

**“Character, in the long run, is the decisive factor in the life of an individual and of nations alike.” – Theodore Roosevelt**



Heather Heckel, *Sagamore Hill*, colored pencil on paper, 8" x 8", 2020

## Heather Heckel's Art Connects History and the Natural World

by Nancy Hall

Heather Heckel has taught art in New York for six years so far, at both the middle school and high school level. As an artist, she has also been privileged to spend several summers as well as weekends participating in the artist-in-residence program for the National Park Service at locations across the country. Since 2016, Heather has created drawings at Hot Springs National Park, Weir Farm National Historic Site, Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area, Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, Indiana Dunes National Park, Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site (in Navajo Nation), Homestead National Monument of America, Big Cypress National Preserve, and in the Fall of 2019, Sagamore Hill National Historic Site.



The following is Heather's account of both her work at Sagamore Hill and her understanding of how art can connect history, culture, generations, and the community.

"My experience as a visiting artist-in-residence at Sagamore Hill National Historic Site was meaningful to me both personally and professionally. I moved to Long Island three years ago to teach middle school art in Port Washington; however, I was still feeling the need to connect with the local community. Sagamore Hill provided the opportunity for me to be of service to the Park while making new connections with visitors, volunteers, and staff. Drawing in the Visitor Center on Saturday afternoons allowed me to meet new people while sharing my artistic process of using colored pencils and photo reference to combine historical objects from inside the house with natural objects found on the grounds. During my roughly six months of visits, I was able to chat with visitors and answer questions, conduct a public workshop where participants made artist trading cards about the Park, and I created an activity for a local Girl Scout troop. This residency gave me the time, space, and inspiration to create eight new drawings that paired objects in a way that I had never practiced before.

Every National Park is different, and as I am now creating artwork for my 11th residency I am able to reflect on how the atmosphere of each park directly influenced the series that I made. Sagamore Hill projected elegance, precision, and the importance of learning from history indoors fused with the appreciation of preserving and exploring the outdoors. These virtues are all influenced by the memory of Teddy Roosevelt and his family, whose personalities and passions linger through the home they lived in and continued storytelling; I hope these themes are evident in the artwork that I created, and ultimately they are an invitation for dialogue about Sagamore Hill and all it has to offer."

Heather's drawings shown below and of the TRH at the top of this newsletter are all colored pencil on paper, 8" x 8".

**Question:** Can YOU identify the objects and the room in which they are located? Answers are at the bottom of the this newsletter.



Blue Vase with Maple Leaf



Eagle with Flowers



Vase with Leaves



Frog with Goldenrod and Bee



George Washington with Black Eyed Susan



Dogs on Pinecone

**Editor's note:** More of Heather's drawings from her work at other National Park sites can be viewed in *NYSATA NEWS, Digital Ed. Vol 49, No.3, Winter 2020.*

## Answers: What and Where is it?

The objects Heather Heckel included in her drawings:

1. "Sagamore Hill" embroidered bureau scarf – Linen Closet
2. Minton blue vase – Drawing Room on the mantle
3. Eagle on the front door
4. Red and white floral pitcher – Family/Red Bathroom next to sink
5. Frog figurine/toothpick holder with mouth open – Boys Room on the table (not original)
6. Spode George Washington figurine - Drawing Room on the what not/etagere
7. Animal figurines – Boys Room on the table (not original)

This newsletter is produced by members of the Volunteer Advisory Board for the volunteers of Sagamore Hill National Historic Site.

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

### About Sagamore Hill National Historic Site

Sagamore Hill National Historic Site, located in Oyster Bay, New York, is a unit of the National Park Service. The Site was established by Congress in 1962 to preserve and interpret the structures, landscape, collections and other cultural resources associated with Theodore Roosevelt's home in Oyster Bay, New York, and to ensure that future generations understand the life and legacy of Theodore Roosevelt, his family and the significant events associated with him.

For more information please check out our website at [www.nps.gov/sahi](http://www.nps.gov/sahi) or call (516) 922-4788.