kill's role and evolution relating to the larger Roosevelt Estate falls within the 1924-1962 period of significance. Though the site was always primarily focused around Mrs. Roosevelt, it functioned within the larger context of the estate; as a place away from the hectic life of Springwood, as a deeded property of FDR's, as a location for FDR's forestry activities, as a physical connection between Springwood and Top Cottage, and as the center of activity as the family attempted to retain the estate lands after FDR's death. By the 1950s, when most of the former estate had been sold or deeded to the Government, Val-Kill remained as the last Roosevelt property in Hyde Park, tying the family to the community until 1970.

It is recommended that the National Register nomination be amended to include references to the contributions of the larger landscape to the significance of Val-Kill. The landscape, both by the presence of specific features and in its broader context, encapsulates what Mrs. Roosevelt valued about Val-Kill, namely, its simplicity, natural beauty, and the opportunity for outdoor leisure and contemplation it afforded. These qualities helped define Mrs. Roosevelt's Val-Kill experience, contributing to the environment in which she nurtured her unique personality and spirit.

#### **EVALUATION OF LANDSCAPE INTEGRITY**

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its historic identity or the extent to which the property evokes its appearance during a particular historic period. An evaluation of integrity is made by identifying seven characteristics or qualities determined by the National Register program: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Not all of the aspects must be present for the site to have integrity, though several must exist to convey the significance of a property. While analysis based on non-quantitative qualities such as feeling and association may appear subjective, the evaluation must be based on an understanding of the documentary evidence, historical significance, and current conditions to determine how they reflect historic condition of the period of significance, 1924-1962.

Val-Kill retains integrity due to the high number of extant historic features. While numerous individual components of the landscape have been restored and represent new materials on site, the overall sense of historic integrity survives.

#### **Location**

Location refers to the place where the cultural landscape was constructed and evolved. Val-Kill remains in the location where Mrs. Roosevelt and her friends first built the retreat from FDR's agricultural estate lands. While the land holdings associated with Mrs. Roosevelt's tenure at the site have fluctuated between 8 and 842 acres, culminating in the 180.5-acre National Historic Site

present today, the core resources of Val-Kill have remained in a constant location since the period of significance. As such they retain integrity.

### **Design**

Design refers to the qualities of the place, including form, space, structure, and style, that help define the cultural landscape. The overarching design of Val-Kill has remained fairly constant since the construction of the key features, though many modifications occurred to the landscape within the period of significance and after. The Stone Cottage retains its defining design elements as few alterations to the building were made after 1962. Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage was divided into four rental apartments after her death in 1962 before being restored by the NPS in the early 1980s. The core circulation system of Val-Kill remained the same throughout the period of significance and exists today, after some restoration by the NPS in the 1980s. Two of the most dynamic feature types are vegetation and small-scale features. As the function of the site evolved from a quiet retreat for Mrs. Roosevelt and her two friends to a permanent home for the former First Lady, her children, and grandchildren, features were modified to address the changing land use. Whereas the site was initially dominated by gardens, the pond, the pool, and copious amounts space for quiet reflection and relaxation, more recreational features were added and maintenance intensive gardens were removed by the 1950s. Many elements reflecting the period of significance, including the informal plantings, tennis court, stepping stone walkways, rose garden, Doll House, and pool exist today despite being neglected during the 1970s when the site was owned and managed by absentee landlords. As such the site retains design integrity.

### **Setting**

The setting of Val-Kill is an important quality as it was one of the key determinations in choosing the site. The Roosevelts used the future Val-Kill site for picnicking in the 1920s because of its quiet, secluded setting. The site's proximity to the Fall-Kill and its distance from Route 9G created a private and scenic location that was well suited to the development of a quiet country home. For much of the period of significance, Val-Kill resided in a rural and agricultural setting, surrounded by farmland but screened from most direct views of farming activities by woodlands and topography.

Towards the end of Mrs. Roosevelt's life, suburban development increased in the Hyde Park area, some on former Roosevelt estate land. Increased suburbanization since the period of significance has altered the setting, exacerbating the reduction of the rural context that began in the 1950s. As this is not a new trend, just an amplification of an existing one, the larger setting retains integrity to the period of significance. Val-Kill's historic core also retains integrity of setting as the current scene is private and shielded from abutters, as it was in 1962.

**Materials**

All types of construction materials, including paving, plantings, and other landscape features, are included under this aspect of integrity. Val-Kill's cultural landscape materials largely date to the period of significance, including many trees and shrubs, stone pavers, and small-scale features. The tennis court surface and backstops are original and the pool, though covered and not functional, contains much of its historic material. Some individual plants have been replaced, including the cutting garden, but many original trees and shrubs remain on site. Because both a fair amount of original materials exist along side the new materials, Val-Kill retains material integrity.

**Workmanship**

Workmanship refers to evidence of the crafts of a particular period. While the resources of Val-Kill do not represent the work of fine craftsmen or extraordinary design and construction techniques, indications of the historic workmanship remain. The buildings and structures represent historic integrity in varying degrees. Some have not been substantially altered and still display the work of the designers and craftsmen who built them. Others have been modified since the period of significance and have lost evidence of their historic building craft. Most landscape features such as the driveways, walkways, gardens, picnic fireplace, and swimming pool have been restored by the NPS, reducing their integrity of workmanship. As a whole, not enough of the original workmanship survives to say the site retains integrity of workmanship.

**Feeling**

A property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular time period is evaluated under this aspect of integrity. If Mrs. Roosevelt could see Val-Kill today, it can be argued that she would recognize it as her home. The site was always characterized by its rural setting, and quiet and peaceful atmosphere. These key components still exist at Val-Kill today. Neighbors are not visible from the cottages, the pond still looms large in the landscape, the woods roads still travel through the east region of the site, and the informal planting scheme of the historic core remains. Certainly, individual features, such as trees and shrubs, have matured or been removed, maintenance regimes have been altered creating a different appearance along the pond edge, and NPS introductions such as signage and benches for visitor use have modified the appearance of the area. However, the overall feeling of Val-Kill that Mrs. Roosevelt would have experienced between 1924 and 1962 exists, so the site retains integrity of feeling.

**Association**

The linkage between the existing cultural landscape and the person or event that made it significant, Mrs. Roosevelt, is defined by association. The landscape created and enjoyed by Mrs. Roosevelt remains with a high degree of integrity,

leading to a direct association with her. As the major landscape features from the period of significance exist, the association of the site with Mrs. Roosevelt is readily visible and integrity is retained.

## **ANALYSIS OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS AND FEATURES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The analysis of landscape characteristics and features serves to determine what are the essential components that define the historical value of Eleanor Roosevelt NHS. By addressing the large-scale patterns, or landscape characteristics, together with individual landscape features, the cultural landscape's contribution to the significance of Val-Kill can be better understood. This exercise is informed by earlier chapters of the report that explored the site's history, existing condition, reasons why it is significant, and integrity of the extant landscape resources.

Landscape characteristics will be evaluated using the same categories appearing in the existing conditions chapter. The characteristics include: natural systems, spatial organization, circulation, topography, vegetation, buildings and structures, views and vistas, and small-scale features. On a smaller scale, landscape features, which are components of landscape characteristics, are analyzed for their historic condition, post-historic condition, and existing condition so a determination of their contribution to the period of significance can be made. The feature analysis segment is broken into the following components:

*Historic Condition, that encompasses brief discussion of the feature's history and evolution as it relates to the period of significance;*

*Post-Historic Condition and Existing Condition, an overview of changes that have occurred since the end of the period of significance up to today; and*

*Evaluation, a determination of the feature's contributing or non-contributing status to the period of significance.*

In the analysis of landscape characteristics, the site is discussed in its entirety to reach a comprehensive ruling on the contribution of large-scale landscape patterns.

Conversely, the analysis of landscape features is structured using three spatial units to help organize the discussion of features. The delineation of these three areas, or character areas, creates distinct regions based on similar natural features and land uses. No hard edges define these smaller units as they are largely bounded by dynamic features such as vegetation and hydrology and as such, some geographic overlapping may occur.

The definition of the three character areas has been alluded to previously in the site history chapter. A natural separation occurs between the low-lying

agricultural land in the site's western areas (hereafter referred to as the west region), the core area around the cottages including associated structures and affiliated landscape features (hereafter referred to as the historic core), and finally the forested east region of the site (hereafter referred to as the east region) (Figure 8.1).

The landscape characteristics and features are determined to be contributing or noncontributing to clearly state their importance to the presentation of the historic scene.

Contributing features generally date to the period of significance, 1924-1962, and retain association with Mrs. Roosevelt. They may be character-defining, meaning of utmost importance to the overall character of the site, or they may be characteristic features, ones that contribute as components of the larger landscape.

Non-contributing features generally post-date the period of significance or have been so altered from their historic condition that they have lost their association with Mrs. Roosevelt. Within the classification of non-contributing, features may be either compatible or incompatible with the presentation of the historic scene. Compatible features, while non-contributing, have consistent character with historic fabric, are in-kind replacements of original features, or generally do not detract from the presentation of the historic scene. Incompatible features have no historic precedent or detract from the historic character of the site in terms of materials, size, scale, proportion, and massing.

## **ANALYSIS OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS**

### **NATURAL SYSTEMS**

#### Geology

The geology of Val-Kill was created through many years of glacial action and erosion. Early uplifting caused by tectonic action of the Allegheny mountain formation added vertical dimensions to the formerly flat landscape.<sup>292</sup> During several ice ages, glacial ice up to one mile thick covered the region, modifying the rough landscape created by the previous era's uplifting. Toward the end of the ice age a large glacial lake, Lake Albany, located north of the study area, melted and scoured the current path of the Hudson River. As the last glaciers retreated 13,000 before present, they left behind soils made of glacial till or outwash that was comprised of rocks, sand, silt, and clay, which largely exist today.<sup>293</sup>

Early settlers and farmers cultivated the land of Val-Kill, relying on the soil to produce agricultural yields. Nineteenth-century accounts lauded the productivity of Dutchess County farming, yet generations of family farming depleted the soil forcing many to switch to raising livestock. By the time the

Roosevelts purchased Val-Kill, much of the land was devoted to livestock grazing because of the poor agricultural soil and the site's hilly, rocky topography. Soils remain similar today as they were after the last ice age. The geology of Val-Kill played an important role in the site's historical development by influencing land-use patterns and as such contributes to the period of significance.

### Ecology

During the pre-and early European settlement era, the local landscape was dominated by a white and Northern red oak forest.<sup>294</sup> The forest also included red and sugar maple, chestnut, beech, tulip trees, white pine, and hemlock.<sup>295</sup> Early settlers and farmers encountered black bear, wolves, panthers, and moose, along with the smaller fauna seen today, including raccoon, deer, skunk, squirrels, rabbits, and mice. Europeans altered the native landscape to suit their agricultural aims, cutting forest land, removing wildlife habitat, and hunting game.

By the time the Roosevelts purchased the Bennett farm in 1911, large amounts of the farm were either deforested or partially cleared for agriculture and livestock grazing. With the exception of a few forestry plantations that did little to alter the overall ecosystem of the area, the landscape of the east region reverted to a hardwood forest. The agricultural and natural context of the site was altered beginning in the 1950s with increased suburbanization in the local community. This trend modified the surrounding ecosystem through the removal of forests and the changing of hydrological patterns.

Mrs. Roosevelt and her friends manipulated the Val-Kill environment beyond FDR's forestry activities, turning the farmland into a residential unit. They introduced native and exotic ornamental plant species and altered the Fall-Kill from a marshy stream into a well-defined pond.

Today, Eleanor Roosevelt NHS consists of a mixture of agricultural land, forest stands, and a maintained residential landscape. FDR's white pine, white cedar, Scots pine, and tulip poplar stands remain in varying stages of succession in the east region. Common forest mammals and birds are found in Val-Kill's forests including white-tailed deer, coyotes, gray fox, raccoons, chipmunks, red foxes, and gray squirrels, downy woodpeckers, blackcapped chickadees, warblers, orioles, and sparrows.<sup>296</sup>

The state-threatened Blandings turtle has been observed in several areas of the park as they travel to and from preferred nesting sites, though no nesting sites have been found within the park. Within the historic core, numerous domestic plantings exist, such as day lilies, crocuses, iris, euonymus, violets, dogwood, peony, American elm, and forsythia that were largely planted during the period of significance. The Val-Kill pond has now become crowded with wetland plants such as purple loosestrife, duckweed, and cattails that provide ample habitat for

green frogs, bullfrogs, painted turtles, and salamanders. Further west, wetland plants flourish in the low, marshy northwest fields and hay is grown in the southwest field. Many bird species have been found within the meadows, including rough winged swallows, starlings, blue winged warblers, cowbirds, and hairy woodpeckers.<sup>297</sup>

The current and historic ecological components of the park represent an important characteristic of the landscape that describes an integral part of the Roosevelt story at Val-Kill. The management decisions made by FDR, Mrs. Roosevelt, and their sons, influenced the ecological resources on site and reflect the family's numerous interests in the land.

### Hydrology

Val-Kill's water resources have long played an active role in influencing land use and spatial organization of the area. No evidence of Native American settlements have been found within the park, possibly because of the wet and swampy land. The Fall-Kill that runs south through the center of the property was traditionally a slow-moving, shallow, wide creek, resulting in a large wetland area through the center of the site.

Early farmers dammed the creek to create a wider creek bed. The Roosevelts increased the dam in the 1920s and 1930s, changing the stream north and west of the Val-Kill cottages into a seven-acre pond. Numerous changes were made to the stream and pond between the 1920s and 1940s to enlarge and deepen the amount of open water as well as to further define the shoreline. Reduced maintenance from the 1940s onward allowed the wetland character to return.

Today the hydrology at Val-Kill is dominated by the Fall-Kill creek and pond. The pond's area of open water is greatly reduced from historic times. The Fall-Kill wetland area extends west near the caretaker's house and the northwestern field remains wet in certain sections and is seasonally fed by drainage ditches that channel water from the northwest field. South of the historic core, the Fall-Kill continues past the bridge, running along the park's southwest boundary. Several areas of wetland exist along its length. Several vernal pools and a year-round pond are located in the southeast region of the park. The southern dam still exists, creating a small pond along the park's southwestern boundary.

The hydrology of Eleanor Roosevelt NHS contributes greatly to the significance of the park. The evolution of the Fall-Kill closely mirrors the evolution of the larger landscape. Initially the overgrown, rustic pond reflected the landscape treatment of the Val-Kill landscape, yet by the time the Val-Kill partners had created a more designed and maintained residential landscape, the pond's character had been changed to complement the larger scheme. Likewise, the wetlands that remain today in the west region and along the northwest boundary

of the Val-Kill pond influenced agricultural land use patterns established prior to and during the period of significance.

### **Spatial Organization**

The Val-Kill landscape has always been spatially divided by the Fall-Kill creek. The creek serves as a north-south boundary, roughly marking two distinct zones. By looking at topography, soil patterns, and water routes, it can be surmised that early farmers cleared and cultivated the western region of the park. This area is relatively flat and close to the road, making it more attractive for farming.

The Roosevelt's improvements to Val-Kill followed this pattern, allowing the creek and topography to dictate how they organized their landscape. FDR rented the western portion of the site to a tenant farmer to keep the acreage in production. The area remained cleared of large vegetation and retained a rural character. The Val-Kill retreat evolved along the east bank of the creek and took advantage of the water for its scenic qualities and for recreation. FDR located several forestry plantations north and south of the historic core, strengthening the wooded character of the farm's eastern region.

Within the historic core, the site developed a hierarchy of gardens and designed landscape features based on the preference of the residents. When Mrs. Roosevelt converted the Factory building into her residence in 1936, a landscape plan that reflected her personality and goals emerged in contrast to that of her fellow Val-Kill resident and gardening enthusiast, Nancy Cook. Two zones were created, one of carefully maintained flower gardens near the Stone Cottage and another consisting of a more naturalistic design consisting primarily of native plant material at Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. After 1947, the two distinct areas blurred into one another again as the gardens of the Stone Cottage lost their manicured appearance due to deferred maintenance.

Val-Kill today retains a similar spatial organization that alludes to the property's agricultural origins. The west region remains largely as open land, illustrating the many generations of farmers that worked these low-lying fields. The Fall-Kill creek and pond marks the boundary between this open land and areas to the east, including the historic core and eastern woodland that retain a similarly forested appearance. The historic core is tucked into the edge of the woods and blends with the forest due to its numerous mature trees. The spatial organization remains an important component of the larger landscape that contributes to the understanding of Eleanor Roosevelt's experience at Val-Kill.

### **Land Use**

Until 1925, Val-Kill functioned as part of the farm centered on the west side of Route 9G. The many farmers who utilized the land most likely followed similar patterns, sowing crops on the flat, well-drained land and grazing livestock on more marginal acreage. When FDR purchased the Bennett Farm in 1911, farming continued to be the primary land use but the Roosevelt family also used the site intermittently for recreation. The banks of the Fall-Kill creek emerged as a favorite family picnic spot in the summer months. This part-time use transitioned into a more intensive recreational use of the site in 1924 when the idea to construct the Val-Kill retreat for Mrs. Roosevelt and her friends Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman materialized. For the next forty-six years, or until the property was sold outside of the Roosevelt family, land use was primarily residential and recreational, with other secondary uses including light manufacturing, forestry, and farming.

Mrs. Roosevelt, FDR, Nancy Cook, Marion Dickerman, and their friend Caroline O'Day established Val-Kill industries in 1926, operating the venture until 1936. Other business operations associated with Val-Kill included FDR's tree plantations that were conceived of as a sustainable forestry effort and for the production of Christmas trees. Many of FDR's Christmas trees were harvested after his death by Val-Kill Farms, an agricultural enterprise operated by Mrs. Roosevelt and her son Elliott between 1946 and the early 1950s. Val-Kill Farms utilized other Roosevelt estate lands for most of its agricultural activities, but the western fields of Val-Kill were used for livestock grazing. After Val-Kill Farms folded, tenant farmers resumed occupancy of the former Bennett Farm, using the Val-Kill west fields for fodder crops and grazing.

After Mrs. Roosevelt's death in 1962, her son John and his family lived at the Stone Cottage and converted Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage into four apartments. John rented the four units and the Playhouse until he sold the property in 1970. The next tenants were absentee landlords who continued to rent the subdivided structures as well as the Stone Cottage.

Today, Val-Kill is a national historic site owned and managed by the National Park Service. The National Park Service operates the site as a public resource dedicated to educating visitors about the life and accomplishments of Eleanor Roosevelt. The current land use is does not contribute to the period of significance due to its divergence from residential and agricultural uses that were essential during Mrs. Roosevelt's life at Val-Kill.

### **Circulation**

Circulation patterns at Val-Kill were most likely limited for much of the site's history. As early land owners and tenant farmers centered agricultural activities west of Route 9G, farm roads were likely few on the less frequently used Val-Kill

lands. The one known road dating to the late 1800s is the present day Val-Kill entry road that connected the tenant house with Route 9G. Other small, unpaved roads may have existed in the central and eastern regions of the site to provide access to grazing land, yet as a whole, the site did not have an extensive or formalized system of roads.

The Roosevelts enlarged the Val-Kill road system to provide access to FDR's forestry plantations and later to serve the Val-Kill cottages. They rebuilt the bridge, improved the entry road and extended access east of the Fall-Kill to connect the Stone Cottage and Factory with Route 9G. Pedestrian connections were established throughout the historic core between the buildings and other landscape features, including the cottages, pool, and bathhouse. Circulation systems were further expanded in the 1930s with the construction of a loop road through the east woods that was used to access FDR's plantations and used by Mrs. Roosevelt for exercise.

After Mrs. Roosevelt's death in 1962, her son John Roosevelt who lived at Val-Kill and managed the property, built a road through the cutting garden that connected with the eastern access road. In 1964, Charles Curnan, Mrs. Roosevelt's long time employee and former superintendent built a house north of the site of the old tenant house and connected the house to the entry road with an earthen driveway. As former Roosevelt estate lands were sold and subdivided in the 1950s and 1960s, a parcel east of Val-Kill was developed as a residential subdivision. Consequently, the connection that once existed between Val-Kill and Top Cottage disappeared. The woods road connection ended at the boundary of Val-Kill, abutting a private property owner.

The circulation system in use today at Val-Kill resembles the one standing in the late 1960s. The main entry road, used historically as the primary access route, continues to service a majority of site traffic. Pedestrians and vehicles may also enter and exit the site via the eastern access road. Two parking lots have been created by the National Park Service, a staff parking lot south of the garage/stable and a visitor lot in the orchard southwest of the bridge. The National Park Service removed the driveway spur through the cutting garden in the mid-1980s, but all other roads and walkways remain. The house and driveway Charles Curnan built is still in use, as is the loop road, and interior paths and driveways in the historic core.

The circulation systems at Val-Kill play an important role in understanding the evolution of the site. Not only do the historic roads and paths describe events that took place at Val-Kill, helping illustrate Mrs. Roosevelt's changing use and perception of the site, they relate to the development of FDR's forestry operations and the development of his own private retreat at Top Cottage.

## Vegetation

Before Val-Kill developments the property was divided between cultivated lands and non-agricultural or grazing lands, which dictated the type of vegetation located throughout the site. The western region was cleared for crop production and grazing, as was the central portion. Historically, wetland vegetation surrounded the large Fall-Kill wetland, around which livestock grazed. Farther east, native forests grew, including chestnut, oak, hemlock, and beech trees, on hilly rocky soils.

When FDR purchased the property in 1911, Willet Bennett managed the west fields for cultivation and the east and central regions for grazing. The center of the site hosted thick successional shrub growth including scattered birch and red cedars around the Fall-Kill wetland. FDR's first involvement at the Bennett farm included planting a stand of white pine trees northeast of the Fall-Kill wetland in 1914. He located the single-species plantation on former pasture land in the north central area of the farm. FDR managed the stand while renting the remaining acreage to tenant farmers.

More substantial manipulation of the site's vegetation began in 1925 when construction of the Val-Kill retreat began. Initially, a stretch of creek bed and pasture was cleared of vegetation northeast of the bridge. Further clearing occurred as the Factory, forge, and other structures and landscape features were constructed throughout the 1920s and 1930s. An orchard was planted southwest of the bridge in the early 1930s, containing several varieties of apples and pears. By the late 1930s, the area surrounding Stone Cottage had evolved from an informal area dominated by lawn and few ornamental plants to a rich, designed landscape. The plant palette included many varieties of annuals, climbing vines, perennials, and flowering shrubs. The Factory landscape was manipulated as well but with less attention to detail. Loose foundation plantings, birches, cedars, lilacs, climbing roses, and seasonal bulbs predominated in this area.

FDR established additional plantations south of the historic core in the early 1930s. He planted northern white cedars, tulip poplars, red oak, Scots pine, and black walnut in stands along the Fall-Kill southeast of the bridge. Some of these trees were later harvested by Mrs. Roosevelt and her son Elliott Roosevelt during the operation of Val-Kill Farms, a short lived agricultural operation run on FDR's former estate lands.

From the 1960s to the late 1970s the designed landscape at Val-Kill deteriorated, including the gardens and ornamental plants of the historic core. By 1977 when the National Park Service acquired the property, little to none of the formal gardens remained and existing vegetation was in poor condition.

Today, the National Park Service maintains a fraction of the designed landscape present at the site during the 1940s and 1940s. The west fields are still kept as meadows, though some wetland vegetation grows in the north field. The pond

and pond edge are not mowed as they were in the 1940s and 1950s. The National Park Service cut the grass at the edge of the pond annually until approximately eight years ago but now vegetation grows freely around most of its perimeter. Clipped lawn is maintained throughout the historic core, down to the rough vegetation at the pond's edge. Elsewhere on site, the cutting garden has been restored and roses, annuals, and perennials grow within a replanted arborvitae hedge. The rose garden is also maintained west of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. FDR's tree plantations have not been managed since the 1950s and are overgrown. Outside of the 1914 white pine plantation, the plantations do not retain a high degree of integrity to their historic conditions.

The vegetation at Val-Kill is an essential component of the landscape. Each of the three regions contains vegetation that contributes to the period of significance, even though each is characterized by different attributes.

### **Buildings and Structures**

The first structures built at Val-Kill were most likely related to agriculture. The oldest documented building on site was the old tenant house built in the late 1800, which was likely rented to farm workers, family members, or tenants of the property owner who resided on the west side of Route 9G. Later residents remembered associated agricultural outbuildings located near the tenant house for their personal use, to store equipment and livestock, yet few other were likely located on the property prior to construction of the Val-Kill retreat.

The bridge at Val-Kill has long been an important feature, providing access to the east region of the park from Route 9G, but the original bridge's design and date of construction are unknown. The feature is first documented from the time directly preceding Val-Kill development. In 1925, the bridge was a crude log structure built on fieldstone pilings. It was later repaired and eventually replaced several times between the 1920s and 1930s, evolving into a thirty-seven-foot-long structure with a plank deck on concrete supports.

The Stone Cottage was the first building constructed at Val-Kill that was built to be a part-time residence for Mrs. Roosevelt and a full-time home for Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman. The fieldstone, one-and-a-half-story building was located east of the bridge, set back approximately one hundred feet from the Fall-Kill. Construction of the Factory building followed shortly after to house a shop for the women's joint business, Val-Kill Industries. The women built an additional shop building directly adjacent to the first structure in the late 1920s, and joined the two shortly after to create a large, irregularly shaped building with several wings. In 1936, Val-Kill Industries closed and Mrs. Roosevelt converted the Factory into her residence, when it became known as Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage.

Several buildings were constructed to support the Stone Cottage and Factory. A small garage was built east of the Factory and later converted into a metal forging shop for Val-Kill Industries. After the business closed, the building continued to be used as a forge for a short period of time and then was converted into gathering and picnicking space for Mrs. Roosevelt and her family and was renamed the Playhouse.

East of the Playhouse, several small structures were built to support the extensive gardens planted by Nancy Cook. These included a greenhouse, potting shed, hot frame, and cold frame. Further east of the garden structures, Mrs. Roosevelt located a shared garage and stable. The building is a one-and-a-half-story concrete block structure with several bays for cars and horses as well as a small apartment.

In 1945, Mrs. Roosevelt had a play structure known as the Doll House, built at her mother-in-law's direction, moved from Springwood to the Val-Kill lawn.

As Val-Kill continued to function as a farm in varying degrees until approximately 1970, several impermanent structures were built and utilized for animal enclosures and farm equipment storage. John Roosevelt and Charles Curnan built and maintained several barns in the west and central regions of the property. Charles Curnan also built a house north of the old tenant house site in 1964. This building is a modern one-story wood-frame home.

Today, the agricultural buildings in the central and western region of the park are gone, as are the greenhouse and hot and cold frames. All other structures remain, including the Curnan house, Stone Cottage, Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage, Playhouse, Garage/Stable, Potting Shed, Doll House, and bridge. The Curnan house and Garage/Stable are used for maintenance and non-visitor park needs. All other structures are part of the interpretive programming.

The buildings at Val-Kill are essential components of the significance of the site. They illustrate the activities and interests of Mrs. Roosevelt that shaped the overall landscape over time. The extant Val-Kill buildings, with the exception of the Curnan house, date to the period of significance and represent Mrs. Roosevelt's influence on the evolution of the site.

### **Views and Vistas**

Val-Kill's topography, land use, and vegetation have always played a role in defining the views and vistas on site. It is likely that the landscape, both within Val-Kill and on neighboring properties, hosted substantially fewer trees than today, so views off site may have been more expansive during the period of significance.

Within the historic core, views in the initial stages of Val-Kill construction were quite limited. As development was centered around the Fall-Kill creek and wetland that were surrounded by undergrowth and dense wetland vegetation, views outward were almost non-existent. Later, as the site became more developed and the creek was enlarged to a pond, the water's edge was cleared on all sides and westward views were opened. Views from of the Val-Kill cottages became visible from the entry road when wetland growth was cleared from the pond.

Forest growth obstructed views to the east. As maintenance priorities changed through the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, views west from the cottages were reduced as wetland vegetation grew abundantly on the west and northwestern banks of the pond. Views north from Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage were compromised by a row of Norway spruce trees planted in the mid-1930s. As they grew to maturity in the 1950s and 1960s, they completely screened the view north.

Today, as vegetation matures and the pond continues to revert to wetland, a view west to the southwest field is available from the Stone Cottage lawn. Views are limited from Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage due to the abundance of mature trees surrounding the house. Forest growth obscures outward views from the park's high point at the park's southeast extent.

Current views at Val-Kill are similar to ones available during the end of the period of significance and contribute to the historic scene.

### **Small-Scale Features**

Few small-scale features remain from the pre-Roosevelt period, with the exception of stone walls. Numerous stone walls exist on the property, marking old field patterns and boundary lines. The most prominent are the walls that run the length of the boundary at Route 9G and the wall that once separated the Bennett Farm and the Tompkins Farm to the south. Yet, other walls run through the forest in the central and eastern region of the site, some even on the steep slopes in the southeast region of the park.

During the three decades that Mrs. Roosevelt spent at the site, many small-scale features were added to the landscape. Mrs. Roosevelt, Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman added several features between 1925 and 1947, including a dock, flagpole, board and paling fences, garden statuary, bath houses, children's play equipment, outdoor fireplace, and patios. Tennis and badminton courts were added while some of the garden fencing and ornamentation was removed in the 1950s.

Many features remain from the time the Roosevelt family owned the property, mostly in the historic core. Many relate to the scenic and recreational activities that characterized use of the site, including the east and south patios of the Stone

Cottage, the pool equipment room and old pool pump, tennis court, swing set, and brick wall enclosing the Stone Cottage east garden. Several stone walls remain as well, in varying degrees of repair. Some have been maintained by the National Park Service and others are deteriorating deep in the woods. The National Park Service added several small-scale features to meet visitor needs including benches, signage, and lighting.

As a group, the site's small-scale features are important landscape resources that contribute to the period of significance.

## EVALUATION OF LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The evaluation of landscape features is divided into segments corresponding to spatial divisions of the Val-Kill landscape (see Figure 8.1). As discussed earlier, three regions, or character areas have been defined for the park that contain groupings of features and feature types that are roughly enclosed by discernible boundaries. This grouping system that includes the west region, historic core, and east region, structures the following discussion of the contributing or non-contributing status of Val-Kill's landscape components.

### WEST REGION

#### Circulation

##### Val-Kill Entry Road

*Historic Condition:* The first documentation of a road servicing the interior of the current Eleanor Roosevelt NHS, or what was historically known as the Bennett Farm, appears on an 1858 map of the area. A farm road bisected the west region of the property into two nearly equal sized rectangular fields, terminating at the Fall-Kill. Whether a road crossed the creek in the early days is unknown, but it is likely that early farmers grazed livestock on the east side of the creek, possibly crossing them at a naturally shallow area of the stream. By 1914 when FDR planted a stand of white pine trees on the east bank of the Fall-Kill, the road served a dual purpose of providing access for the tenant farmer as well as providing access to the forest plantation. The Roosevelt family also used the road to reach picnic locations on the east side of the Fall-Kill. Though documentation about its surface and width is unknown, it can be deduced that the road was a two-track dirt road, just wide enough for cars and farm equipment. The road bed followed the undulating topography, rising and dipping with natural features. A vernacular fieldstone wall lined the north side of the road, and possibly the south side, built over years of clearing agricultural fields for cultivation.

Developments for the Val-Kill retreat began in 1924, spurring improvements to the primitive farm road. It was rebuilt between the old tenant house and the bridge in 1925, an action that likely leveled and re-graded the simple, uneven surface. As use of Val-Kill increased in the 1930s and 1940s, the road was oiled annually to keep dust down and provide a partially paved surface.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The entry road remained unpaved through the 1970s, even after the 1977 establishment of Eleanor Roosevelt NHS. Early employees of ERVK recalled bumping along the rutted entry road at some peril to their cars. The Federal Highways Administration

substantially altered the vertical profile and width of the road in the 1980s. Alterations continued in 2000 when the NPS paved the segment between the bridge and Route 9G with a bituminous concrete finished with a chip-seal coat. Road improvements also included widening the segment between the visitor parking lot and the driveway to Charles Curnan's former residence and adding a culvert to improve drainage. Today, the road resembles a more regular, engineered feature than what would have existed historically. It is a paved, flat, well drained driveway, ranging between twelve and eighteen feet wide.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The entry road retains the same defining layout since its origins in the 1800s and early 1900s when it was designed as an agricultural access road. Though it has the same horizontal alignment, its vertical alignment, surface material, and portions of its width and shoulder have been altered. Despite these changes, the road conveys the same general character it did during the period of significance, passing through the agricultural landscape that Mrs. Roosevelt appreciated and actively perpetuated and as such, is a character-defining contributing feature.

## **Vegetation**

### West Field South of the Entry Road

*Historic Condition:* The southwest field was likely one of the site's most productive agricultural fields. After clearing the land of native forest growth, early farmers probably grew a variety of crops, some like wheat for sale and varied crops for family sustenance. In early 20th century, farmers cultivated corn and hay in the west fields. Between the 1940s and 1970s tenant farmers, Val-Kill Farms, and Roosevelt family members rotated numerous crops through the southwest field including corn, wheat, oats, hay, and asparagus, as well as using the land as pasture for livestock.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* After Mrs. Roosevelt's death, her son John continued to use the southwest field to pasture sheep and cut the field for hay. The park currently manages the area as a hay field.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* Many different types of crops were grown in the southwest field during the period of significance, one of them being hay, which currently exists in the field. The historically compatible vegetation of the southwest field is a component of the agricultural setting of Val-Kill and is significant as a representation of the property as it appeared during Mrs. Roosevelt's time and as such, is a characteristic contributing feature.

### West Field North of the Entry Road

*Historic Condition:* The northwest field was historically used for agricultural purposes and cleared of tree and shrub growth. The area has a very high water table leading to the presence of numerous seasonal pools and drainage swales, added in the 1800s. Despite the area's agricultural deficiencies, the field was kept almost entirely clear of wetland and successional growth by tenant farmers during the period of significance, as it was presumably maintained as pasture and for fodder crops.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Larger amounts of acreage in the northwest field reverted to shrub land after Mrs. Roosevelt's death as the field was less actively used for agriculture. John Roosevelt and Charles Curnan pastured sheep in portions of the field, which controlled the growth of vegetation. The western extents of the field is currently mowed infrequently to prevent the growth of woody vegetation. Areas of shrub growth dominate the central and eastern area of the field where the presence of surface water is greatest. Approximately half of the field is maintained as meadow and half is covered by woody vegetation.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* Though larger amounts of wetland shrub growth exists in the center of the field, the general proportion and type of vegetation in the northwest field is similar to what existed during the later years of the period of significance. It is a characteristic feature of the important agricultural context of Val-Kill.

### Tree Line Along North Side of Entry Road

*Historic Condition:* Evidence of a tree line along the north side of the entry road is visible in aerial photography from the 1930s appearing to have already been several decades old by that time. The row of Norway spruces began at Violet Avenue, spanning both sides of the entry road for a short distance and continued on the north side of the road for several hundred yards until it neared the driveway to the old tenant house. Smaller segments of tree lines on the south side of the road can be seen in historic aerial photography, scattered along its length, which may imply that both sides of the road were planted simultaneously and the south side trees languished. The trees were planted as close as 4- 5 feet together, possibly as a windbreak to counter cold northwesterly winds blowing across the open fields. The tree line matured throughout the period of significance, reinforcing the separation between the north and south fields.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* No apparent changes occurred to the tree line after the period of significance outside of natural decline and death of a small percentage of the trees. Currently, many of the trees within the entry road tree line are in good health, creating continuous segments whose vertical elements mark the roadway. Few lower limbs remain, leaving closely

spaced trunks and a canopy that is roughly fifteen feet above the ground that appears lower because of the pendulous lower branches.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The tree line along the entry road that contains the original plant material, retains integrity to the period of significance, and is a characteristic feature of the agricultural landscape of Val-Kill.

### Tree and Shrub Growth in Northwest Field

*Historic Condition:* Historically, the northwest field was kept largely devoid of shrub and tree growth and devoted to animal pasturing and hay fields. This practice that began with early 20th century land owners continued on a somewhat modified level through the period of significance. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, evidenced by an aerial photograph from 1960, successional growth began to dot the previously cleared landscape, illustrating the trend toward reducing maintenance on the property.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Shrub growth quickly established itself in the low-lying wet areas of the northwest field, as it was not regularly maintained for agricultural purposes. Today, large areas of the northwest field, notably adjacent to the Fall-Kill and in several patches in the center of the field surrounding seasonal ponds and wetlands.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The presence of tree and shrub vegetation in the northwest field has been a dynamic aspect of the property, during the period of significance and in the recent past. Today's current level of vegetative cover is not entirely representative of earlier days of the period of significance when the site was being actively farmed by tenants and Roosevelt family members. However, it does, to a degree, resemble the later years of Mrs. Roosevelt's life when less care was given to consciously managing the site. As a whole, the tree and shrub growth are characteristic features that contribute to the historic scene as a reminder of the compromised conditions of the northwest field late in the historic period.

## **Buildings and Structures**

### Caretaker's House

*Historic Condition:* Not applicable. Constructed after the period of significance.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* What is known today as the caretaker's house was built in 1964 by Charles Curnan, Val-Kill's site superintendent, after Curnan purchased a small parcel of Val-Kill land, located in the northwest field. The house is a one-story, wood-frame dwelling that once had several associated outbuildings where Curnan raised small amounts of livestock. Currently, the structure is located at the end of a gravel paved

driveway, in the approximate location of the historic tenant house driveway, and is used as park housing.

*Evaluation: Non-Contributing:* As it post-dates the period of significance and is unrelated to Mrs. Roosevelt's appreciation of Val-Kill, the caretaker's house does not contribute. Though the structure can not be seen from the historic core or the entry road, it is incompatible with the historic scene.

### **Constructed Water Features**

#### Drainage Ditches in Northwest Field

*Historic Condition:* Though the land was low and wet, the field north of the entry road was flat and close to the agricultural complex across Violet Avenue, and as such was attractive to early farmers. Out of necessity, early farmers of the Val-Kill landscape dug drainage ditches throughout the northwest field to help remediate the high water table. Evidence of these drainage features can be seen in a 1936 aerial photograph, but their construction may predate the 1930s by many decades. Whether the land was productive for grain crops or corn is questionable, but cleared land, regardless of if it was wet, would have been useful for grazing or hay production. As the north field remained largely devoid of trees and successional growth throughout the period of significance, the drainage ditches remained in use, contributing the productiveness of land.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The drainage ditches established in the early 1900s remain today. The series of structures feed into a primary channel that runs northwest-southeast across the field into the Fall-Kill wetland system.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* Since the drainage ditches existed during the period of significance and remain today, they are characteristic features that contribute to the agricultural context of the site.

#### Sheep Pond by Caretaker's House

*Historic Condition:* Not applicable. Constructed after the period of significance.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The sheep pond was built circa 1964, likely by Charles Curnan, superintendent of Val-Kill and owner of the neighboring house occupying the site of the former tenant house. He and John Roosevelt owned a flock of sheep that they pastured throughout the property and watered at the pond. The pond is a small water body with a raised bank along one side where the earth from the hole was placed. It is currently surrounded by vegetation and is not visible from the entry road or historic core

*Evaluation: Non-contributing.* As the feature post-dates the period of significance and is not related to Mrs. Roosevelt's use of the site, it does not contribute but is compatible with the appearance and land-use of the agricultural west fields.

### **Small-Scale Features**

#### Stone Walls along Route 9G

*Historic Condition:* Dating to the property's early agricultural history, the stone walls lining Route 9G were created out of necessity to rid agricultural fields of stones, to delineate property boundaries, and to create enclosures for animals. The Route 9G wall is a dry-laid wall, made from angular medium grey-green stone. The historic height is thought to be roughly three feet.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The stone walls remained along Route 9G in the same path and configuration after Mrs. Roosevelt's death. Their condition slowly deteriorated due to natural weathering and disturbance. Route 9G was leveled and regraded, yet the stone walls were set back far enough to avoid being disturbed. Currently, the walls undulate with the historic road profile, contrasting with the new flat road. Most of the walls are in good condition, with the exception of a few segments that have toppled.

*Evaluation: Contributing:* The walls lining Route 9G, in their current adequate condition, are historic features that help define the agricultural character of the site and are characteristic features that contribute to the period of significance.

#### Stone Wall Between Former Bennett and Tompkins Farms

*Historic Condition:* The stone wall along the southwest boundary of the park represents a well established property line that dates to the early agricultural subdivision of the local area. The wall was created to mark the border of what were historically the Bennett and Tompkins Farms. During the development of Val-Kill, the wall changed little with the exception of modifications for the orchard, located just south of the Bennett Farm property on the other side of the stone wall. The wall was severed to create access into the orchard and was marked by a pair of square stone pillars.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The wall was not substantially altered after Mrs. Roosevelt's death until the NPS made an additional opening for vehicular access into a visitor parking lot in the 1990s. Currently, the wall stands in various states of repair. The segment in front of the parking lot entrance is well maintained and kept free of vegetation. On either side of this short section, the wall deteriorates in condition. Many segments have toppled and tree and shrub growth directly abuts the wall and grows within it.

*Evaluation: Contributing:* The wall dividing the historic Bennett and Tompkins Farms retains integrity that may correspond to the later years of the period of significance. The wall, along with the other stone walls of the west region, helps define the agricultural character of the site and are characteristic features that contribute to the period of significance.

#### Stone Wall Along the Entry Road

*Historic Condition:* The entry road stone wall was built much like the others on site, to delineate fields and boundaries and as a place to stack unwanted stones from cultivated fields. The dry-laid rubble wall likely dates to the mid-1800s and travels along the north side of the road, though it historically may have lined both side of the road. Stones were collected from old walls throughout the Roosevelt estate in 1924 to provide building material for the Stone Cottage and it is possible that stones from a wall on the south side of the entry road were used in the building's construction.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Road work completed by the Federal Highways Administration raised the profile of the entry road at several low points that abutted seasonal water bodies. In the process, the wall along the road's north side was substantially altered. Several segments were partially or completely buried by the road work, leaving a non-contiguous line of wall segments of varied height and condition.

*Evaluation: Contributing:* The entry road wall stands in a compromised condition compared to its historic appearance. However, the visible segments that remain help define the road edge, and illustrate old boundaries. Despite its poor condition, the wall is a characteristic feature that contributes to the agricultural appearance of Val-Kill's west region.

## HISTORIC CORE

### Circulation

#### Stone Cottage Driveway Circle

*Historic Condition:* As the first structure built at Val-Kill, the location of the Stone Cottage largely dictated the organization of the site's circulation. Immediately after construction of the cottage, a large driveway circle was built east of the new building, connecting it to the bridge and later the Factory. The circle abutted the east door of the Stone Cottage and led to the Factory garage doors. After the Stone Cottage addition was built in 1936, the driveway configuration shifted to accommodate the expanded structure and new gardens on the east lawn. The circle became smaller in diameter and connected to a south-facing door of the Stone Cottage. Mrs. Roosevelt and her friends planted a line of red pines around the perimeter of the circle to shield the lawn and garden spaces from the vehicular access areas. The driveway circle was unpaved, of a packed earth and gravel surface. It was oiled once a year to control potholes and dust.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The 1936 realignment of the driveway circle represented the last major shift in the Stone Cottage driveway circle configuration. What has changed about the feature is the width of the driving lanes, as years of parked vehicles have slowly pushed the bounds of the existing driveway. Replacement red pines, planted in 1984, still surround the feature.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The current driveway circle configuration represents design choices made during the period of significance. The road illustrates Mrs. Roosevelt's use of the site and reflects Val-Kill's vernacular, informal appearance. As a key feature that defined the placement and orientation of other site elements, the Stone Cottage driveway circle is a character-defining feature.

#### Driveways Between the Cottages

*Historic Condition:* Connection from the entry road and Stone Cottage to the Factory was developed shortly after the completion of the building's initial phase in 1926. Two roughly parallel driveway lanes led to the building, one from the Stone Cottage driveway circle to the Factory garage doors on the south side of the building, and the other skirted the Stone Cottage entirely and led around the east side of the Factory to the forge and east door. After the driveway realignment in 1936 when the Stone Cottage driveway circle was made smaller, the lanes leading to the Factory changed only slightly, with a short southern extension added to the west lane to meet the new driveway circle. When Mrs. Roosevelt converted the Factory to her residence, the

driveway lanes and east parking area became the primary access to and from the building.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The driveways between the cottages have remained largely unchanged since 1962. Their widths have increased due to increased vehicular traffic. They are surfaced with packed earth and gravel.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The driveway paths that have not changed appreciably since 1962 and are character defining features of the historic core circulation system.

#### Two-Track Service Drive North of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage

*Historic Condition:* This informal feature has likely been in use since the early 1930s when the picnic fireplace was constructed on the lawn west of the Factory. Picnics, large and small, took place regularly on the lawn for political functions and family parties. Access for vehicles servicing the picnic area occurred along the north side of the Factory, between the building and the pond edge. The grass would have simply compacted into a two-track path as no surface material was ever applied. The Roosevelt's most likely also used the service drive during construction of the tennis court and placement of the Doll House.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* No formal paving or alteration of the infrequently used grass and earth path occurred after Mrs. Roosevelt's death. Today, the drive is a packed earth and gravel track that becomes less visible the farther it travels from Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. The tracks simply disappear into the lawn approximately twenty-five yards from the parking area.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The informal and subtle driveway evolved without planning or design intent under repeated vehicular use. It stands today as it did during the period of significance and is a reminder of the informal entertaining and recreation that took place at the retreat. The two-track path is a characteristic feature of the period of significance.

#### Visitor Parking Lot

*Historic Condition:* Not applicable. Constructed after the period of significance.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* To create space for visitor parking without extending the structural limits of the small, wood Val-Kill bridge, the NPS built a parking lot in the orchard in the 1980s. It was initially a gravel-surfaced, linear feature, oriented across the width of the east side of the orchard. It was paved with bituminous concrete and overlain with a chip-seal coat and expanded laterally to include room for a bus turnaround in 2000.

*Evaluation: Non Contributing.* The visitor parking lot has been carved out of the historic orchard, an important feature of the period of significance. As a modern NPS-era feature designed for visitor services, the visitor parking lot is non-contributing and is incompatible with the historic scene as it detracts from the historic spatial organization of the orchard.

#### Employee Parking Lot

*Historic Condition:* Not applicable.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* In the 1980s, the NPS constructed a gravel-surfaced parking lot for the staff of Eleanor Roosevelt NHS and ERVK. The feature is located in the woods east of the garage/stable along the entrance to the loop road trail, set back from the eastern access road by approximately sixty feet. The parking lot is slightly arced with a central aisle configuration. A buffer of trees remains between the parking lot and garage/stable, visually screening it from the historic core.

*Evaluation: Non-Contributing.* As a modern NPS feature located in a formerly wooded area that has no relationship to the significance of Val-Kill, the employee parking lot is non-contributing and is incompatible with the historic scene.

#### Path Between the Cottages

*Historic Condition:* To create pedestrian connections between the cottages at Val-Kill, Mrs. Roosevelt and her friends installed a flagstone walkway along the north wall of the Stone Cottage, through the lawn, to the Factory. The stone walkway was constructed of roughly 2 1/2-3" thick, medium grey stone of random square and rectangular sizes that were set into the lawn with grass joints. Some of the stones incorporated into the path were large, spanning the entire four foot width, while others were set side-by-side. The path traveled closely by a large sycamore tree and joined other stone paths encircling the Factory. As maintenance of the site declined in the 1950s and early 1960s, broken stones were not reset nor were stones that shifted due to routine weathering and frost heaving, yet the path remained a key circulation feature of the site.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* During the period after Mrs. Roosevelt's death, the stone path between the cottages deteriorated and was eventually removed. When John Roosevelt sold Val-Kill to new owners who acted as absentee landlords, the paths on site went largely to ruin. By the time the NPS acquired the site in 1977, stones from the paths were located elsewhere on site and reset. Currently, the path resembles its historic alignment, having been restored by the NPS in the 1980s. However, its condition is somewhat compromised because of several fractured stones, pavers that are out of alignment, and uplifted pavers due to surrounding tree roots. Currently the root flare of the sycamore tree has grown into the path width.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* Though the path has been altered and reconstructed several times, it retains integrity of material and design. It is a key feature of the Val-Kill cultural landscape that dates to the early years of the site's development and conveys the informal and vernacular character of the site. As such, the path is a characteristic feature that contributes to the period of significance.

#### Stone Cottage Main Entry Path

*Historic Condition:* As the first driveway circle once abutted the Stone Cottage east facing door, the south door (the present main door) was not always the primary entrance. It can be deduced that the first path to the south door was made from stone pavers similar to others on site, though the configuration may have shifted to accommodate the 1936 driveway circle realignment. After 1936, it is documented that the path traveled west from the driveway circle and made a ninety-degree turn to meet the south door. The paving pattern was more regular and simplified than others on site, replacing the random mix of pavers with an arrangement of mostly equivalent sized, large rectangular stones. Between 1936 and 1945, a narrow side spur broke from the path and led to the walled garden surrounding the 1936 Stone Cottage addition.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* After 1962, few changes occurred to the path to the Stone Cottage main door beyond slight deterioration due to reduced maintenance. The historic configuration remains, including the single paver wide path to the east gardens that no longer exist. This small path terminates in the grass a few yards from the main path. The stone path is slightly uneven and a few pavers have fractured.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The integrity of the path to the Stone Cottage main door remains high, as it retains its historic alignment and materials. Its grass joints lack of edging material and the stone pavers are consistent with other paths on site relate it to the overall informal character of Val-Kill, which represented Mrs. Roosevelt's tastes and wishes for the retreat. The path is a characteristic feature that contributes to the period of significance.

#### Paths Along West Side of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage

*Historic Condition:* Following the precedent set by the Factory's function and aesthetic, walkways around the building were informal stepping stone paths that were often obscured by long grass and surrounding vegetation. When the building became Mrs. Roosevelt's residence, she provided more structure and routine maintenance but left the paths as relaxed, fairly narrow corridors. Typical paving patterns included a two-and-a-half-foot width consisting of small and medium-sized square and rectangular pavers with grass joints.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* These paths, like others on site, suffered from neglect during the late 1960s and 1970s. The NPS replaced missing sections during early site rehabilitation efforts of the 1980s. Today the paths are in marginal condition with certain segments out of alignment and uneven. The large stone-paved area outside of the public restroom, which is also where several paths converge, has been enlarged to provide a stable surface at this high traffic junction.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The vernacular stone paths west of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage reflect historic condition, are representative of the evolution of the site and Mrs. Roosevelt's unpretentious and naturalistic preferences for ordering her environment. They contribute as characteristic features.

#### Path From Entry Road to Orchard/Parking Lot

*Historic Condition:* A pedestrian connection was made between the entry road and orchard in the early 1930s when the orchard was planted. The Roosevelt estate superintendent, William Plog, created a passage in the stone wall separating the Bennett and Tompkins farm and framed the entry with two stone pillars. It is unknown if any designated path was created into the orchard or if a simple mowed grass strip sufficed.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* As the orchard trees declined in the late 1960s and 1970s, it is unlikely that a path from the entry road to the orchard retained historic appearances or good condition. The NPS altered the orchard in the 1980s to use part of the space as a parking lot. The orchard gate pillars were re-pointed and vegetation was removed from the segment of stone wall visible from the entry road. Today, a stone dust path connects the parking lot to the entry road where visitors are encouraged to leave their cars and experience the site on foot, passing through the historic stone pillars.

*Evaluation: Non-contributing.* The current stone dust path into the visitor parking lot was created by the NPS for modern park needs. It is an incompatible feature as it connects the historic entry road with a modern feature (the parking lot) and because it is unlikely that the historic orchard path resembled the surface material, length, or alignment of the current path.

### **Vegetation**

#### Oak Grove

*Historic Condition:* It is unknown whether the grove of white and red oaks at the northwest tip of the historic core are naturalized specimens or were planted by the Roosevelts. The trees appear to be fifty years or older and are of varied age. It is possible that the trees that are native to the area and

tolerant of the moist, wetland conditions of the site grew naturally from seed during the early years of Val-Kill developments, or they may have been transplanted by the Roosevelts during the 1920s, 1930s or early 1940s. They grew readily in the sparsely vegetated lawn and by the 1960s the grove was well established.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The oaks flourished between the 1960s and the present, requiring little maintenance or attention. Several of the trees are now approximately eighteen inches DBH, though others are considerably smaller.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* Whether some of the oak trees existed on the east bank of the Fall-Kill prior to Val-Kill developments or if they were planted during the period of significance, the grove of trees was present and matured throughout Mrs. Roosevelt's time at the site and contributed to the naturalistic character of the historic core, helping to blend the area with the wetland and forested areas surrounding them. They are characteristic features that contribute to the period of significance.

#### Sycamore on Pool Terrace

*Historic Condition:* The stately sycamore tree (*Platanus occidentalis*) on the Val-Kill pool terrace was a consciously protected tree during early Val-Kill developments. Stone Cottage construction photos from 1924-1925 show the staging area and building environs to be cleared of vegetation, except for a fairly large sycamore tree south of the cottage. The tree was later incorporated into the Stone Cottage landscape plan and created dappled shade for the pool and pool terrace.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The sycamore grew unimpeded and today is an outstanding specimen tree that towers over the Stone Cottage pool terrace. It is approximately two feet DBH.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The sycamore tree on the pool terrace was specifically managed as an attribute of Val-Kill, contributing to the wooded, green, and naturalistic landscape. Its large canopy helped blend the historic core with the surrounding forest, helping to retain the private, rural character of the site. Its prominence during the period of significance and today make it a character-defining feature of the cultural landscape.

#### Sycamore Between the Cottages

*Historic Condition:* Like the pool terrace sycamore, the sycamore between the cottages pre-existed Val-Kill site developments. The large tree resided outside of the footprint of disturbance for the Stone Cottage and Factory and was cultivated as a specimen tree. It too, grew with little interference from competing trees or structural impediments and matured into a dominant feature throughout the historic core.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* As the tree matured, its expanding girth grew almost into the stone path between the cottages. Today the tree is thriving and stands over 70 feet tall.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* Like its counterpart on the pool terrace, the sycamore between the cottages is an integral feature of the Val-Kill landscape. It predates the development of the retreat and towers over the area, providing shade in the summer months and blending the historic core with the adjacent forest. The sycamore is a character-defining feature of the vernacular landscape created and managed by Mrs. Roosevelt.

### Cutting Garden

*Historic Condition:* Complementing their appreciation for the natural beauty and outdoor resources of Val-Kill, Mrs. Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, and Marion Dickerman built a garden for cut flowers, known as the cutting garden, behind the playhouse in 1937 to provide the cottages with fresh flowers in the spring and summer months. They located the roughly 55' X 90' rectangular garden in a former meadow dominated by birch and cedar trees, just yards from the cottages. It featured wood-edged, raised beds containing a variety of flowers, surrounded by a tall arborvitae hedge. The contents of the garden shifted over the years, from exclusively flowers for cutting, including tea roses, peonies, aster, and zinnias, to both flowers and vegetables in later years. Mrs. Roosevelt and her staff maintained the garden throughout the 1940s and 1950s after Cook and Dickerman moved from Val-Kill, and harvested vegetables to freeze for winter consumption. By 1960, maintenance of the garden declined. Annual flowers and vegetables were no longer planted and only perennials sprouted among the weeds, though the hedge remained.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* After her death in 1962, Mrs. Roosevelt's son John converted her cottage and the Playhouse to apartments and cut a driveway through the abandoned cutting garden to provide access to the new rental units. Portions of the arborvitae hedge were removed to accommodate the new road. A few years after the National Park Service acquired the site the cutting garden was restored, including the raised planting beds, annuals and perennial flowers, and a new arborvitae hedge. Winter deer browsing of the arborvitae hedge followed the garden restoration, resulting in severely stripped hedges below the browse line. In response, the park erected a metal mesh deer fence around the perimeter of the garden. A white plastic picket gate at the garden's entrance is closed when the site is not open to visitors.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The restored cutting garden retains integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association, despite having been altered from its historic condition. Though the current plant material is not an exact replacement of historic varieties, the garden is a key feature of the period of significance whose overall location and appearance mirrors that of the original feature. The flowers and vegetables grown in the garden were an

important part of Mrs. Roosevelt's hands-on Val-Kill experience that focused on the outdoors. The cutting garden is a character-defining feature of Val-Kill's cultural landscape.

#### Rose Garden

*Historic Condition:* John Roosevelt built a garden on the lawn west of his mother's cottage in 1960 so she could view a flower garden from her upstairs sleeping porch. The garden, known as the rose garden, was rectangular in shape, surrounded by a post and chicken-wire fence, containing a variety of flowers including Mrs. Roosevelt's favorite tea roses.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* John Roosevelt's wife later adapted the garden to include almost exclusively zinnias that she grew to show at the county fair. After John Roosevelt sold the property in 1970, little is known of the treatment of the rose garden other than it was in disrepair by the time the NPS acquired the property in 1977. Park staff restored the garden in the 1980s, replacing the cedar fence posts and wire mesh, and replanting flowers.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The building of the rose garden was emblematic of Mrs. Roosevelt's life-long appreciation of Val-Kill. The placement and materials of the feature illustrates her appreciation of the natural aspects of the site. The rose garden retains integrity to the period of significance through its location, restored fence, and plant material. It is a characteristic feature of the cultural landscape.

#### Pool Terrace Garden

*Historic Condition:* The terrace south of the Stone Cottage has gone through many changes since 1924. Initially, the area was informally planted with transplanted cedar and birch trees and used as a badminton court. After the first pool was abandoned, a second pool was constructed on the terrace. This prompted other landscape improvements including the construction of a flagstone patio and numerous beds of flowering shrubs, annuals, and perennials. Nancy Cook designed much of the terrace, experimenting with different designs and plant material over the years that resulted in a colorful, lush, and pleasing outdoor room, bounded by the red pine screen along the entry road and planting beds. After Cook and Dickerman left Val-Kill in 1947, the Stone Cottage was used as guest quarters and as a residence for Mrs. Roosevelt's son John and his family, none of whom had Cook's gardening skill or inclination. The gardens of the pool terrace became simplified in this period, losing some of their former brilliance but retaining the structural elements created by Cook.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Elements of the pool terrace gardens continued to decline after Mrs. Roosevelt's death and through the 1970s. What remains today is a mixed shrub border, some remaining from the period of significance, some replanted, including lilac, mockorange, rose-of-sharon,

and spirea. A large sycamore tree that predates the Stone Cottage grows between the cottage and entry drive and replacement red pines create a semi-circular backdrop to the area.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* Though vastly changed from its height as an ornamental landscape in the 1940s, the pool terrace garden retains the spatial characteristics dating to its initial design. As a gradual decline in the maintenance occurred during the latter years of Mrs. Roosevelt's residence, the somewhat compromised existing condition of the area is reflective of the period of significance. The collection of plants that exist today are mostly replacements and NPS-era introductions, with the exception of a few large rhododendron and two aged lilacs at the terrace patio, yet the general character of the space reflects historic conditions. The individual plants are not contributing, with the exception of the sycamore tree, but their collective presence is a characteristic feature of the cultural landscape.

#### Stone Cottage Entry Garden

*Historic Condition:* As a sub-space of Nancy Cook's larger landscape plan for the Stone Cottage, the entry space blossomed after the building addition of 1936. Prior to that, the entryway mirrored the informal character and native plant palette of the rest of the site. Loose lilacs and climbing vines framed the doorway and entry experience. Nancy Cook increased the variety of plant material with layers of flowering shrubs, perennials, and annuals as part of her redesign after 1936. She opened the space by pulled the shrubs back from the walkway and planting a flower border against the building. A small area of lawn was created east of the door that was backed by a mixed planting bed and a paling fence that led to the enclosed garden of the Stone Cottage. Her maintenance intensive scheme became burdensome to the Roosevelts after her departure in 1947 and the entry garden lost some luster. Through the 1950s and early 1960s many of her more impermanent improvements, like schedule of summer flowers, disappeared.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* After 1962, the Stone Cottage entry garden became simplified and overgrown like the rest of the Val-Kill landscape. The Stone Cottage is currently used as the headquarters for Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill, Inc., and little has been done to restore the space. Several overgrown yews crowd the door, along with a mountain andromeda, and mountain laurel. Impatiens and other annuals are sometimes planted outside the door in summer months.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The Stone Cottage entry garden contains some plant material from the period of significance, including the large yews, and possibly the mountain laurel. Regardless of age, the informal plants that define the entry garden, while overgrown, reflect the informal character of the later years of the period of significance. The closely maintained vegetation and more elaborate seasonal displays that characterized the period between

1936 and 1947 were more reflective of Nancy Cook's design sensibilities rather than Mrs. Roosevelt's. The current collection of plant material at the Stone Cottage entry is a characteristic group of features that contribute to the cultural landscape.

#### Stone Cottage Walled Garden

*Historic Condition:* The Stone Cottage walled garden was built along with the 1936 addition to the structure. Nancy Cook designed a walled garden outside of the new east door of the cottage, nesting within the outer fenced garden. Initially, the walled garden was bounded on the south and east by a paling fence and on the north by a three sided, open structure called the loggia. Cook used a similar array of plant material inside the walled garden, adorning the space with climbing vines, flowering shrubs, perennials, and annuals. In subsequent years a brick wall replaced the paling fence, affording the space an additional element of permanence and privacy. John Roosevelt removed the loggia circa 1960 during the process of building a laundry room on the east side of the cottage, replacing it with a cement block wall. It is unknown what occurred to the plant material or layout of the walled garden at this time.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Documentation has not been found to understand how the walled garden changed in the years after Mrs. Roosevelt's death. It may have been fairly well tended by tenants of the Stone Cottage in the 1970s or may have been largely neglected. ERVK now maintains the garden, using a few potted plants and a loose mixture of perennials and ivy.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The presence of ornamental plants in the walled garden contributes as a collective resource. The individual plants are not contributing since they are not historic, but they have significance as a group that reflects the overall character of the lushly planted walled garden. The garden stands as an a tangible example of the site's shift to a more consciously designed and maintained space in the mid-1930s.

#### Stone Cottage West Lawn

*Historic Condition:* The west lawn of the Stone Cottage has always been treated largely as open space, affording views and access to the Val-Kill pond. As early as 1924, the area was cleared of vegetation and used for picnics and boat launching. Several large trees grew on the perimeter of the lawn, including an American elm, planted in the mid-1920s, and a native shagbark hickory that predated the cottage construction. A cluster of trees and shrubs grew near the bridge on the lawn's periphery to frame the view between the cottage and pond. A line of lilacs was planted along the low fieldstone retaining wall north of the cottage shortly after the structure's construction. As they matured, the lilacs created a visual buffer to the Factory landscape. Several weeping willow trees were planted along the pond edge in the 1930s and further focused views to the water. The area remained largely

unencumbered by other structures and plantings throughout Mrs. Roosevelt's life.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The lawn remained maintained as an open space after Mrs. Roosevelt's death. In the late 1970s, the stately elm located near the northwest corner of the Stone Cottage was removed. The west lawn took on a greater open appearance with its absence.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The surrounding trees and mowed lawn west of the Stone Cottage have remained a constant feature of Val-Kill since the site's initial development in 1924. Large trees such as the weeping willows at the pond's edge, the hickory, and a cluster of trees near the bridge, including several white pine and a sugar maple, date to the period of significance. Younger vegetation that resides within the groups of trees on the lawn's periphery contribute as a collection of vegetation that is representative of the informal character of the space. The existing vegetation of the Stone Cottage west lawn includes characteristic features that contribute to the historic scene.

### Orchard

*Historic Condition:* Eleanor Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, and Marion Dickerman had William Plog, the Roosevelt Estate superintendent, plant an orchard and garden in a meadow southwest of the Stone Cottage in 1931. The roughly 1.6-acre parcel lay outside of the three women's lease, just over the boundary between the Bennett and Tompkins farms. Initially, the orchard contained fruit trees, including several varieties of pears and apples, as well as raspberries and blueberries. Information about the specific varieties planted and spacing has not been found, but former employees of Mrs. Roosevelt remembered planting Bosc and Bartlett pears, Mackintosh, Red and Yellow Delicious, Spy, and Pippin apples. An opening in the stone boundary wall, punctuated by two stone pillars, provided access to the orchard. The enclosure was completed by a decorative paling fence cut with a convex bow, adding visual interest and capturing the attention of visitors approaching on the entry road.

Aerial photography from 1936 displays the overall shape of the orchard, initially a rectangle minus a notch of native vegetation in the southeast corner. Later photo documentation shows that the orchard was well maintained, as a careful geometry is visible in the 1947 and 1960 photographs. The grid pattern remained fairly continuous and well defined throughout this period, with the addition of several hundred square feet of previous native vegetation in the southeast corner, and the eventual removal of the berry plants. Oral history taken from former employees documents that the orchard was also used as a nursery for small Christmas tree seedlings in the late 1940s, though the location of the plantings and information about when they were removed is not known.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* By 1970, when John Roosevelt sold the property after living at Val-Kill for many years, the orchard was neglected. Aerial photography displays large gaps in the grid pattern, with several large, aged trees dominating the formerly productive orchard. The area was used to pasture sheep between the mid-to late 1960s and included a sheep shed by 1970.

The orchard was substantially altered in the mid-1980s when the National Park Service constructed a visitor parking lot in the east side of the space. The parking lot is a narrow, north-south oriented, gravel surface that utilized the historic orchard entrance marked by the stone pillars for pedestrian access, as well as a new vehicular entrance approximately 40 feet to the west. The parking lot was later paved and expanded eastward to provide room for a bus turn-around. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, several orchard trees were lost due to age and storm damage without being replaced. Notably, multiple trees fell or were severely damaged in a 1986 fall storm.

Currently, approximately one third of the orchard is devoted to the parking lot while the remaining two thirds host a scattering of aged fruit trees and volunteer trees. The largest trees in the orchard are two oaks located in the north central region. Twenty fruit trees remain, six of which are seriously deteriorated. Two small and damaged pear trees are located in the southwest corner. The northwest side of the orchard retains the most integrity and evidence of the grid pattern is visible.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The orchard is a microcosm of Mrs. Roosevelt's appreciation for productive landscapes. Though little documentation has been found to support cyclical maintenance activities, historic photographs show that the orchard remained well maintained through 1960. The orchard today has been compromised by the addition of the visitor parking lot and the removal of many orchard trees. However, the feature retains significance of location, setting, some plant material, and remnants of the historic spatial organization can be seen through the remaining orchard trees and stone wall. The orchard is a character-defining feature of Val-Kill's cultural landscape.

#### West Lawn of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage

*Historic Condition:* After the Factory was constructed in 1926, the lawn facing the pond was left in a naturalistic state, taking on characteristics of the native landscape and not heavily used for recreation. Before the pond was dredged in 1937, wetland vegetation grew profusely on the bank of the Fall-Kill, obscuring views to the west. Beginning in 1933, the area's land use changed to include recreational functions with the construction of the picnic fireplace. The Val-Kill partners located the large stone cooking fireplace in a stand of native cedar and rough-cut grass, using the rustic, loosely designed space for intimate family cookouts and large-scale entertaining. After Val-Kill Industries dissolved and Mrs. Roosevelt made the converted Factory her

cottage, the west lawn changed to reflect the new residential use of the building. Between 1936 and the early 1960s, the rough lawn with its scattering of native trees diminished after the addition of children's play equipment, the Doll House, a tennis court, badminton court, and rose garden.

The lawn was kept shorter, but numerous trees remained in the space to retain the woody, natural atmosphere. Several notable trees grew to maturity and provided fairly continuous canopy coverage, including the American sycamore between the cottages, a large sugar maple south of the tennis court, several flowering dogwoods near the tennis court, a cluster of northern white cedar and eastern red cedar at the picnic fireplace, a grove of white and swamp white oaks at the lawn's northwest tip, a Colorado blue spruce near Mrs. Roosevelt's sleeping porch, and the line of Norway spruce along the northern extents of the lawn, among others.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* After Mrs. Roosevelt's death, the west lawn was well maintained until 1970 while her son John lived on site, after which the area, along with the entire site, suffered from neglect. The NPS reversed this trend and began maintaining the area. Several large trees reached the extents of their lifespan and were removed by the NPS. The Colorado blue spruce was replaced but others, including a dogwood and sugar maple were not replanted. Currently the west lawn is well vegetated with large trees and wetland growth on its perimeter and has areas of open lawn in the middle of the space.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* Currently, the west lawn retains integrity to the period of significance. Many original trees remain, conveying the informal, partially wooded character that existed historically. Younger trees and some shrub growth that is not historic, supplements the relaxed landscape plan of the west lawn and contributes as a complementary part of the historic scene. The west lawn, having gone through several subtle aesthetic shifts during the period of significance, is an essential, though characteristic, feature of the Val-Kill landscape as a tangible reminder of how Mrs. Roosevelt ordered her environment.

#### Southwest bank of Val-Kill Pond

*Historic Condition:* The southwest bank of the Val-Kill pond, located just north of the bridge, across the water from Stone Cottage has been a visible and important area of the site since the commencement of Val-Kill developments in 1924. Limited clearing of the Fall-Kill occurred concurrently with construction of the Stone Cottage, mostly in the creek bed and along the east bank, opening views across the water to the west bank.

Maintenance activities for the creek and creek bed fluctuated through the 1920s the Val-Kill owners attempted to control the quickly reestablishing wetland. In 1930, the creek was dredged to create a larger basin of open water

west of the cottage and thinning of vegetation of the west bank occurred. The banks of the pond were cleared on both sides and the native vegetation visible from the Stone Cottage was supplemented to include azalea, rhododendron, phlox, and spring bulbs. These complemented several graceful weeping willows on the west bank, which were possibly early transplants or were native to the site. After the mid-1940s, maintenance of the site declined. Photographic documentation shows increased wetland vegetation growing on the west bank of the pond, obscuring the flowering shrubs and annuals planted a few years earlier. This trend continued through the end of Mrs. Roosevelt's life.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* While the vegetation on the east bank of the pond was maintained fairly regularly in the 1960s and 1970s, the west bank was allowed to grow naturally. Higher concentrations of native shrubs and grasses established around the pond. Currently, the NPS mows the area directly across the pond from the Stone Cottage, in which several aged golden weeping willows, a stand of Scots pine, a cluster of barberry, and a white oak are located.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* Currently none of the ornamental plants from the late 1930s and 1940s remain but several willows and Scots pine create a semi-wooded appearance across the pond from Stone Cottage. Several barberry shrubs grow among the trees, and while they do not specifically contribute, the cluster of understory growth adds to the naturalistic character of the area. As a highly visible portion of the site that has been nurtured for its contributions to the Stone Cottage viewshed, the southwest bank of the Val-Kill pond contributes as a characteristic feature.

#### Norway Spruce Row North of Mrs. Roosevelt Cottage

*Historic Condition:* A double row of Norway spruce trees were planted along the north side of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage in approximately 1936, possibly as a windbreak for cold northwesterly winds sweeping off the Val-Kill pond. The trees matured throughout the period of significance, forming a thick screen and blocking views to the pond.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Most of the Norway spruce trees in the row survive today but have lost their lower branches. As the limbs of Norway spruces characteristically droop loosely, some of the higher limbs drape into the view of the pond to create a partial screen.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The tree row that exists largely as it did during Mrs. Roosevelt's time at the site, outside of forty years of growth, contributes to the wooded and enclosed feeling of the historic core. Though they are planted in a line, the trees do not give the appearance of a formal screen and blend the line between the historic core and surrounding forest. They are characteristic features that contribute to the historic scene.

### Red Pine Screen Along Entry Road East of the Bridge

*Historic Condition:* A staggered row of red pines was planted along the entry drive from the east side of the bridge, around the south side of the Stone Cottage, and ringing the perimeter of the driveway circle in 1936 during the alteration of the Stone Cottage and circulation system. This row of closely spaced small evergreen trees effectively screened the Stone Cottage west lawn, pool terrace, and Stone Cottage building from the driveway and parking area. As they matured, the trees provided a continuous backdrop to the gardens and open space of the pool terrace and west lawn.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* By the 1970s and 1980s, the red pine trees along the entry road had grown large and ungainly, losing the character and effectiveness of a screen. They were removed and replaced by the NPS in 1984. Twenty years later, the trees have again grown quite large but still retain their screening ability, resembling the character during the later period of significance.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The restored red pine screen along the entry road plays a prominent role in the Val-Kill cultural landscape. The approximately twenty-year-old trees mark the edge between the entry road and pool terrace and partially screen the Stone Cottage south lawn from approaching vehicles as they did historically. The sinuous natural screen adds to the private, informal atmosphere of the retreat and is a characteristic feature of the historic scene.

### Ivy on Stone Cottage

*Historic Condition:* Mrs. Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, and Marion Dickerman trained Boston ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*) up the walls of the Stone Cottage shortly after the building's completion. The ivy took hold especially on the south walls, both facing the pool terrace and near the south door, yet it was kept from establishing on the north facing wall. The Stone Cottage ivy remained a constant feature throughout the period of significance with some variation in the percentage of the building that was covered.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The Stone Cottage ivy has remained since Mrs. Roosevelt's time at the site and grows abundantly today on the wall facing the pool terrace patio, the east facing wall of the main entryway, and on the inside brick walls of the walled garden.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The Boston ivy growing on the Stone Cottage represents how Mrs. Roosevelt and her friends Nancy Cook and Marion Dickerman built a naturalistic style into their retreat, blending architecture with its surroundings. The ivy is a characteristic feature of the cultural landscape.

### Spruce Grove Southwest of Cutting Garden

*Historic Condition:* Little specific information about the history of the spruce grove southwest of the cutting garden is known. Since the grove is a homogenous stand of a single species, it is likely that it was planted by the Roosevelts. The native trees may have been transplanted to the small knoll from elsewhere on the property after construction of the Stone Cottage in the 1920s or the garage/stable in the 1930s. The grove was sufficiently mature by the 1950s to allow room for sheep to forage beneath the limbs. John Roosevelt and Charles Curnan fenced the area and used it to pasture sheep.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* John Roosevelt continued to pasture sheep in the grove after his mother's death, possibly until he sold the property in 1970. Since that time, little maintenance of the grove has occurred. The area is currently unfenced and contains mostly mature spruce trees, with some younger trees interspersed.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The spruce grove was present and was a managed feature during the period of significance. It currently is representative of its historic condition and is a characteristic feature of the landscape.

### **Buildings and Structures**

#### Val-Kill Bridge and Dam

*Historic Condition:* The first documented bridge spanning the Fall-Kill was a rough log and fieldstone structure. The bridge was used by tenant farmers and Roosevelt estate staff to reach the east side of the creek for animal grazing, agricultural activities, and FDR's experimental forest plantations. It is likely that a small dam was also located beneath the bridge to retain water upstream. Development of the Val-Kill retreat prompted improvements to the inadequate bridge. The Roosevelt estate superintendent rebuilt the bridge in 1924, providing a more secure deck for cars and construction equipment. Continued improvements to the feature occurred in 1926, 1934, 1939, 1940, and 1955, resulting in a longer bridge with a plank deck, low wood railing. The dam was rebuilt as well, impounding considerably more water after the mid-1930s than in the early 1920s. The water level of the pond was controlled by raising and lowering wooden flashboards in the dam.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The NPS altered the bridge in the early 1980s to repair the wood planks and shaky railing. As per Federal Highway regulations, a wood curb was added and the railing replaced in 2000.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The existing bridge and dam have been altered many times since its construction in the 1920s. The last bridge design in the period of significance resembles what exists today, though much of the timber

material has been replaced in-kind. The rough timber bridge with its hewn log railing illustrate Mrs. Roosevelt's design intentions for Val-Kill; the structure met the vehicular needs of the site but never progressed stylistically beyond a simple, vernacular wood bridge. The bridge and dam are character defining features of the cultural landscape.

### Stone Cottage

*Historic Condition:* The Stone Cottage was the first building planned at Val-Kill and became the central feature of the early retreat experience. Mrs. Roosevelt, FDR, Nancy Cook, and Marion Dickerman agreed to build the cottage on the east bank of the Fall-Kill to provide a place for relaxation away from Springwood. The site was chosen for its isolation, scenic qualities, and proximity to the Fall-Kill. The building was designed by Henry Toombs between 1924 and 1925 with considerable creative input from FDR and Nancy Cook. It was constructed as a one-and-a-half-story Dutch Colonial fieldstone building with a steeply pitched roof. The small building was expanded in 1936 to include a dormer on the northeast ell and a one story addition on the east side. After 1936, Mrs. Roosevelt moved from the Stone Cottage into the converted furniture factory and Cook and Dickerman became the sole residents. They left the site in 1947 and Mrs. Roosevelt's son John made changes to the building including a dormer on the west facing roofline in 1951 to add light and space to the upstairs. John Roosevelt also added a laundry room the northeast corner of the building in approximately 1960.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Little alteration of the building has occurred since the period of significance. It is currently used as the headquarters for ERVK and is open to the public on a limited basis.

*Evaluation:* Contributing. Stone Cottage today appears largely as it did after the last addition period in 1960. The building is a key feature of the Val-Kill retreat as the first structure planned and built which served as the focal point of the residential and recreational activities until the mid-1930s. The building represents Mrs. Roosevelt, FDR, Nancy Cook, and Marion Dickerman's defining vision for Val-Kill - a small-scale rustic feature that provided comfort in a private, country setting. It incorporates local building material, was constructed with local labor, and was furnished with hand-made furniture from Val-Kill Industries. Stone Cottage is a character-defining feature of the Val-Kill cultural landscape.

### Factory/Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage

*Historic Condition:* The Factory was built shortly after the Stone Cottage, in 1926, to house a workshop for Val-Kill Industries, the cottage industry started to provide additional employment for local workers. Though early plans for the Stone Cottage included space for a workshop, a separate two-story stucco shop building was built northeast of the cottage. The building included space

for the workshop, a dormitory, a caretaker's apartment, and a garage. Numerous additions took place to the building beginning in 1928, continuing into 1937 to create extra work space, a showroom, and finally for Mrs. Roosevelt's living quarters after the business failed in 1936. At the end of the expansion period, the building had become a rambling, irregularly shaped structure with two screened porches, an outdoor fireplace, a complicated floor plan, and multiple egress points.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* After Mrs. Roosevelt's death in 1962, her son John converted the building into four rental units, significantly altering the interior layout of the structure. He rented the building through his tenure at the site, a use continued by the next owners. By the time the NPS acquired the site, the structure had deteriorated into poor condition. The NPS renovated the building, which required extensive structural repairs, remediation for water damage, upgrading of electrical and plumbing systems, as well as returning the interior layout to the pre-1962 appearance. Today, roughly half the building has been restored and is open for public visitation. One wing now serves as the visitor contact station and the garage has been converted into public restrooms.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The Factory represents a tangible expression of Mrs. Roosevelt's social sensibilities and personal tastes as the center of Val-Kill Industries and the place she called home for many years, notably between 1945 and 1962 when the building served as her primary residence. Though it was significantly altered in the years after her death, the NPS has restored the Factory to its 1962 appearance and it retains a high degree of integrity. The informal, rambling structure is unimposing from the inside and outside, complementing the overall character of the retreat. The building is a character-defining feature of Val-Kill.

### Playhouse

*Historic Condition:* First constructed in the late 1920s as a three-car garage and tool shed, what was later known as the Playhouse was a simple, one-story wood-frame structure with a sloped shed roof located a few yards northeast of the Factory. The building was later expanded and converted into space for the Val-Kill Industries pewter business, and renamed the Forge. The Forge addition, completed around 1935, almost tripled the size of the building that now took the shape of a long rectangle. Arnold Berge, a former Val-Kill Industries worker, continued the pewter business several years after the dissolution of the business in 1936, but the building was later converted into recreational and residential space for Mrs. Roosevelt and her family. In 1941, extensive work was done to the building's electrical and plumbing systems and interior framing. The converted space was then used at times for square-dancing, indoor picnics, guest quarters, an apartment for Mrs. Roosevelt's chauffeur Tubby Curnan, and an office for Elliott Roosevelt.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* After Mrs. Roosevelt's death, the Playhouse was again converted, this time into an apartment. John Roosevelt and later owners rented the building until the NPS acquired the site in 1977. Park staff rehabilitated the aging and deteriorated building, adapting it into a media room for an interpretive movie and a break room for park staff.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The Playhouse has gone through many physical changes and shifts in use, yet the structure represents multiple aspects of Val-Kill relating to Mrs. Roosevelt; as a functional building of the Val-Kill Industries and as space used in conjunction with her residence at the site. In its current configuration, the exterior of the Playhouse reflects approximately 1962 conditions and retains integrity. As one of the small-scaled, vernacularly designed outbuildings that serviced the main structures, the Playhouse is a characteristic feature that contributes to the cultural landscape.

### Doll House

*Historic Condition:* The Doll House was built in 1935 at the direction of Sara Roosevelt and located at Springwood. The small one-story, wood-frame structure with a front portico was built as a play house for her great-grandchildren. After FDR's death in 1945, Springwood was deeded to the federal government and Eleanor Roosevelt had the Doll House moved to Val-Kill to retain it for her grandchildren. She had the structure placed on the lawn northwest of her cottage, near the picnic fireplace.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Sometime after Mrs. Roosevelt's death, John Roosevelt converted the Doll House into an apartment, adding electricity, plumbing, and dividing the main room into two. By the 1980s, the building had many problems needing remediation, including rotted wood on the exterior and insect damage. Today, the building is in good repair but is not open to the public.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The Doll House, which reflects early 1960s conditions, is one of the eclectic outbuildings located throughout the Val-Kill historic core that relates to the highly personal connection between Mrs. Roosevelt and Val-Kill. The Doll House is a characteristic feature of the cultural landscape.

### Garage/Stable

*Historic Condition:* Though Mrs. Roosevelt was interested in building stables at Val-Kill as early 1926, construction of a combined garage and stable didn't occur until 1937. The concrete block building had four garage bays and three horse stalls along with a tack room and small kitchen on the first floor, and a hay loft and small apartment on the second floor. A paddock was located north of the structure.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Some changes occurred after 1962, including the replacement of the shingle roof with a corrugated metal roof, removal of the paddock, and some alteration of the interior space. The NPS currently uses the building for maintenance functions.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The garage/stable retains integrity to the period of significance despite having received minor alterations to the interior and exterior. It originated from Mrs. Roosevelt's desire to introduce recreational functions to the retreat. The building helps connect the historic core and the east forests, due to its location on the boundary of the two areas and as a center for Mrs. Roosevelt's riding activities that drew her to the surrounding woods. The building is a characteristic feature of the cultural landscape.

### Potting Shed

*Historic Condition:* The potting shed was built by Charles Curnan in the late-1930s or early-1940s to serve the cluster of resources associated with the cutting garden. The small wood-frame shed abutted the cutting garden and worked in conjunction with the greenhouse, hot frames, cold frames, and storage shed, all located east of the forge. The structure was likely used for storage after the productive years of the cutting garden were over as it was centrally located in the historic core.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The building remained after the cutting garden was interrupted by a driveway in 1962. After the NPS acquired the site, the building was repaired to fix numerous areas of rot. Today the structure still holds gardening tools.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The simple shed building, constructed as a component of the garden system at Val-Kill retains integrity to the period of significance. As one of the vernacular structures built to supplement the outdoor resources of the site, it is a characteristic feature that contributes to the cultural landscape.

### Storage Shed

*Historic Condition:* The storage shed was built east of the cutting garden in the early 1940s. The square, wood-frame shed served as a storage facility for gardening tools and equipment. In the 1950s or 1960s, Charles Curnan adapted the building into a kennel for John Roosevelt's dogs.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The building remained in place after Mrs. Roosevelt's death and is currently used to store maintenance equipment.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The storage shed, built to house landscaping equipment, appears to retain integrity to the period of significance, though little is known about the specific design aspects of this vernacular shed. It is a contributing component of the collection of structures that serviced the

outdoor resources of the site and is a characteristic feature of the cultural landscape.

### **Constructed Water Features**

#### Pool

*Historic Condition:* A second pool was built on the flat terrace south of the Stone Cottage in 1935. The feature was serviced by a mechanical room excavated into the side of the slope leading to the lower lawn, which served to disguise the working equipment from the pool terrace. The pool was an approximately twenty-by-fifty-foot concrete feature with a variable depth between three feet eight inches and nine feet. A deck made from flagstone pavers with grass joints surrounded the pool. The pool was used frequently during the period of significance by friends and family and became the focal point of many summer gatherings. Many well-known individuals swam in the pool during visits to Val-Kill including Winston Churchill, King George VI of England, and Dutch Princess Julianna.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* John Roosevelt and his family used and maintained the pool during their residence, but it is not known if use continued after Roosevelt sold the property in 1970. The NPS repaired the deteriorated interior walls, replaced several missing capstones, and covered the pool with a wood deck in the mid-1980s.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The existing fabric of the pool retains integrity but is not currently visible due to the presence of the wood deck. The pool is a central feature of the landscape, around which many seasonal gatherings and regular recreation occurred that was characteristic of Mrs. Roosevelt's informal, outdoor entertaining style. The pool is a character-defining feature of the cultural landscape.

#### Val-Kill Pond

*Historic Condition:* A small dam likely predated the development of Val-Kill in 1924, producing an enlarged creek bed north of the log bridge. At this time, the creek was characterized by its undefined edge, shallow water, and abundance of wetland vegetation both in the channel and on the creek beds. Mrs. Roosevelt, Nancy Cook, and Marion Dickerman focused activities around the creek, locating the Stone Cottage on the east bank just northeast of the bridge and dam. Maintenance to cut shrubs and grasses along the east bank and channel in front of the cottage occurred regularly, but the amount of cleared water was highly variable in the 1920s. Pervasive wetland growth peppered the area, perpetuating the natural character of the site. In 1930 the stream bed north of the bridge and dam was dredged to form a linear pond, free of impediments. Dredging of the northern Fall-Kill wetland occurred in

1937, culminating in an approximately seven-acre pond with cleared banks all around the historic core. This mass of open water was fleeting, however. Native wetland plants and lilies introduced by Mrs. Roosevelt retook the north segment a few years after the dredging. Before 1947, the pond was "mowed" using sickle bars pulled by a motor boat, which kept most of the growth at bay. Later, maintenance lessened and revegetation occurred more rapidly.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* No major efforts have been taken to reduce wetland growth in the pond in the post-historic period. Today, the north segment is choked with plants, providing a small, meandering channel for creek water to pass. The south segment that is visible from the bridge and Stone Cottage is less overgrown, yet hosts substantial wetland plants at its perimeter.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The current state of the Val-Kill pond reflects historic conditions from numerous stages in the feature's dynamic past. As the key feature around which the Val-Kill retreat developed, the pond represents the essence of the site's evolution and association with Mrs. Roosevelt. The feature's boundaries, streambed, maintenance regime, and overall character varied widely over the period of significance, yet always remained a defining aspect of the landscape. The Val-Kill pond is a character-defining feature of the cultural landscape.

### **Small-Scale Features**

#### Stone Pillars at Orchard

*Historic Condition:* The stone pillars marking the entrance to the orchard were built in the early 1930s, likely when the orchard was planted. To provide access to the orchard located south of the stone wall dividing the Bennett and Tompkins Farms, the wall was breached and decorative but rather simple stone pillars were built at the opening. The roughly four-and-a-half-foot high pillars, located four feet apart, had two-tiered caps and concrete joints. They remained standing without any documented repairs through the period of significance.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Though maintenance of the orchard declined in the 1960s and 1970s, the cemented pillars remained standing. The cap of one pillar fell off in the 1990s when a visitor drove their vehicle through the pedestrian walkway. It has not been repaired.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The orchard pillars retain integrity, and minus the missing cap on one pillar, are well maintained and clearly punctuate the pedestrian access point to the orchard/parking lot. They are simple and unadorned embellishments of the vernacular stone wall that bounds the

orchard, displaying Mrs. Roosevelt's preference for marking the small-scale agricultural elements on her property. They are characteristic features that contribute to the cultural landscape.

#### Pool Terrace Patio

*Historic Condition:* The pool terrace patio was built shortly after the Val-Kill partners located the second pool on the terrace south of the Stone Cottage in 1935. Its construction accompanied the Stone Cottage addition, driveway circle alteration, and a change in landscape design around the cottage. The fifteen by forty foot patio was constructed with large flagstone pavers of unequal square and rectangular sizes, similar to those used in walkways throughout the site. Potted plants and patio furniture, complemented by extensive flower beds along the perimeter of the pool terrace, made the patio a comfortable and inviting outdoor room. Awnings were added in the late 1930s to shade part of the space.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The pool terrace remained used by John Roosevelt's family after Mrs. Roosevelt's death, though the second awning, this one made of wood, was removed after much of it rotted. It is not known how meticulously the terrace was cared for during the 1960s and 1970s. Today, after many years of weathering, the terrace surface is in disrepair. The pavers are unevenly settled and many have broken. The awning is gone, as are the flower beds on the terrace beyond.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* Though the pool terrace patio is in a marginal condition, its defining structural elements remain. It retains integrity of materials, design, location, and association. Its simple design, materials, and construction methods resemble other stone paths on site and is indicative of the informal approach Mrs. Roosevelt incorporated into the Val-Kill landscape. The pool terrace patio is a characteristic feature of the cultural landscape.

#### Pool Pump

*Historic Condition:* Pumping equipment for the first pool was located adjacent to the creek, just northeast of the bridge. This proximity to the water's edge is likely due to the fact that the pool used recirculated creek water. Little is known about the specifics of the pool equipment.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* A small, weathered metal pump house remains today in a stand of conifers northeast of the bridge.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The pool pump retains little integrity to the period of significance due to its compromised condition and because its context is missing, yet the basic shape and materials remain to remind visitors of its original purpose. As the only tangible reminder of the first pool, that was a

defining element of the early retreat landscape, the pump is a characteristic feature that contributes to the cultural landscape.

#### Pool Equipment Room

*Historic Condition:* Built into the side of a bank, the pool equipment room for the second pool was strategically placed in 1935 for easy access and low visibility. From the pool terrace, the flat roof of the room sat flush with the ground and was incorporated into the flagstone pool deck. A door nestled into the slope, lined by stone retaining walls, provided access on the southwest side of the pool. The ten-foot by seven-foot room housed the pumps and filters. The pool and pool equipment room were maintained in good working order throughout the period of significance.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The pool remained in use through 1970 when John Roosevelt sold the property. It is unknown what state of repair the subsequent tenants maintained. Currently, the pool room is locked but accessible and contains all of its original parts, albeit, unworking.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* As it retains integrity to its working era during the period of significance and was a component of a character defining feature, the pool, the equipment room is a characteristic feature that contributes to the cultural landscape.

#### Fieldstone Retaining Wall

*Historic Condition:* Built in 1924-1925, the fieldstone retaining wall at the Stone Cottage was constructed partly for aesthetic purposes and partly to compensate for grade changes created during the cottage construction process. The low, dry-laid wall stood approximately 26 inches high and ran for sixty-five feet along the north side of the Stone Cottage. Three flagstone steps connected the slight grade change approximately in the middle of the wall. The stone wall served as a boundary between the Stone Cottage and Factory lawns, a line that was further delineated when a line of lilacs was planted just north of the wall. The feature remained constant through the period of significance.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* No documented changes occurred to the wall after Mrs. Roosevelt's death in 1962. Currently, the stone steps need resetting, the wall has lost several flagstone capstones, and contains segments that have partially toppled. The wall is obscured by the large, overgrown lilac shrubs at its base, whose roots compromise the wall's stability.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The wall stands in decent repair, needing some maintenance to return it to historic condition. Regardless, it represents the initial site work that occurred during the first stages of Val-Kill developments. The largely aesthetic wall was built using native stone and created a boundary along the north side of the Stone Cottage. The planting and maturity of the

lilac row reinforced the edge of the Stone Cottage yard using a loose and semi-fluid material. As a component of the informal early retreat landscape, the retaining wall is a characteristic feature.

### Flagpole

*Historic Condition:* A flagpole was installed in 1940 on the west lawn of the Factory near the edge of the pond. The two-and-a-half-inch metal pipe flagpole is approximately thirty feet tall.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The original flagpole exists on site. It was restored to the west lawn after being found in the dump in the east woods. It remains in good condition outside of a pronounced lean.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The flagpole that retains integrity to the period of significance stands as a component of the residential landscape developed by Mrs. Roosevelt during the period of significance. It is a characteristic feature that contributes to the cultural landscape.

### Play Equipment

*Historic Condition:* A swing-set was installed on the lawn west of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage in 1937 for the caretaker's daughter. It is likely that a see-saw was also installed at this time. They were located south of the picnic area, near the edge of the pond. It is probable that they remained in use through much of the period of significance by Mrs. Roosevelt's frequent visitors and grandchildren.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Photos from the 1960s and 1970s show the play equipment in disrepair. It is likely during this period that the seesaw board was removed, leaving only the metal support. Today, the metal pipe supports for both the swing-set and see-saw remain.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The remnants of the play equipment, which includes only the metal supports of the swing-set and see-saw, illustrate the recreational uses of Val-Kill and Mrs. Roosevelt's desire to accommodate the many children who lived and played at the site. They are characteristic features that contribute to the cultural landscape.

### Tennis Court

*Historic Condition:* Built in 1950 for a cost of \$764, the Val-Kill tennis court was located on the lawn west of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage. This period of time represented when the site was frequently used by her children and grandchildren, some of whom were in residence at the Stone Cottage, for active recreation. It was a ninety-four by thirty-six foot asphalt court with a gravel base. Initially, lines for tennis and badminton were painted on the surface, white for tennis, yellow for badminton. The later installation of a badminton court adjacent to the tennis court made the yellow lines

superfluous. Two backstop fences with angled wings were installed at the court's east and west ends. Honeysuckle vines were trained up the ten foot high welded wire mesh.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* No documented changes occurred to the tennis court after Mrs. Roosevelt's death. It is unknown whether tenants used the court between 1962 and 1977. Today, the surface of the court is mottled and aged. Little evidence of the white marking lines can be seen on the fractured and pitted surface. There is no net. In contrast to the court surface, the backstop supports are in good condition. The welded wire mesh is rusted and damaged in some places but the metal posts are plumb and sound.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The tennis court that retains integrity, due to little adaptation of the feature outside of normal weathering, is representative of changes made to the site after Mrs. Roosevelt became the sole owner of Val-Kill. She modified the character of the site to include more recreational features and less maintenance intensive ones. The tennis court, built in 1951, was included in this shift and contributes as a characteristic feature of the cultural landscape.

#### Picnic Fireplace

*Historic Condition:* Built in 1933, the large, mortared fieldstone fireplace was located in a dense stand of cedar trees west of the Factory. Henry Toombs, the architect of the Stone Cottage, designed the fireplace with input from Nancy Cook. The solidly built fireplace had a five-foot-long grill flanked by two eighteen-inch high seat walls or "warming shelves." A terracotta statue of a boy eating a hot-dog was hung over the grill sometime between the mid-1930s and mid-1950s. The fireplace, covered with climbing vines, became the focal point of the picnic area that was characterized by informal vegetation and roughly cut grass. Several associated features including a bench and water spigot made the area a convenient entertaining venue.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* When the NPS acquired the site in the 1970s, the picnic fireplace was in need of repair. Disintegrated mortar was re-pointed and missing flagstones were replaced for a gathering of Mrs. Roosevelt's grandchildren in the early 1980s. Today, the feature stands in good condition.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The picnic fireplace served as an important feature of the Val-Kill landscape during the period of significance and became the setting for many of the simple outdoor gatherings that defined Mrs. Roosevelt's entertaining style and use of the site. The feature has been repaired in to fix issues related to aging and retains integrity. As such, it is a characteristic feature of the cultural landscape.

### Pump Behind Cutting Garden

*Historic Condition:* Not applicable. Constructed after the period of significance.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* An emergency pump for the septic system at Val-Kill was installed in the 1990s. It stands east of the cutting garden and is shielded from view by the cutting garden arborvitae hedge and its own perimeter hedge.

*Evaluation: Non-contributing.* The emergency pump is a modern feature and does not relate to the period of significance. Because it is located in proximity to the cutting garden and garage/stable in the historic core and is an intrusion, it is an incompatible feature.

### Signage

*Historic Condition:* Not applicable. Constructed after the period of significance.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Interpretive and directional signage has been placed throughout the historic core for visitor orientation and safety. Several signs indicate the main buildings on site, while others delineate handicapped parking and features such as public restrooms. Some signage is already outdated. For example, a sign directs visitors to the Playhouse for tours while the point of beginning has changed.

*Evaluation: Non-contributing.* NPS signs in the historic core are modern features that do not relate to the period of significance. They are incompatible with the historic scene.

### Benches

*Historic Condition:* Not applicable. Constructed after the period of significance.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Approximately six to eight benches of two different styles exist on site. One style is a simple, wide-slat, green-painted wood bench with metal supports and arm rests. They are unremarkable and blend into the landscape. The second type is more ornate composite of wood and cast iron. The back is created from a curved wood support and a basket-weave pattern of cast iron. Their more stylized appearance stands in contrast to other features on site and is more eye-catching.

*Evaluation: Non-contributing.* Neither of the bench types contribute because of their contemporary age and design. Both bench types are incompatible with the historic scene.

### Lighting

*Historic Condition:* Not applicable. Constructed after the period of significance.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* A limited amount of lighting is located throughout the historic core to illuminate building entrances and circulation systems. The streetlights are modern in design, with simple brown metal supports with square, down-facing bulbs and subtly blend into the environment.

*Evaluation: Non-contributing.* Light poles in the historic core are modern features that do not relate to the period of significance. They are incompatible with the historic scene.

## **EAST REGION**

### **Hydrology**

#### Fall-Kill

*Historic Condition:* The slow-moving Fall-Kill establishes the low, wetland areas that characterize the southeast extents of the park. Historically, the creek meandered past the historic core to the southern areas of the park where it collected water from a contributing stream. The banks of these creeks shifted seasonally with variations in surface and ground water. The creek in the east region was not manipulated or actively managed by the Roosevelts. A small concrete dam was built in the mid to late-1950s along the Fall-Kill at the southwest extents of the park to create a narrow and sinuous pond.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The Fall-Kill was not manipulated or altered after the creation of the south dam. It continues to move its course slightly due to natural factors.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* Though little activity related to Mrs. Roosevelt's use of Val-Kill occurred along the Fall-Kill south of the dam outside of passive recreation, the course of the slow-moving stream contributes to the natural setting of the site's east region. This natural context was one that she valued highly and even though the stream has been manipulated through the introduction of a small dam, it retains its defining characteristics. The Fall-Kill is a character defining-feature of the Val-Kill cultural landscape.

#### Vernal Pools

*Historic Condition:* Several vernal pools are located along the loop road east of the Val-Kill Cottages. Presumably, since there has been no significant alteration of topography or hydrological patterns in the area, the pools existed during the period of significance. It is likely that Mrs. Roosevelt passed by the pools on her daily walks on the loop road in the spring months.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* One vernal pool is located just off the loop road, up hill from the historic core. It appears in the late winter/early spring each year, remaining a variable amount of time depending on the amount of rainfall and snowmelt. Several other pools exist in the same area, though are not visible from the loop road.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* As part of the forested landscape of the east region, used regularly by Mrs. Roosevelt for walking and horseback riding, and as a backdrop to the private setting of Val-Kill, the vernal pools are characteristic contributing features.

### Pond in Southeast Woods

*Historic Condition:* A pond is located near the southeast corner of Val-Kill, at the highest elevation on site. The loop road, built in 1940, was built around the pond, that is present year round. Mrs. Roosevelt would have passed the pond on her daily walks along the loop road. Likewise, FDR often paused at the pond during his recreational drives around the loop road.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* There has been no evidence to show that the pond has changed since the period of significance. It is not a managed feature and evolves naturally, hosting a significant population of plant and animal life.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The pond in the southeast woods contributes to the natural, wooded environment of the Val-Kill east region and is a characteristic feature of the cultural landscape.

### **Circulation**

#### Eastern Access Road

*Historic Condition:* FDR had a road built through the east woods of Val-Kill in 1933, passing the cottages and exiting to a farm road northeast of the property. This road served as an extension of the Val-Kill entry road that led to his 1914 white pine plantation. It later evolved into a rear egress point for the Val-Kill estate and the way to access the former Dumphy Farm that abutted Val-Kill to the north.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The road was used more frequently after Mrs. Roosevelt's death. Her son John converted her cottage into rental units, building an additional driveway spur through the cutting garden to connect with the eastern access road. Renters likely used this road as their primary access to and from the site. Today the road is actively used by park staff and repeat visitors who access the park from Roosevelt Road at the park's northeast boundary, yet remains a narrow packed-earth road.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The eastern access road exists today in the same general alignment as when it was created in the 1930s. The road serviced the larger Roosevelt estate by leading past FDR's forestry plantations and later to adjoining Roosevelt properties. At the same time, the road served as a connection between the historic core of Val-Kill and the forested east region. It is a characteristic feature that contributes to Val-Kill's cultural landscape.

### Loop Road

*Historic Condition:* FDR directed his estate staff to build a road for recreational purposes through the east woods of Val-Kill. The road, built in circa 1940 connected with the 1935 road to the Rohan Farm near the garage/stable east of the cottages, created a closed loop that traveled throughout the east central and south east region of the site, passing steep topography of the southwest hill and the low wetlands of the Fall-Kill. The road also provided vehicular access to the forest plantations along the Fall-Kill that FDR planted in 1930 and 1931. Additionally, Mrs. Roosevelt walked the two-track packed-earth loop daily with her dogs.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* It is unknown how frequently or for what the loop road was used after the period of significance. Currently it is used by park visitors, many of them local repeat visitors, for exercise and dog walking. Some segments on the steep slopes in the south have eroded from water damage. The NPS maintains it as an approximately ten-foot-wide packed-earth road.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The loop road, built under FDR's direction, contributes to the period of significance for its representation of the interconnectivity of the Roosevelt estate and as a feature used by Mrs. Roosevelt for passive recreation and as a way to connect with the natural environment of the site.

## **Vegetation**

### 1914 White Pine Plantation

*Historic Condition:* One of FDR's first ventures into experimental forestry on his own property occurred in 1914 on the recently acquired Bennett Farm. He selected a site on the east bank of the Fall-Kill wetland that was partially cleared from grazing and planted a gridded stand of white pines within an irregular parcel sandwiched between the northern property line of the Bennett Farm, the Fall-Kill wetland, and a small creek. The stand was thinned in 1930 and 1931 as the Val-Kill retreat developed to its south. By the 1940s and 1950s, the large, even rows of uniform tree trunks and high canopies created an inviting place for Mrs. Roosevelt's grandchildren, who used the quiet, mysterious forest for play time.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* No documented management of the plantation has occurred since 1931 and the stand is now aged and has lost a portion of its defining characteristics. Though many trees have been upended due to windthrow and lost from age, some areas still retain the gridded planting plan, and continuous canopy.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The 1914 plantation, that is still partially intact, is significant in the arena of FDR's forestry program but also because of its compatibility with the natural, wooded environment of the east region of Val Kill. As Mrs. Roosevelt remarked on the serene and beautiful qualities of the plantation as an asset of the retreat, it is a characteristic feature that contributes to the historic scene.

#### 1930 Mixed-Species plantation

*Historic Condition:* Contributing to the growing forestry operation located on his estate, FDR and the New York State College of Forestry planted a stand of tulip poplars south of the Stone Cottage in 1930. The stand was likely planted in old pasture land that did not require clearing. He supplemented the plantation a year later, adding northern white cedar, and black walnuts. While still interested in sustainable forestry practices, the northern white cedar were planted to be harvested commercially. The stand was supplemented with a crop of scots pine in 1937 under the direction of Nelson Brown. Mrs. Roosevelt remarked on passing the stands along the loop road in her daily walks. No documented thinning occurred to the stand in subsequent years and the trees matured naturally during the period of significance.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* After Mrs. Roosevelt's death in 1962, her son John and site superintendent Curnan enclosed a portion of the 1930 plantation and allowed their flock of sheep to forage between the trees. Currently, the 1930 plantation is barely visible amidst the native growth and volunteer trees. To a trained eye, groupings of like trees can be seen, sometimes with distinct edges between the species with markedly different characteristics, though all lack visible signs of a gridded planting pattern.

*Evaluation: Non-contributing.* The 1930 plantation at one time was a contributing feature of the wooded east region, when its characteristic rows of trees were visible, as they were to Mrs. Roosevelt. However, so little of the original planting exists today that the feature can not be considered to contribute as historically intended. Regardless, the remaining historic trees and the many volunteer trees that have obliterated the former grid pattern comprise a compatible stand that blends seamlessly into the surrounding forest.

#### 1931 Mixed-Species Plantation

*Historic Condition:* During the effort to introduce multiple species to the 1930 tulip poplar plantation south of the Stone Cottage, FDR, working collaboratively with the New York State College of Forestry, directed the planting of a mixed-species stand, comprised of northern white cedar and black walnut, abutting the south boundary of the 1930 plantation. An additional planting of northern white cedar followed in 1941, as directed by Nelson Brown. As the loop road was later constructed along its east edge, it

became a regularly viewed feature for Mrs. Roosevelt during her daily exercise through the east woods. The stand is not known to have been thinned.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* After seven decades of natural growth, the 1931 plantation is difficult to differentiate from the native forest around it. A few short segments of tree lines can be seen, but many trees have been lost to age or windthrow. Many volunteer trees crowd the original plantation trees.

*Evaluation: Non-contributing.* Like the 1930 plantation, the 1931 plantation no longer retains the qualities that convey historic significance. Its lack of integrity disallows the feature from being a contributing component of the historical scene, yet the current condition as native forest is compatible with its surrounding context.

### Native Forest

*Historic Condition:* Much of the east region was likely cleared of vegetation during the late 1800s and early 1900s, evidenced by the abundant stone walls. Though portions of the land was hilly and rocky or low-lying and wet, agricultural land was at a premium and even marginal areas were utilized for production. Judging by the age of the trees throughout the east region, natural succession of the area began between 1910 and 1930. Mrs. Roosevelt utilized and appreciated many aspects of Val-Kill including the cultivated fields of the west region and the forests to the east of the cottages. She exercised regularly along the loop road of the east woods, commenting on the wildlife, seasonal changes, and glory of the native landscape. One major alteration of the successional forest occurred between 1955-1959, when Central Hudson Electric Corporation cut a one hundred foot swath through the east region for an electrical line right-of-way. This wide channel ran continuously from the south to the north boundary of the property, making a ninety-degree turn and heading west along the northern extents of the site. Central Hudson maintained the right-of-way in grasses and low shrubs, mowing periodically.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Little if any manipulation of the east region occurred after Mrs. Roosevelt's death, outside of routine maintenance of the electrical line right-of-way. Today the successional forest appears healthy and composed of many species of hardwoods, conifers, and understory growth.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The native successional forest of the east region is a character-defining feature that encompasses the qualities of the native landscape that Mrs. Roosevelt valued and experienced at Val-Kill.

## Small-Scale Features

### Stone Walls

*Historic Condition:* The east region of Val-Kill during the 1800s and early 1900s was likely cleared of vegetation for agricultural activities, be they crop production or animal grazing. Stone wall field boundaries used to delineate fields and contain livestock remain throughout the east region, obscured by forest growth. It is unlikely that the Roosevelts added to or maintained these stone walls during the period of significance, but they may have dismantled some to provide building material for the Stone Cottage.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Today, numerous walls appear within the east forest. Some are several feet tall, in fair condition, and have discernible paths. Others are merely piles of rubble partially hidden beneath fallen leaves and understory growth.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* Though not created by the Roosevelts, the stone walls contribute to landscape of the east region, standing as obsolete reminders of the successional area's agricultural history. The stone walls are characteristic features of the historic scene.

### Wire Fencing

*Historic Condition:* Tenant farmers of the Bennett Farm, and possibly land owners before them, used wire fencing to create animal enclosures on site. Notably, farmers of the 1920s recalled fencing the area around the creek and low-lying land of the east region to contain their livestock. Much of this may have been removed during the years of Val-Kill retreat development, though segments likely remained in the woods south and east of the cottage.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* After Mrs. Roosevelt's death in 1962, her son John and the site superintendent fenced an area around the 1930 forest plantation south of the Stone Cottage to allow their flock of sheep to forage in the woods. Today, numerous strands of wire fencing remain, mostly in the woods south of Stone Cottage. Cut sections of wire fencing project out of tree bark along the approach to the loop road where a fence line once ran. Other discontinuous strands of wire are located along fallen stone walls within the forest.

*Evaluation: Non-contributing.* Though partial strands of barbed-wire fencing exists throughout the east region, dating to the period of significance or before, the remaining strands lack the integrity to contribute to the cultural landscape. Despite this, the segments are compatible with the historic scene, as they often exist adjacent to stone walls and illustrate former agricultural land uses.

### Central Hudson Electric Power Lines

*Historic Condition:* Built between 1955 and 1959 as part of a power line extending from Poughkeepsie to the south and Rhinebeck to the north, Central Hudson erected a transmission line through the east woods of Val-Kill, cutting a one-hundred-foot-wide channel through the forest. The line traveled on a slight diagonal, north to south, and along the property's northern boundary. Central Hudson mowed the right-of-way periodically to control vegetative growth.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* The power lines right-of-way are still in service and appear largely as they did when they were constructed.

*Evaluation: Contributing.* The power lines and right-of-way date to the period of significance and are therefore contributing features.

### South Dam

*Historic Condition:* A dam was built on the southwest boundary of the current park extents in approximately 1955 to create a small body of water from the Fall-Kill. Parcels adjacent to Val-Kill were subdivided in the 1950s and 1960s and a cluster of homes was built abutting the creek. The dam is made from concrete block and spans a width of approximately five feet. Water spills over the top of the simply constructed concrete block wall.

*Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:* Since little is known about the feature's origins or initial design, it is difficult to ascertain if it has been altered. It is currently in good condition and creates a narrow, meandering pond that resembles the original creek bed.

*Evaluation: Undetermined.* Without more information about the feature's origin and history, a determination about its contribution to the historic scene cannot be made.

### TABLE OF LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Key: C=Constructed, A=Altered, R=Removed

West Region			
Characteristic	Contributing/ Non-Contributing Status	Feature Name	Dates
<i>Natural Systems</i>	Contributing	Fall-Kill and wetland	A 1930, 1937+
<i>Spatial Organization</i>	Contributing	West field south of entry road	A c. 1900, 1960+
	Contributing	Fall-Kill and wetland	A 1930, 1937
<i>Circulation Roads</i>	Contributing	Val-Kill entry road	C c. 1850, A 1925, 1936, 1980, 1999
<i>Topography</i>	Contributing	West field south of entry road	C c. 1850
	Contributing	West field north of entry road	C c. 1850
<i>Vegetation</i>	Contributing	Meadow/west field south of entry road	
	Contributing	Meadow/west field north of entry road	
	Contributing	Shrub and tree growth in west field north of entry road	
	Contributing	Tree line along northwest side of entry road	C c. 1910
<i>Buildings and Structures</i>	Non-contributing	Caretaker's house	C 1964
		Tenant house	C c. 1880, R c 1963
		Agricultural buildings	C c. 1880, A 1880+, R 1984
<i>Built Water Features</i>	Contributing	Sheep pond by caretaker's house	C c. 1964
		Drainage ditches in west field north of entry road	C c. 1900
<i>Small-Scale Features</i>	Contributing	Stone walls along Route 9G	C c. 1850-1900
	Contributing	Stone wall between former Bennett and Tompkins Farms	C c. 1850-1900
	Contributing	Stone walls along entry road	C c. 1850, R (partially) c. 1925
		Stone pillars at entry on Route 9G	C 1940, R c. 1945

Key: C=Constructed, A=Altered, R=Removed

Historic Core Characteristic	Contributing/ Non-Contributing Status	Feature Name	Dates	
<i>Natural Systems</i>	Contributing	Fall-Kill		
<i>Spatial Organization</i>	Contributing	Val-Kill pond	C 1930, A 1937+	
	Contributing	Stone Cottage lawn	C 1926, A 1926+	
	Contributing	Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage lawn	C 1926, A 1926+	
<i>Circulation</i>				
Roads	Contributing	Stone Cottage driveway circle	C 1926, A 1936	
	Contributing	Driveways between the cottages	C 1926, A 1936	
	Contributing	Two-track service drive north of Val-Kill Cottage	C c. 1930	
	Non-contributing	Visitor parking lot	C 1980, A 1999	
	Non-contributing	Employee parking lot	C 1980, A 1999	
Paths	Contributing	Path between cottages	C c. 1926	
	Contributing	Stone Cottage main entry path	C 1926, A 1936	
	Non-contributing	Path from entry road to orchard/parking lot	C 1980	
<i>Topography</i>	Contributing			
<i>Vegetation</i>	Contributing	Oak grove	C c. 1920-1950	
	Contributing	Sycamore on pool terrace	C c. 1900	
	Contributing	Sycamore between cottages	C c. 1900	
	Contributing	Cutting garden	C 1937, R c. 1962 (partially), re-established 1984	
	Contributing	Rose garden	C 1960, A 1984	
	Contributing	Pool terrace garden	C 1936, R 1962-1976	
	Contributing	Stone Cottage entry garden	C 1926, A 1936, 1940	
			Stone Cottage east garden	C 1936, A 1936-1947, R c. 1960
	Contributing	Stone Cottage walled garden	C 1936, A c. 1940, 1984+	
			Stone Cottage north garden	C 1936, A 1936-1947, R c. 1960
			Stone Cottage west lawn	C 1926, A 1936-1947
	Contributing	Orchard	C 1931, A 1931+	
	Contributing	Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage west lawn	C 1926, A 1936	
Contributing	Southwest bank of pond	C 1925, A		
Contributing	Norway spruce row north of Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage	C c. 1936		
	Contributing	Red pine screen east of bridge	C 1936, A 1984	
	Contributing	Ivy on Stone Cottage	C 1925	
	Contributing	Spruce Grove	C c. 1920	

<b>Historic Core Continued</b>			
<i>Buildings and Structures</i>	Contributing	Bridge and dam	C c. 1900, A 1925, 1926, 1934, 1939, 1940, c. 1955, 1981
	Contributing	Stone Cottage	C 1925-1926, A 1936, 1951, 1960
	Contributing	Factory/Mrs. Roosevelt's Cottage	C 1926, A 1928, 1929, 1932, 1937, 1962
	Contributing	Playhouse	C 1928, A c. 1935, c. 1962
	Contributing	Doll House	C 1935, Moved 1945, A c. 1962
	Contributing	Garage/stable	C 1937
		Greenhouse	C 1937, R c. 1960
	Contributing	Potting shed	C c. 1940, A c. 1960
	Contributing	Storage shed	C c. 1940
<i>Built Water Features</i>		First pool	C 1924-1925, R 1935
	Contributing	Second pool	C 1935
	Contributing	Val-Kill pond	C 1930, A 1937
<i>Small-Scale Features</i>	Contributing	Stone pillars at orchard	C 1931
	Contributing	Pool terrace patio	C 1936
	Contributing	Pool pump	C 1925
	Contributing	Pool equipment room	C 1935
	Contributing	Fieldstone retaining wall	C 1926
	Contributing	Flagpole	C 1940
	Contributing	Dock	C 1939, R c. 1960
	Contributing	Play equipment	C 1937
		First bath house	C 1930, R 1935
	Contributing	Second bath house	C 1935, R c. 1960
	Contributing	Tennis court	C 1950
		Badminton court	C 1950, R c. 1960
	Contributing	Picnic fireplace	C 1933
	Non-contributing	South dam	C c. 1955
	Non-contributing	Pump behind cutting garden	C c. 1998
	Non-contributing	Signage	C c. 1984
	Non-contributing	Lighting	C c. 1984
	Non-contributing	Fire hydrants	C c. 1984
	Non-contributing	Benches	C c. 1984

Key: C=Constructed, A=Altered, R=Removed

East Region Characteristic	Contributing/ Non-Contributing Status	Feature Name	Dates
<i>Natural Systems</i>	Contributing	Fall-Kill	
	Contributing	Vernal pools	
	Contributing	Pond in southeast woods	
<i>Spatial Organization</i>	Contributing		
<i>Circulation</i> Roads	Contributing	Eastern access road	C 1933
	Contributing	Loop road	C 1935
		Road to Top Cottage	C 1936-1938, R c. 1960 (partially)
<i>Topography</i>	Contributing		
<i>Vegetation</i>	Contributing	1914 White pine plantation	C 1914, A 1931, 1933
	Contributing	1930 Mixed species plantation	C 1930, A 1931
	Contributing	1931 Mixed species plantation	C 1931, A 1941
	Contributing	Successional forest	
<i>Small Scale Features</i>	Contributing	Stone walls	C c. 1820-1900
	Contributing	Barbed wire fencing	C late 1800s, early 1900s, A c. 1924-1930, 1962
	Contributing	Central Hudson power lines	C c. 1955-1959
	Undetermined	South dam	C. c 1955

## Landscape Analysis Endnotes

- <sup>284</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 6 June 1938, *My Day*. ROVA park files.
- <sup>285</sup> Joseph P. Lash, Eleanor and Franklin: The Story of Their Relationship, Based on Eleanor Roosevelt's Private Papers, 305, as cited in Torres, HRS, 88.
- <sup>286</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 21 July 1938, *My Day*. ROVA park files.
- <sup>287</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 31 July 1938, *My Day*. ROVA park files.
- <sup>288</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 1 August 1945, *My Day*. ROVA park files.
- <sup>289</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 11 July 1939, *My Day*. ROVA park files.
- <sup>290</sup> National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, *Significance*, 2, 2 February 1979.
- <sup>291</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 15 June 1939, *My Day*. ROVA park files.
- <sup>292</sup> John Auwaerter, "Land-Use History, Roosevelt Estate Historic Resource Study, Draft," 5.
- <sup>293</sup> Buell and Buell, "Preliminary Assessment of Archeological Resource Potential of the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York," Department of Anthropology, State University of New York at Albany, January 1979, 4, citing Funk, Robert E., "Early to Middle Archaic Occupations in Upstate New York," in *Current Perspectives in Northeastern Archeology*, R.E. Funk and C.F. Hayes III, eds.
- <sup>294</sup> Buell and Buell, 5.
- <sup>295</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>296</sup> "Natural Resources Inventory at Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York," Overview Report, 16, 18, 1 November 1979, Pandullo Quirk Associates.
- <sup>297</sup> Ibid., 16.



# Cultural Landscape Report for Eleanor Roosevelt NHS

## Diagram of Character Areas

Figure 8.1

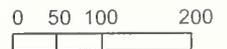


**National Park Service  
Olmsted Center for  
Landscape Preservation**  
99 Warren Street  
Brookline, MA 02445

**SOURCES**

1. Eleanor Roosevelt NHS Survey, April 2004
2. Historic and contemporary maps and photographs

**LEGEND**



-  Contour
-  Building/structure
-  Boundary between character areas
-  Historic Core
-  Road/Path

Cultural  
Landscape  
Report for  
Eleanor  
Roosevelt NHS

Diagram of  
Character Areas

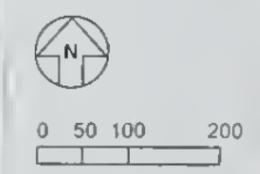
Figure 8.1



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- Contour
- Building/structure
- Boundary between character areas
- Historic Core
- Road/Path





Stone Cottage and bridge in winter, circa 1928. Cook-Dickerman Collection 763, ROVA park files.

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Marion Dickerman and Eric Gugler with Buick at the Cottage, 1926. Cook-Dickerman Collection 725, ROVA park files.

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