



Homeschooling

The Making of Theodore Roosevelt

Charlene Notgrass

My father, Theodore Roosevelt, was the best man I ever knew.

President Theodore Roosevelt

Cover image: President Theodore Roosevelt, 1903

*Drawing at right: New York City in 1870,
when Theodore Roosevelt was twelve years old.*

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Homeschooling in New York City

New York was a bustling city after the Civil War. New York City native Theodore Roosevelt Sr. and his wife Martha from Georgia lived there in a grand townhouse. The couple had married in 1853, eight years before the war began. Their five-level home had been a wedding present from Theodore's father. Here Theodore and Martha (known as Mittie) homeschooled their four children: Anna, Theodore Jr., Elliott, and Corinne.

The couple's older son, Theodore Jr., would become the honest, compassionate, hard-working, athletic, enthusiastic, bigger-than-life President Theodore Roosevelt, whose likeness was carved on Mount Rushmore along with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln. How did that happen?

Theodore Roosevelt Jr. at Age 2 in 1861



The Roosevelts made a conscious decision to train their children at home. They believed that attending public school would coarsen—that's the word they used—their children.

The Roosevelts used tutors as part of their children's education. When the children were young, their tutor was their Aunt Anna, Mittie's sister. Anna had come to live with the Roosevelt family in 1857, the year before Theodore Jr. was born, as did Mittie's mother, whom the children called Grandmamma.

Of his Aunt Anna, Theodore Jr. later said, "She was as devoted to us children as was my mother herself, and we were equally devoted to her in return." Grandmamma and the children also had a close and affectionate relationship.