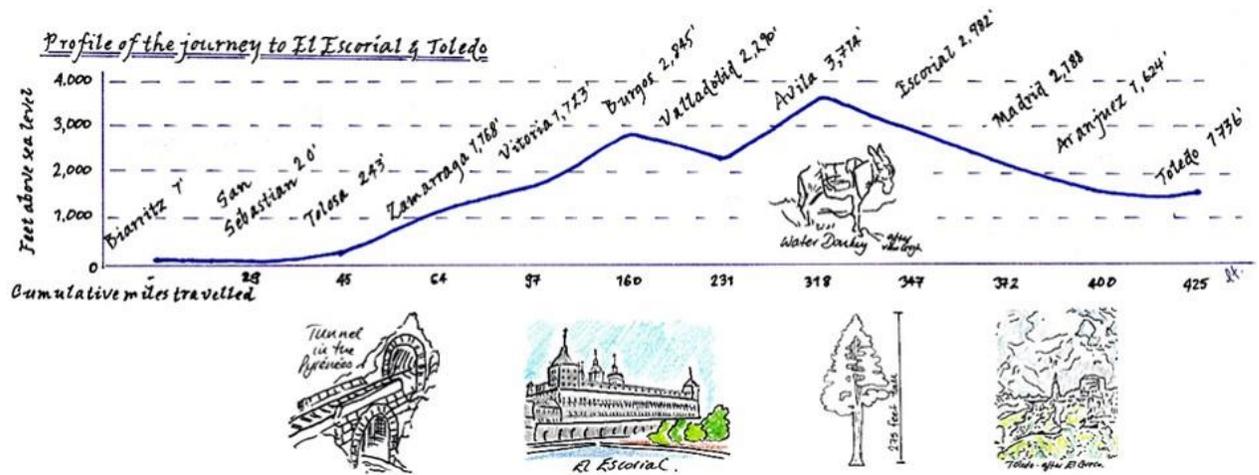


The Pope Family's Grand Tour

Episode 4, El Escorial and Toledo, Spain, 1888



Theodate Pope Riddle saw the world through a new lens as she took in the landscape from her train car window. The long ride from the French seaside town of Biarritz to Spain's Basque region provided plenty of time for reflection and contemplation. At the same time, it was an awakening moment for her.

As a young woman coming into her own, she began to observe details in a new light, especially the bucolic countryside. Train travel connected people and places in profound ways; the facility and ease of this increasingly popular mode of transportation afforded new freedoms. It was a novelty to start somewhere and end up somewhere entirely different within a relatively short amount of time. In the late 1880s, train travelers could travel between France to Spain in several days versus a week or two by horse and carriage.

For artists of the day, the widespread use of cameras and rail travel informed their artwork in fabulous new ways. The broken, irregular brushstrokes of the Impressionists was one of many innovations inspired, in large part, by this movement through the landscapes at unprecedented speed.

For Theodate, her awareness of the contrasts between city and country heightened while her confidence and compassion for the land grew during the long train trek.

December 3, 1888, El Escorial

"Arrived [in Madrid] from Escorial this morning at 7.30. Our afternoon ride from Biarritz on the way to the Escorial was through the most picturesque country. Little stone houses, mellow with age that looked as if they had grown up from the soil so well did they harmonize in color with it, and the old tile roofs were in autumn shades. The first part of the afternoon we rode in the valleys and the sun was warm; the latter part of our ride was very high and we went through tunnel after tunnel, in all over thirty. The sky was a beautiful blue all day, and after sunset the after glow was with us quite a while alternately silueting [sic.] and lighting villages as we came towards and left them."

The Pope family continues their journey south, leaving behind the French seaside at Biarritz for a long train journey through the Pyrenees Mountains, and into Spain. The landscape differs quite dramatically south of the Pyrenees, and Theodate was fascinated by the villages passing by the train windows.

The train traveled through the Basque region of Spain, and Theodate noticed the little stone houses, known as *baserri* - a traditional Basque farmhouse.



The weather in December in Northern Spain is not always as sunny as it was for Theodate's journey. There is a particular term in Basque for very light rain, a touch heavier than a mist: *xirimiri* (pronounced 'shirimiri'). There is no exact equivalent word in Spanish for this type of precipitation - but it ends up leaving clothes wet, without the realization of the person wearing them!

The Pope family's first destination was **San Lorenzo de El Escorial**, a small town in the foothills of the Sierra de Guadarrama mountain range, about 30 miles northwest of

Madrid. In the mid-1500s, King Philip II ordered the building of a grand palace and monastery complex. El Escorial served many purposes:

- The palace for the royal dynasty, the Spanish branch of the Habsburgs
- The focal point for a strong, centralized Spanish kingdom, stretching from Mexico to Manila in the Philippines
- The royal mausoleum to bury members of the royal family, including Emperor Charles V, the father of Philip II.
- A repository of the finest art and treasure, funded by the gold coming from the Spanish possessions in the New World
- A monastery
- A school and Library



This vast complex took over twenty years to complete, with the final stone laid in 1584. There were two great architects associated with the construction:

- **Juan Bautista de Toledo** (1515-1567) – Bautista was educated in Italy and worked for Michelangelo and Pope Paul III. Please note: Theodate will see another of Bautista's creations when she visits the courtyard of the Palazzo Farnese in Rome. She also will encounter the Alcazar in Toledo, which Bautista helped to restore.
- **Juan de Herrera** (1530 - 1597) – Herrera was a student of Bautista's and took over the completion of El Escorial after 1567. Herrera made several significant changes to the design of the building, introducing a more austere style in line with the wishes of Philip II. The exterior of the building displays bare

granite, without significant decoration or embellishment. This austerity stands in stark contrast to both the Gothic style of Notre Dame Cathedral and the Byzantine style of the Sacré-Coeur Basilica in Paris.



The almost total absence of exterior decoration led to a new style, *estilo desornamentado* (unornamented style), which has become synonymous with the architect himself. Herrerian architecture came to dominate civic and religious construction in Spain for the next two centuries.

The main building complex is 650 feet long, has 2,600 windows, 1,200 doors, and more than 100 miles of passages. El Escorial was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1984.

"On leaving the palace, we went to the hotel to pack our satchels and then walked to the ... little palace of Carlos, Philip II's son. This prince disappeared [sic.] very mysteriously, and it is supposed that Philip killed him... This little palace is a gem through out... One would love to spend a summer in this little low ceiling house with its dormer windows framing pictures of the mountains."

The Casita del Principe is a separate building on the grounds of El Escorial, constructed in 1772 for the Prince of Asturias, the future Carlos IV. The term "casita" means a little house. Designed without bedrooms, the prince slept in the main palace at El Escorial. However, he would use the Casita as a getaway; it was a less formal place for more casual behavior. Le Petit Trianon is a similar type of satellite building at the Palace of Versailles, outside Paris.



Theodate's guide was mistaken in the facts he provided her - as the events she noted in her diary took place in the 1560s, long before the birth of the Casita. Philip II's son, Carlos, did live a short and sad life (1545-

1568), but it did not end in murder. Nonetheless, rumors have persisted, even 300 years later, that his father commanded his son's assassination. The story of Don Carlos inspired an opera by Guiseppe Verdi and a play by Friedrich Schiller.

The Casita del Principe is a stone and brick pavilion with lavish interior decorations, including silk-clad walls, a room entirely decorated in porcelain, and ceilings inspired by the Roman ruins at Pompeii. Excavation work started at Pompeii in 1748, during the time that Carlos IV's father, Carlos III, was the King of Naples and Sicily. The artistic discoveries at Pompeii proved a rich source of inspiration for architects, interior designers, and artists alike.

Questions:

This picture is of the Regia Laurentina Library in El Escorial.

- Can you guess how many books and manuscripts are in the Library?
- What is the name for the globe object you can see on the right-hand side of the picture?



Spain established their national forestry school in the grounds of the Casita del Principe in 1870. One of the unique species of trees growing at the Casita is not a native of Spain - you can see these tall trees growing on either side of the Casita.



Question:

- Can you identify the type and where you might find these trees growing in the United States?
Hint: there is a National Park named after these magnificent trees.

To learn more:

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=396&v=cGSuXTobJNQ&feature=emb_logo

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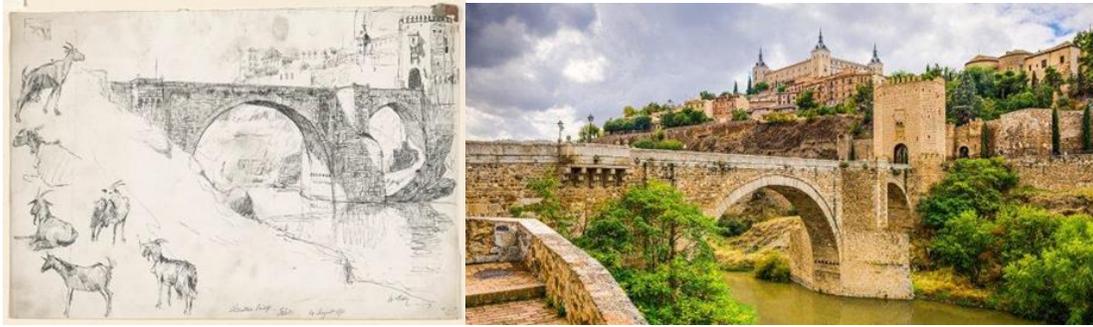
December 5, 1888, Toledo

"Spent today in Toledo. It is only forty miles from here [Madrid] and it takes these Spanish trains three hours to make the trip. Toledo is very interesting, the old moorish walls and gates are very picturesque and can be seen to advantage from the valley roads, below & outside of the town."

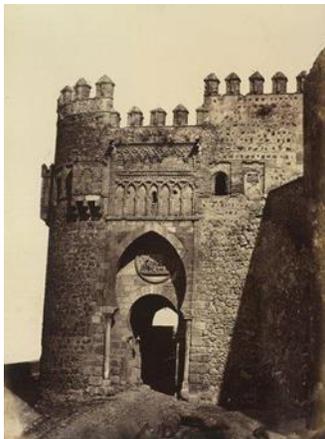
Train travel has improved considerably since Theodate's visit - the trip from Madrid to Toledo now takes only 30 minutes. Back in 1888, however, conditions were less comfortable, although the view of Toledo greeting the Pope family has hardly changed to this date.

Toledo is known as "the city of the three cultures" due to the history of Christians, Moors, and Jews living in peaceful co-existence over several centuries. The Romans were the first to record the name of the city as *Toletum*, indicating that this was the site of a Celtic settlement (*tol* is the word for "hole" in Celtic). The Roman historian, Livy, described it as "a small city, but fortified by location."

The Alcántara Bridge, shown in both the etching and the photograph, was first built during the Roman period. Its name comes from the Arabic for "bridge."



Toledo occupies a dominant position on top of a hill overlooking a bend in the Tagus River. Nature's defenses have been enhanced by successive regimes, starting with the Roman army in 192 BCE, which constructed the first set of defensive walls. The Pope family walked over the Alcántara Bridge from the train station, entering the old town and noticing the dominant Moorish architectural style, which reflected almost 375 years of occupation (711-1085 CE).



The *Puerta del Sol*, "Gate of the Sun," named for the sun and the moon that were once painted on either side of the medallion, reflects some of the main elements of Moorish style, including a pointed arch center with a series of looped arches carved above. There are crenellations at the top of the wall; these are defensive structures that provide cover for city defenders. *Puerta del Sol* was built in the 14th century by the Knights Hospitaller.

Toledo was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1986, with the citation noting that its: "masterpieces are the product of heterogeneous civilizations in an environment where the existence of three major religions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - was a major factor."

One of the most famous residents of Toledo, **El Greco** (1541 - 1614), painted two very different paintings with the city as the primary subject. The first, *View of Toledo*, was completed around 1600 and captured the iconic view of Toledo from a neighboring hilltop. This painting depicts many of the principal buildings and monuments of the time, but not necessarily in the correct geographic locations. Dominated by a dark, brooding sky, the view showcases the

rolling landscape around the city. The inhabited part of Toledo takes up only a small portion of the painting.



Both the landscape and the sky seem to be moving - is a fierce storm about to break?

View of Toledo is known as the first Spanish landscape where a picture had no other subject aside from the cityscape itself. It broke with the conventions of the time - there were strict religious laws established by the Council of Trent in 1563, which banned the "secular" natural landscape as a subject for counter-reformation painting.

The Counter-Reformation refers to a period in the 16th and 17th centuries, usually dated from 1545 (the start of the Council of Trent) to 1648 (the end of the Thirty Years' War), where efforts addressed the emerging popularity of Protestantism by specific reforms within the Catholic Church. Among the important outcomes of the Council of Trent, the Church also reaffirmed the "usefulness" of images. This had a significant impact on art, as the Church had been the single largest patron. Though now art was scrutinized in an entirely new way, hence the banning of "secular" landscapes.

Even though El Greco is closely associated with Toledo, he was born on the island of Crete, then a territory of the city-state of Venice, and he lived much of his life in

Italy. El Greco (The Greek), was his professional moniker, though his real name, Domenikos Theotokopoulos, also belied his Greek origin. El Greco trained in the Byzantine tradition of icon painting and then painted in the workshop of Titian in Venice, before moving to Toledo in 1577.

The second of El Greco's paintings with Toledo as the main subject, is *View and Plan of Toledo*, completed between 1610-1614. Over 7½-ft wide and over 4-ft high, El Greco provides two different views of the city, although, again, he relocates some of the buildings to show them in greater detail. The structure shown floating on a cloud represents the Tavera Hospital. The hospital's administrator may have commissioned the painting. Toledo had served as the Capital of the kingdom of Castile from 1085 and was the main court for the Spanish kings until 1561 when King Philip II moved his court and administrative capital to the new town of Madrid. *View and Plan of Toledo* may have been an attempt to convince the King to relocate the capital back to Toledo, but the King remained in his new palace at El Escorial.



December 5, 1888, Toledo (continued)

"We went to the Fabrica where they manufacture the famous Toledo blades. It was a pretty slow little manufactory. The inlaid gold & iron work did not come up to my expectations."

For centuries, the name Toledo was synonymous with steel - specifically for a firm and resilient type of steel, made through a secret process. Kings and noblemen from all parts of the world had their swords and sabers forged in Toledo.

"Toledo steel" is an alloy of iron and two kinds of steel with different carbon content, meaning it is both hard and flexible. An intense and precise process, the swords were forged at a temperature of 800°C (1,470°F) and the tempering process required up to 20,000 hits.



The blades were so flexible that they could be stored curled up. William Shakespeare referenced this feature in the play *The Merry Wives of Windsor* when Falstaff, complained that he had to hide away tucked up in a laundry basket. As he put it, "compassed like a good Bilbo [another name for a flexible Spanish blade], in the circumference of a peck, hilt to point, heel to head." In other words, all curled up.

Theodate's father, Alfred Pope, was the owner of malleable iron and steel castings plants back in America, so a tour of the steel factory (Fabrica) would undoubtedly have been of interest to him.

December 5, 1888, Toledo (continued)

"Saw the famous cathedral there which is quite impressive. Choir is put in the middle of the church. Saw the usual number of poor over laden donkeys. ...and what makes one groan is to see intensely American gimcracks and underwear for sale in their shops."

Theodate next visited the Cathedral of Saint Mary, built in high Gothic style between 1226 and 1493. The external structure is from the French tradition, with Spanish elements, especially the ornate interior decoration.

The altar of the main chapel, or *Capilla Mayor*, is richly embellished with gilded and painted larch wood and life-sized statues depicting scenes from the New Testament.



The Sacristy showcases an early work by El Greco painted on the site in 1587. It is framed in a marble and bronze altarpiece made in 1798, that replaced the original one made by El Greco. The Sacristy also includes paintings by several other important artists: Caravaggio, Tiziano, Van Dick, Orrente, Tristán, Goya, Morales and José Ramos.



Although Toledo is surrounded on three sides by a river, there is a lack of readily-accessible fresh water from within the city. There are no springs and few wells inside the old city walls, and most people had to rely on water carried up from the river for their household needs.

The Moors constructed a giant water-wheel which forced water up from the river by pipes. By 1568, the wheel mechanism delivered up to 3,725 gallons a day to the royal palace, the Alcazar. The water-wheel worked until around 1639. Without the water-wheel, the residents had to find another way of obtaining a supply of water.



DONKEY LADEN WITH WATER-POTS, TOLEDO.

Donkeys, laden down by earthenware water pots, became familiar sights in the streets. They retained the Arabic term *azacanes* or water carriers. They would use the water to fill the cisterns and containers in the old town.

Questions:

- Who was the patron saint of the official Toledo sword factory?
- Which famous Carthaginian general used Toledo steel swords against the Roman Empire in the Second Punic War (218-202 BCE)? Shortly after encountering these weapons, Rome adopted Toledo steel as their preferred choice for swords and daggers. **Hint:** The general is familiar for using elephants to cross the Alps during his invasion of Italy in 218 BCE
- **Bonus question:** When Theodate visited Toledo, one of its main exports to America was licorice, but what confectionery may have been invented by nuns from the Convent of San Clemente, Toledo?

As Theodate formulated her first impressions of Spain, it was the Basque Region's picturesque countryside that left a lasting impact. Her eyes were wide open to the little stone houses and the lighting villages. It was also during this time that she developed a deep empathy for animals. A mere decade later, she would create an innovative farm complex at Hill-Stead, no doubt informed by her first visit to Spain.

Created by: Beth Brett, Kate Ebner, Holly Maynard, Anitra Powers, Anna Swinbourne, and Lavell Thompson

To learn more:

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Toledo

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