

# The FDR Summer Home

Roosevelt Campobello International Park  
Campobello Island, New Brunswick



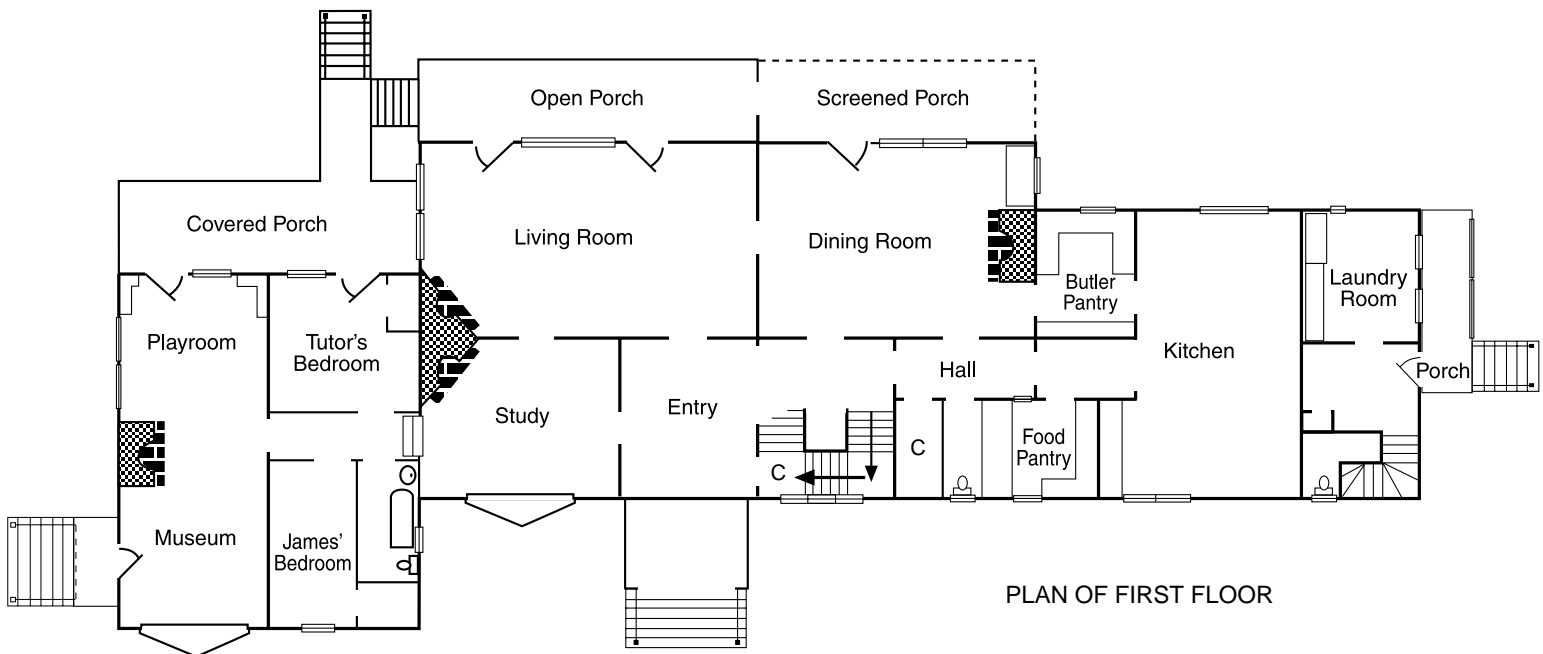
The cottage now known as the FDR summer home was built in 1897 for Mrs. Hartman Kuhn, of Boston, an early guest of Campobello's resort hotels. Mrs. Kuhn was fond of Eleanor when she and Franklin summered at his mother's cottage next door. When Mrs. Kuhn died, a provision in her will offered her cottage to FDR's mother, Sara, at a bargain price (\$5000.00). Franklin's mother purchased the cottage furnished, with two hectares (5 acres) of land in 1909, and when she died, left the cottage to him. He, Eleanor, and their growing family spent summers in the cottage from 1909 to 1921.

The interior of the cottage was comfortable, but had neither electricity nor telephone. Aladdin lamps (kerosene) and candles were used throughout the house. Every summer, the Roosevelts brought along

a nurse and a governess to tutor and instruct the children, and several servants to run the cottage. In addition, several island residents were hired to help with the daily chores. Each morning, servants brought kerosene lamps from throughout the house to the back hall where the lamps were filled; the wicks were trimmed and glass chimneys cleaned before the lamps were returned to their original locations.

Running water for bathing, cooking, and cleaning was gravity fed throughout the cottage from storage tanks on the third floor. Outside, a windmill and, when there was no wind, a single-cylinder gas engine pumped water from the well to the holding tank high on the tower. Gravity carried the water from the tower to the inside storage tanks. The dining room ice crock held drinking water, brought by horse and cart in large bottles from a spring called Barrel Well.

A wood box at the bottom of the stairs to the second floor attests to the major source of heat, seven fireplaces. The kitchen stove (coal and wood-fired) also provided warmth.



Exhibiting design principles of the Arts and Crafts Movement, the cottage reveals specific references to early American colonial architecture. Principle considerations in the design of summer homes of the era were comfort, orientation to view and to sun, and the picturesque charm so valued by the Arts and Crafts Movement. Necessaries in the way of size, verandas, and numbers and types of rooms were also important.

Of wood frame construction, the sides of the two-and-a-half story structure are covered with cedar shingles. Originally, the roof, too, was covered with cedar shingles. All the trim is wood. Interiors are finished with lath and plaster, with a generous use of wooden trim for windows, doors, and baseboards. The design of the house was altered in 1915 when Franklin had a new wing built on to provide additional space for his growing family. The addition blends well with the original design.



**Museum/Playroom**

The cottage is 35.7 metres long (175') and 10.7 metres (35') wide, and has seventy-six windows and seven fireplaces. Eighteen of the thirty-four rooms are bedrooms; six are bathrooms.

The room visitors first enter was originally used as a schoolroom and play room. Later, during President Roosevelt's three return visits, it was used as a reception room and office. Today it is a small museum containing both a display of photographs symbolizing FDR's four terms of office and various furnishings and artifacts related to FDR and his family's summer activities. Paraphernalia of fair and foul weather summer pastimes include oars, water



**Dining Room**

wings, games, toys, and model ship-making tools and supplies.

Just up the short hall is the bedroom used by Franklin and Eleanor's son James, and later used by the secret service. James once reminisced, "My memories of this rugged, rocky island are wonderful ones. It was here father taught me to swim and how to sail a boat. With no telephone and electricity, the beauty of nature, especially in summer, was in no way spoiled, and Campobello was a wonderful haven from the cares of the world."

Across the hall from James' bedroom is the room used by the children's tutor. FDR used this bedroom in 1933, when he returned as President for an overnight visit.

Most furnishings in the living and dining rooms are original Roosevelt items. At the turn of the century, wicker furniture was very much in vogue in resort areas and was widely used in summer cottages. The tea set on display in the living room is reminiscent of



**Living Room**



**Kitchen**

Eleanor Roosevelt's daily custom of serving tea from her Wedgwood tea set, either in the living room or on the porch.

Scatter rugs in the dining room were designed and hand-hooked by Campobello residents. When numerous dining guests were present, the youngest children, John and Franklin, were assigned to eat at the small table in front of the two windows. Through the wide windows, visitors look across the bay to Eastport, Maine.

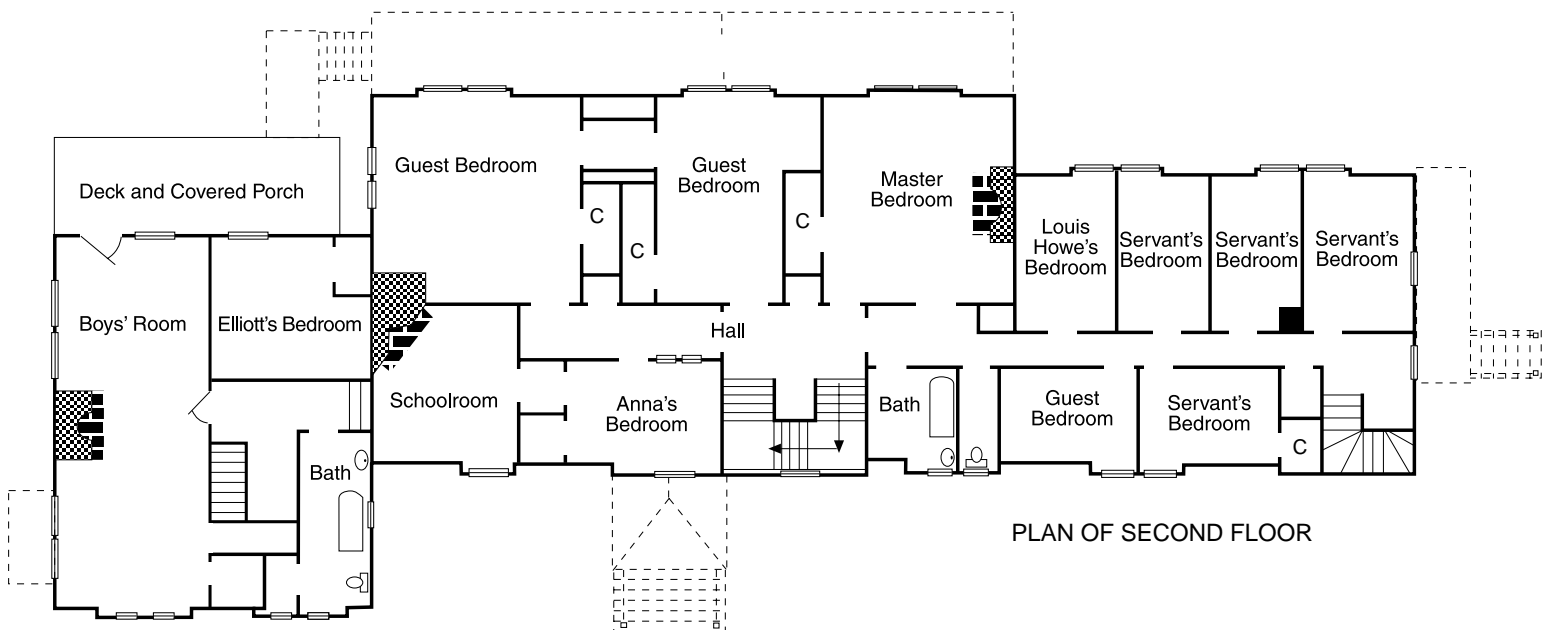
Just before the kitchen is the food pantry. Here are items used for food and beverage preparation: a cake mixer, meat press, muffin pans, molds for boiled cakes or puddings, and gelatin molds. Built-in storage for large bags of flour and sugar was convenient for preparation of cakes, cookies, pies, and breads. Food was refrigerated in wooden ice

chests. Island men cut the ice in the winter from Lake Glensevern and stored it in sawdust in the ice house just north of the cottage.

The spacious kitchen offered the cook and servants plenty of room to prepare food. Meals were served from the adjoining butler's pantry. Near one wall is a large, white enamel, coal and wood-burning stove. Prior to the President's 1933 visit, his mother, Mrs. Sara Roosevelt, had the stove installed; coincidentally, the stove bears the model name PRESIDENT across its oven door. Food could be kept warm in the warming oven top of the stove or bread dough could be kept there to rise before baking. The previous kitchen stove had been a large, cast-iron wood stove. A small kerosene stove was



**Laundry Room**



used to start vegetables and other foods, which were then transferred to the wood stove to finish cooking.

At the northernmost end of the first floor, just off the kitchen, is the laundry room; it contains artifacts that were common in laundry rooms of the era. Moving the handle back and forth on the old-fashioned, wooden washing machine worked the agitator to stir the clothes inside. Wash boards were used to hand wash clothes and were kept in soapstone sinks. An unheated “mangle” pressed wrinkles from damp clothes. The clothes were then hung to dry on wooden racks. The pot-bellied stove heated water, and was also used to heat flatirons for ironing. Personal laundry was washed at the cottage. The man who delivered drinking water picked up the house laundry (soiled linen) and empty water jugs; he would later return with fresh drinking water and clean laundry.

On the second floor of the cottage is the master bedroom, shared by Franklin & Eleanor until he fell ill with the polio virus in 1921 - he was 39. Franklin Roosevelt, Jr. was born in this room.



**Master Bedroom**

The bedroom to the left of the master bedroom was a guest room. Down the hall from the master bedroom is Anna’s room. To the right of the master bedroom was the bedroom often used by Louis Howe, FDR’s personal friend and advisor of twenty-two years.

At the southern end of the second floor is Franklin Jr. and John’s room, formerly the nursery. Hanging from the ceiling is a “Jenny” model airplane, the type of airplane used prior to World War I for training combat pilots. The model is not an original Roosevelt

artifact, but was brought to the Park from the Adams Estate, just up the road. The Adams were relatives of the Roosevelts and the children often played together.



**Boys’ Room**

From the veranda outside the boys’ room, and from Elliott’s room next door, is a beautiful view across the bay. The Roosevelt children enjoyed the woods, bogs, beaches, and many other places their father enjoyed when as a youth he came to Campobello with his parents. The Roosevelts treasured their family memories of Campobello.

On the northern end of the second floor are other guest rooms and the servants’ rooms. The third floor is closed, due to fire regulations. On the third floor were two servants’ rooms, two guest rooms, and a full size bath.

### **The Season**

The Park opens the Saturday following Victoria Day (the Saturday prior to U.S. Memorial Day), and remains open through Canadian Thanksgiving (U.S. Columbus Day). Visiting hours are from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. A.D.T. (9 a.m. to 5 p.m. E.D.T.) seven days a week. The last tour of the cottage is at 5:45 A.D.T. (4:45 E.D.T.). There is no admission charge. Although the Roosevelt Cottage is closed to inside tours after Canadian Thanksgiving/U.S. Columbus Day, the Park’s Visitor Centre remains open through the end of October for the convenience of fall travelers. The Park’s Natural Area is open year round.

All inquiries should be directed to the Executive Secretary at 459 Route 774, Welshpool, NB, E5E 1A4 or P.O. Box 129, Lubec, ME 04652.