

TOP COTTAGE

Viewshed Restoration

Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt
Institute and the National Park
Service
Hyde Park, New York

Project Data

Date: 2001
Size: Historic Core: 5 acres
Total Site: 40.5 acres
Context: Mid-Hudson River Valley

Goals & Objectives

Develop a plan to restore FDR's western viewshed

- Identify the original extent of FDR's viewshed.
- Identify and work with a lumberman who understands and appreciates the historical significance of the site.
- Capture the view while limiting exposure of adjacent properties.

Project Description:

In 1938, Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945) designed and built Top Cottage, a stone Dutch Colonial Revival style cottage, on a wooded hill overlooking the Hudson River in New York State. The cottage, FDR's rustic retreat, has a prominent western porch that afforded him and his guests majestic western views overlooking the Hudson River and the Catskill Mountains beyond. During World War II, FDR convened at Top Cottage with Winston Churchill and other Allied leaders to plan and discuss war strategies.

After FDR's death in 1945, the cottage was privately owned. In 1996, the Beaverkill Conservancy, Inc. purchased Top Cottage and 33.6 acres of land for its restoration and ultimate transfer to the National Park Service. Within 50 years, the western viewshed had been reclaimed by the encroaching forest and the formerly scenic views were limited to late fall and early spring, when the leaves were off of the trees.

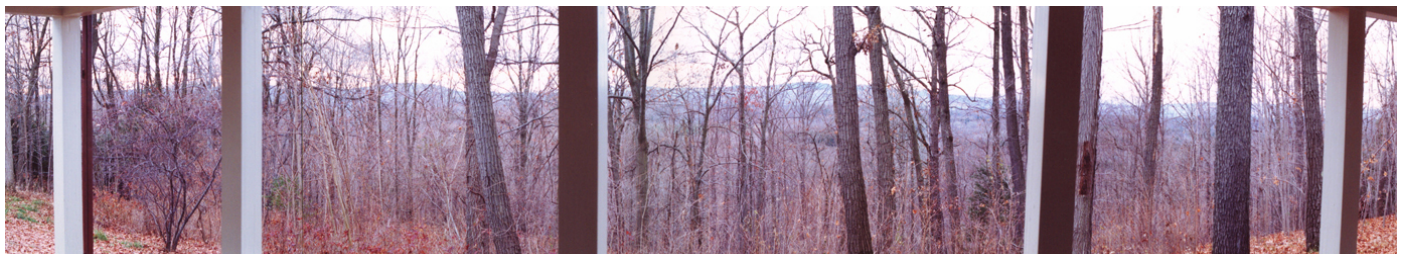
Elmore Design Collaborative, Inc. consulted with the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, members of the National Park Service and John G Waite Associates, the architectural firm restoring the cottage, to research FDR's western viewshed. Historical photographs, historical aerial photographs and USGS quadrangle maps were used to establish the extent of FDR's scenic views to the west. Work included archival research to identify period photographs and maps, site assessment, the preparation of a site plan and cross-section of the viewshed area, support in preparing the recommendations to guide the lumberman's sensitive tree removal and periodic site observations. By late summer of 2001, the western views were restored.



West facing porch at Top Cottage (FDR Library)



Circa 1938-39 (FDR Library)



December 1, 2000 - Winter scene before work began (TJE)