Biltmore Estate

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**Introduction**

What makes humans different than species is the great variety of houses they build[[1]](#footnote-1). Same was the case with George Washington Vanderbilt (1862-191400, in the late 1880s, came across the ideal spot at the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina for building estate known as Biltmore Estate because it fascinated both the old and young alike. Biltmore Estate is one of the most visited historic sites in the US, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors every year from around the world. The fact behind this fascination is that the founder of the Biltmore Estate was a very private man[[2]](#footnote-2). Vanderbilt not only started quietly to build the estate for his comfort but also to used his wealth in a most respectful and responsible way like contributing on educational, artistic and spiritual communities[[3]](#footnote-3).

George Washington Vanderbilt was the son of railroad tycoon William Henry Vanderbilt and born in 1862 in New York City[[4]](#footnote-4). His grandfather Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt who established a financial empire through transportation and become one of the richest family around the world at that time. Vanderbilt’s much of life in a childhood spent in traveling historic places such as museums and libraries. This experience of traveling motivated him to build such a unique architectural estate. In fact, the completion of the Biltmore Estate was possibly the end of his passion.

**Historical Perspective**

Mr. Vanderbilt in early 1888, visited Western North Carolina for the first time. Like many other people, the area attracted him very much due to its great reputation of a suitable environment such as mild weather along with natural mountainous scenery[[5]](#footnote-5). Later he planned another trip to the Area, this time he was accompanied by his friend McNamee. On 1st May 1888, both rode their horses and came upon an attractive view of hills surrounded by Asheville, where the Biltmore Estate stands now. There Biltmore expressed his desire for building a home at the very place.

McNamee, who was an attorney by profession, became the in charge of his desire and started purchasing tracts of land. At the end of the year, he purchased around 2000 acres of land on his behalf, while the figure was continuously increased till Vanderbilt's death in 1914. McNamee purchased around 125,000 acres of land that stretched four countries at that time. The gardens were designed by Frederick Law Olmsted that is known as a pioneer of landscape architecture in the US. Today, both the formal and informal garden encompasses approximately 8,000 acres of land[[6]](#footnote-6).

**The Architect behind the Biltmore Estate**

Everywhere, humans have been influenced by his life, such as natural locations give them inspirations[[7]](#footnote-7). In a few months of his visit, it desire to build home became more clear. However, Asheville should thank France for the building of the popular tourist site[[8]](#footnote-8). The architect who the 250-room French Renaissance Chateau was Richard Morris Hunt, who was later called “Biltmore”[[9]](#footnote-9). Hunt was Vanderbilt’s close friend and one of the three visionary men who built the Estate i.e. Vanderbilt and Olmsted. The Estate is the centerpiece of Vanderbilt legacy that is a National Historic Landmark and the largest private residence in the US.

The Frederick Law Olmsted had other two accomplishment of building two houses, one the coast at Bar Harbor, Maine, and another on Fifth Avenue. This indicates an ever-growing rise of homes in human history and the continuous advancement of technology has made everything available at our doorsteps[[10]](#footnote-10). Both Hunt and Olmsted were master of their area and people did not have the clue that what is going to be done prior to the building of Estate. The house of Biltmore is at the heart of the Estate and is a masterpiece in the architectural history of the US. It was Olmsted’s last and the most substantial project and he described it “the most permanently important public work” of his entire career[[11]](#footnote-11).

**Architectural Style**

The architectural style of the Biltmore is based on the richly-ornamented style French Renaissance with chateaux in the Loire Valley: Chambord, Clemenceau, and Blois. A European house tradition that is filled with fine furnishings, priceless art from around the world, and rare books. Surrounding his house, there are artfully landscaped gardens, scientifically managed forests, working forms, and naturalistic landscapes. The Biltmore House was has a 780-ft façade build with stones with steeply-pitched roof and stair tower. The work continued even after it was opened in 1895 for many years. In 1966, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places due to the origin of US history. Millions of trees were planted on the depleted land that eventually led the foundation of the US Forest Service.

The house contains a massive stone spiral staircase, more than eleven million bricks, and 102 steps. Inside, artworks by Boldini, Pellegrini, Whistler, Sargent and Renior adorn the walls[[12]](#footnote-12). The design includes Chippendale and Sheraton with a chess set and gaming table that has belonged to Napoleon Bonaparte during his exile at St. Helena. Moreover, it includes the Ming Dynasty's Chinese goldfish and tapestries of the 16th century and the Banquet Hall. In addition, there are fifty Oriental and Persian rugs covered with oak floors and marble. The misty desk dates back to 1700s century, even before George Vanderbilt’s vision of the estate[[13]](#footnote-13).

Apart from luxurious bedrooms on the second and third floors, there are areas where honorable guests used to play parlor games along with afternoon tea. While the fourth floor features Observatory and Maid’s Bedrooms with an outstanding view. Moreover, it includes state-of-art domestic nerve center, refrigeration system, large laundry complex, two specialty kitchens, and pantries. While gymnasium, bowling alley, and indoor swimming pool are located downstairs. An exceptional horticultural environment of Biltmore creates a blooming season starting from spring to the first frost. In fact, conservatory if complete with a different tropical plant such s bougainvillea, cacti, lilies, orchids, and poinsettias. To acquire decorative and fine art, Vanderbilt spent years but a small group of objects was inherited from his father and grandfather.

**Change Over Time**

With his death, George Vanderbilt left an enormous philanthropic legacy. However, it is important to note that George Vanderbilt never had the intention to convert his house into a museum[[14]](#footnote-14). His wife sold out around 87,000 acres of land to the US Forest Service on a rate of fewer than five dollars per acre[[15]](#footnote-15). On 1925, George Vanderbilt became a grandfather when Cornelia and John had the first son, George Henry. In 1930, the Biltmore House was opened to the public by Cornelia and John with the hope to increase tourism. In 1960, William Cecil returned to Biltmore for joining his brother’s management and to preserve the estate.

During the World War II, the army was assigned the task of to hide the precious art before they were destroyed or plundered by Hitler[[16]](#footnote-16). While the emperor of Japan was its own rage in the Pacific and the Far East. The indispensable works of the US required to be secured along with the classic portrait of George Washington[[17]](#footnote-17). The attacking of Pearl Harbor give the clue to the US security authorities for an air raid on the estate.

In 1983, construction of Biltmore wine company was established and it was proclaimed as a historic achievement by Mr. Cecil. In 2001, the creation of an inn was materialized with the pursuit of offering the personal taste of hospitality. A major expansion took place in 2010 with the earlier legacy of hospitality and entertainment. New opportunities were created for dining, shopping, and other outdoor activities. To serve the more overnight guest with the wish to taste hospitality, a relaxed and casual hotel was built recently in 2015.

**Who Lived in Biltmore**

George Washington Vanderbilt was the primary resident of the Biltmore Estate for almost twenty years. At the age thirty-three, the first-time friends and family to the Biltmore Estate in 1895 and this welcome was accompanied by speculations and rumors in the press. The most frequent questions were of building the house and being a bachelor. This question was answered in 1898 when he married Edith, a young lady who belongs to a noble family in New England. The marriage was held in a private ceremony in Paris and became ‘the mistress of Biltmore’. However, she was the flawless match to Vanderbilt, such she had an active role in providing opportunities to adults and children, providing support to the families of the estate, and above all taking on the role of hostess in Biltmore House. Later they had the birth of the daughter made the family complete and was named as Cornelia Stuyvesant Vanderbilt. Because of her North Carolina origins, she was used to be called ‘Tarheel Nell’[[18]](#footnote-18). She grew and married within the family, and also continued family’s traditional hospitality.

Vanderbilt’s self-sustaining and progressive management practices set an example for the entire nation[[19]](#footnote-19). In this regard, J. Sterling, the agricultural secretary appreciated his visionary approach. With so much magnificence to look at Biltmore Estate, it is, in fact, easy to overlook how the house was worked and lived in. The operation was more like a hotel while it is stimulating to see the use of technology. As a child, Vanderbilt indicates to become more endearing and even more understandable.

**The Estate Owner and Its Use Today**

The Biltmore estate is still owned by George Vanderbilt’s family and its current CEO is Bill Cecil Jr. He has dedicated himself to the museum services, collections, structure, and the landscape. There is other twenty skilled staff who support the CEO in different tasks related to collection and structure. His father, William Amherst played an important role in the contemporary growth of Biltmore Estate who died recently on 31st October 2017. After a few weeks, his wife Mimi also passed away from this immortal world. The couple married in 1957 and prior to the marriage, Mimi was working with a Wall Street firm as a lawyer. For preserving Biltmore, they moved from New York City to Asheville for its preservation and touristic purposes in 1960. The current employees at Biltmore are 2,400 in 2017 who were hundred in the 1970s.

According to Buncombe Country, the current appraising value of the Biltmore is around thirty-seven million dollars. Annually, 1.4 million people visit the Biltmore Estate and supports agrarian villages by providing jobs and other facilities such as school and church[[20]](#footnote-20). The Biltmore thrived in the year 2018. The philanthropic vision and legacy continue even today. The displayed collection are hung in a way that visitors could get close to them and realize the importance of work.

**Conclusion**

There is no denying the fact that wealthy societies assume similar standards of life universally[[21]](#footnote-21). What they finally require for survival is access to fresh along with means for sustainability[[22]](#footnote-22). One only needs to imagine the Biltmore Estate that was completed just in five years. The desire was different and unique than the other homes that follow a classical agrarian model. Apart from the Estate itself, the Biltmore winery is one of the most visited wineries in the US[[23]](#footnote-23). While it was called as “the Finest Estate in the US” by the Broadway Magazine[[24]](#footnote-24). This was all due to the continuous efforts of Olmstead Law Firm, which has done a marvelous job on the outside of the house.

In fact, the siblings of the Vanderbilt had a bigger share of the family's wealth, but he built one of the most memorable homes. Out of his siblings, Vanderbilt was most humble and the most remembered among people. Biltmore, the name came from the family’s ancestral home in Bildt, Holland. He wished to build the estate because of more details by Olmstead. However, the money spent on the building the Estate greatly helped the local economy and still continues to help. The wealthiest societies come up with their brands to have an influence on the international political economy. However, currently, the building is significantly generating its own income that the Biltmore had thought prior to the construction.

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