

It Was in the Will: The  
Biltmore Estate, 1914

# BILTMORE



# MUNUC 36

Model United Nations at the University of Chicago

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chair Letter.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Crisis Director Letter.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Committee Structure And Mechanics.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The Biltmore Estate.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Statement Of The Problem.....	6
History Of The Problem.....	7
The Vanderbilt Family.....	7
The Biltmore Estate.....	9
Asheville And Surrounding Area.....	11
The Eastern Band Of Cherokee.....	13
<b>Character Biographies.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>22</b>

EST. 1989

MUNUC

## CHAIR LETTER

Dear Delegates,

I am excited to welcome you onto the grounds and surrounding area of the Biltmore Estate in 1914. I am Harper Schwab, and I will be your chair for MUNUC this year!

I am a third year at UChicago double majoring in Data Science, and Human Rights. I was born in Northern California and moved to North Carolina when I started middle school. In fact, I live roughly 30 minutes away from the Biltmore Estate and have toured many times with friends and family. If any of you are in Asheville, NC for any reason, it is a must-see. Outside of MUNUC, I compete with the college Model UN team and I am also a CD for ChoMUN, UChicago's collegiate conference. Outside of MUN, I spend my free time looking for live music, working as a data science research assistant, and taking naps.

For conference, I would like to stress the importance of creating and maintaining a collaborative and inclusive committee environment throughout the days of the conference. Model UN is a chance to learn and work together. It is collaboration and leadership that will prove to be successful in committee above all else. As for the subject of debate, it is important to remember that social, political, and historical norms of the time of committee will not be tolerated by Miller or I in the front or backroom. Delegates should approach the committee from the perspective of the modern day, and work towards positioning the Biltmore Estate and Asheville towards a better future.

The start of the committee will place the committee in a time of great change for the Estate and the surrounding region. Delegates should expect to debate topics related to the many projects of the Biltmore Estate and its influences on the surrounding region and staff. Establishing sustainable business practices will be important, but equally important is ensuring that the many voices of the community and the affected people are heard and their wishes are upheld. The influence and power of the Biltmore Estate are larger than many people realize, and the committee's ability to create positive change in the region should not be overlooked.

As always, feel free to contact Miller or I with any questions or concerns about the committee. And please take a look at MUNUC's wonderful resources to learn more about Model UN and the Crisis style that we will use throughout the weekend. We look forward to seeing how the committee will progress through debate and the backroom as we learn what can be done when everything one can imagine is left in a will.

See you soon,

Harper Schwab

[hwschwab@uchicago.edu](mailto:hwschwab@uchicago.edu)

## CRISIS DIRECTOR LETTER

Dear Delegates,

I'd like to officially welcome you to the Biltmore Estate, 1914. My name is Miller Dunbar, and I will be your Crisis Director for this year's conference.

A little bit about me: I am a fourth year at UChicago double majoring in Economics and Hispanic Literatures. I'm from Boulder, Colorado, but I've actually lived in six states! Aside from MUNUC, I have been a Crisis Director for ChoMUN, our college conference, and I compete on the college crisis circuit with our team. Outside of the MUNiverse, I am a tour guide on campus, I've done research at our graduate school of Public Policy, I am in our Spanish club el Cafecito, and I recently started a fiber arts club on campus called Tight Knit.

In terms of our committee, there are a few important things to keep in mind as you prepare. This committee takes place at a time in United States history when many groups were marginalized, both legally and culturally. We will be covering topics that engage with wealth and class and how it shapes towns, and it is important that we approach these with care. Harper and I will not tolerate any affirmation of oppressive policies or cultural norms from this period of time. We expect delegates to act according to modern standards of respect for others regardless of background, and we hope that committee serves as an opportunity to rewrite history to better the lives of all people in Asheville, North Carolina.

This committee takes place just short of twenty years after the Biltmore Estate opened to family and friends, and just weeks after the untimely death of George Vanderbilt. You've been brought together to guide the Estate and its surrounding town through social, political, and economic challenges after its creator's passing. For backroom, each of you will be given portfolio powers derived from your personal history and connections. Take these and think big! There is a lot of freedom for where the Estate dedicates its efforts in the coming years, and we expect you to take advantage of this. Combine your portfolio powers, a strong ideology, and a compelling story, and we will be eager to see where you want to take committee.

Please feel free to reach out to myself or Harper with your questions regarding research, committee specifics, or any other concerns you may have. I highly recommend taking advantage of MUNUC's resources to learn more about crisis style MUN as part of committee preparation. We are looking forward to a weekend of wonderful debate where you all determine the future of the Biltmore Estate in this uncertain time.

Get excited,

Miller

[millerdunbar@uchicago.edu](mailto:millerdunbar@uchicago.edu)

## COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND MECHANICS

*It Was In The Will: The Biltmore Estate, 1914* will be a single-delegation continuous crisis style Model UN committee. This means that each delegate will represent a unique role in the committee room, and that each role will have unique personal powers and interests over the course of the weekend. The following will be an overview of the frontroom and backroom structure for this committee. That being said, this is a traditional crisis style committee and the MUNUC website has very helpful learning resources if you would like even more detail on what to expect during the conference.

In the frontroom, we will be in continuous directive cycles. Our staff will give the committee crisis updates that convey any problems that need to be addressed - ranging from the Estate, to Asheville, to family drama, and more. Updates will be given in the form of little skits and we hope to make them very entertaining. Later on in our crisis sessions, these crisis breaks may incorporate what delegates are doing in their backroom arcs as well. After receiving crisis breaks, delegates will write directives. Directives are short documents that decide which actions the committee should take in response to each crisis. They are usually formatted with numbered action items (i.e. 1. Hold a parade in downtown Asheville) and have details provided in lettered sub-points (i.e. a.

Bring zoo animals to put on the parade floats). Every “directive round” consists of a crisis break, some moderated debate (speeches) on the topic and solutions, unmoderated debate to write and merge directives, and finally, voting procedure. The weekend will consist of many directive rounds that ultimately dictate the change you all make in the universe of committee! In the frontroom, we hope to see creativity, collaboration, and engagement with the variety of content you’ll see in the Biltmore Estate.

Crisis backroom will consist of a two-notepad backroom note system. Each delegation will create a backroom “arc” over the course of the weekend. Note runs will be timed at 30-40 minutes initially, and the crisis director will check in with committee to see if timing is working well or needs to be changed. At any given time, the backroom will have one notepad and be responding to the most recent note, and delegates will have the other notepad and be able to write a new note on that pad. We know this may be the first time note-writing or doing crisis for many of you, and the crisis director will be accessible for help regarding crisis style MUN in general. We will also briefly go over note expectations at the beginning of committee and provide backroom feedback between sessions. This goes without saying, but backroom will not tolerate backroom arcs that play into harmful stereotypes,

oversimplify history, or disrespect any group of people, past or present. We look forward to reading creative arcs that cause a stir in the Asheville area!



## Statement Of The Problem

This committee is convening due to a tragic, unexpected event earlier in the year. On March 6th, 1914, George W. Vanderbilt suddenly collapsed in his Washington D.C. home and died a few hours later. He had been operated on for appendicitis about a week prior, and was thought to have been recovering well according to his physicians.<sup>1</sup> His wife, Edith, and his daughter, Cornelia, were already at home when he fainted and were quickly joined by the rest of his family to mourn. The cause of death published was a “weak heart,” although Vanderbilt had not had previous coronary health issues.<sup>2</sup> Vanderbilt was buried in the family section of the Moravian Cemetery in Staten Island. They shared great grief because no one in the family had expected to lose George so soon.

Beyond the pain Vanderbilt’s absence caused for his loved ones, his death was a monumental event for the Biltmore Estate. He had spent \$3,000,000 creating one of the most beautiful homes in America and now he was no

longer there to oversee it.<sup>3</sup> Although George was in charge during the Estate’s construction and early years, Edith Vanderbilt had always been a very important part of life at the Estate. She founded and oversaw multiple schools for both children and adults, held gardening contests to promote food diversity in worker’s homes, and was involved with religious life in the area.<sup>4</sup> Her engagement with the community on and off of the Estate prepared her well for assuming leadership at Biltmore. Still, the inheritance of \$50,000,000 and the Biltmore Estate left Edith with more questions than answers as to how to proceed.

Sudden disruption in the management of Biltmore meant that Edith needed to act fast and work with trusted people in the community to pick up the responsibilities George had left. Along with the Estate and part of the family fortune came all of the daily decisions that had to be made to keep it running smoothly. This group had to assume charge of everything from employee contracting, to the creation of protected open space, to family and friend

---

<sup>1</sup> “TimesMachine: Saturday March 7, 1914 - NYTimes.Com,” *The New York Times*, accessed August 15, 2023, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/http://arch-timesmachine-fe-prd-40741-2-575473780.us-east-1.elb.amazonaws.com/timesmachine/1914/03/07/issue.html>.

<sup>2</sup> “TimesMachine.”

---

<sup>3</sup> “TimesMachine.”

<sup>4</sup> “George and Edith,” *Biltmore House*, accessed August 15, 2023, <http://biltmoreestatebyzli.weebly.com/george-and-edith.html>.

hosting.<sup>5</sup> The range of responsibilities was vast, and needed to be filled immediately.

One side of the problem is the sudden need to learn how to run Biltmore, but the other side of the problem is how this event affects the town of Asheville. As mentioned previously, Asheville was steadily growing in 1914, and much of its economic activity came from the Biltmore Estate. Therefore, uncertainty in the Vanderbilt family meant uncertainty for the city itself. The direct and indirect consequences the decisions at Biltmore had on Asheville were numerous: employment levels, education, tourism (although the house was not open to the public), some farming, technological developments, and land use policies revolved around the house and its property.<sup>6</sup> These direct links between Biltmore, Biltmore Village, and Asheville place great importance on the decisions made at the Estate.

There are several aspects of this relationship the committee should consider throughout the weekend as it manages different crisis updates.

First, changes in employment levels will immediately hit the people of Asheville.

Second, technological advancement related to farming is one of Biltmore's great contributions

to the state of North Carolina, and there is a historical precedent of sharing any advancements with the neighboring towns.

Third, the Estate has become a key part of the local education system in its 20 years of existence and should be an important area of investment for Biltmore.

Fourth, there have been whispers of the town wanting the Estate to open its doors to the public to drive an increase in tourism, which will likely need to be confronted in the near future.

Finally, there are delicate social relationships between the wealthy family and friends, those living in Biltmore Village, and those living in the greater Asheville area. Politics between these different stakeholders must always be considered when making decisions for the Estate.

Hence, this committee is faced with two main questions. How should Edith Vanderbilt take the reins and assume all of the responsibilities associated with Biltmore following her husband's sudden passing? And, how can the committee ensure all decisions are made while balancing Biltmore and Asheville interests?

---

<sup>5</sup> "Edith Stuyvesant Dresser," Biltmore, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://www.biltmore.com/our-story/biltmore-history/key-figures/edith-stuyvesant-dresser/>.

<sup>6</sup> "The Vanderbilt's Effect on the Local Community," The Biltmore House: The Great Depression's Influence on the Vanderbilt Legacy

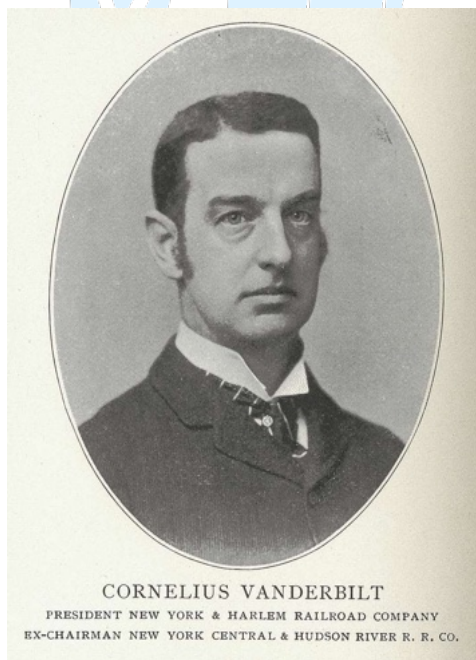
## History Of The Problem

### The Vanderbilt Family

The Vanderbilt family rose to prominence in the United States starting with



Cornelius Vanderbilt, who grew up in Staten Island, NY, and got his first taste of transportation working with his father's ferry. In the 1820's Cornelius began to captain his own steamboats and began his own business. His competitive nature earned him the nickname of Commodore as he dominated the cargo transportation market in the region. His ruthless business sense earned him great success in the New York cargo and transportation business along with many enemies and an everlasting reputation as his empire grew. Notably, Cornelius established a ship route from New York to San Francisco through Nicaragua. This route, faster than any alternative, earned him the equivalent of 26 million dollars in modern tender.<sup>7</sup>



*Image of Cornelius Vanderbilt*

---

<sup>7</sup> "Cornelius Vanderbilt - Biography, Children & Facts," HISTORY, March 26, 2020, <https://www.history.com/topics/19th-century/cornelius-vanderbilt>.

Past the steamship, Cornelius worked hard to assert himself in the railroad business. Taking part in the Erie Railroad War of 1868, the aggressive Vanderbilt was able to buy out shares in the large Erie Railroad. His business partnerships allowed him to work to drive stakeholders out of the business giving him and his partners control over the railroad. Furthermore, Cornelius worked to establish the Grand Central Depot in 1871, the precursor to Grand Central Terminal which stands to this day.<sup>8</sup>

Cornelius spent most of his life working to expand, and solidify, his control and status as a business magnate. While the Vanderbilt family soon came to be known for extravagant philanthropy, compared to his descendants Cornelius only started donating money in the later part of his life. Most notably, he donated to establish Vanderbilt University in 1873. It is his offspring we have to thank for the many physical representations of the massive amounts of wealth the Vanderbilt family amassed. After Cornelius' death in 1877, he left 100 million dollars to his son, William Henry Vanderbilt.

Cornelius' offspring spent a majority of their lives either working to continue his business empire or living off of the massive amounts of wealth their family controlled. William Henry

---

<sup>8</sup> "Cornelius Vanderbilt - Biography, Children & Facts."

Vanderbilt had nine children in his lifetime, many of whom solely worked to uphold the railroad empire that their grandfather established. However, the youngest son, George Washington Vanderbilt II, living off of the millions received through inheritance and trust funds, wanted to establish a country home in the mountains of North Carolina where he first visited in 1888. This country home, known as the Biltmore Estate, became the largest private residence in the United States—and still remains as such to this day.

## The Biltmore Estate



*Image of Biltmore Estate*

Starting literally from the ground up, George Vanderbilt enlisted the help of the famous Frederick Law Olmsted of Central Park and UChicago Campus fame to design the grounds of the Estate.<sup>9</sup> The size of the land originally bought

<sup>9</sup> “Estate Timeline,” Biltmore, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://www.biltmore.com/our-story/biltmore-history/estate-timeline/>.

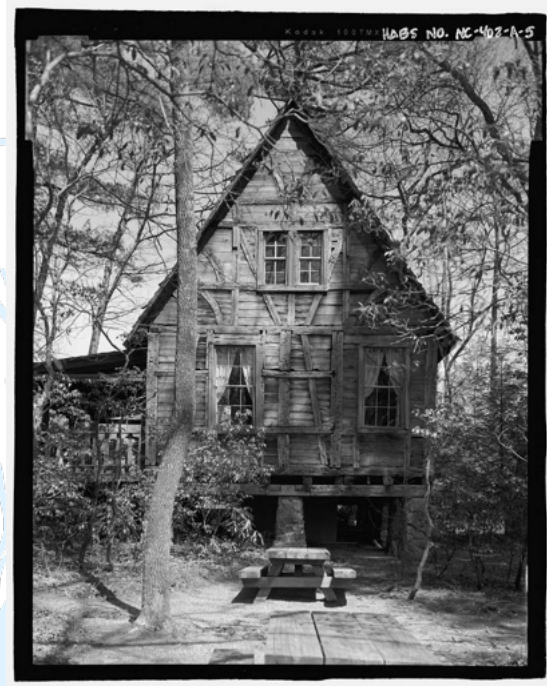
for the Biltmore Estate and grounds totalled 125,000 acres, however Olmsted only landscaped a total of 75 acres. Due to the poor nature of the soil caused by locals’ excessive logging, Olmsted recommended to George that he work towards forestry on much of the land.<sup>10</sup> A supported forest with continual but non-damaging logging could have potentially provided George Vanderbilt with an Estate that was sustainable and provided a profitable business that would last his family for generations. After the first mention of forestry, George Vanderbilt began to invest time, money, and manpower to his grand vision of what the grounds of Biltmore could be. The leftover portion of the land was originally set aside for gardens, a farm, and a deer park. Overall, the grounds of the Biltmore Estate contained massive swaths of land, rich natural resources primarily in the form of timber, extreme natural beauty, and multiple business ventures, including logging and dairy businesses.



*Vanderbilt and Friends*

<sup>10</sup> “Biltmore Estate: Frederick Law Olmsted’s Final Masterpiece,” TheCollector, June 10, 2022, <https://www.thecollector.com/the-biltmore-estate-frederick-olmsted-masterpiece/>.

George's interest in Forestry wasn't a sole venture. Notably, George kept a full time staff member tasked with managing the massive property. German Forester Carl Schenck took George Vanderbilt's vision with stride and worked to establish the first school of Forestry in the United States, the Biltmore Forest School, which opened its doors in 1898 and was located among the many acres of the Estate's grounds.<sup>11</sup> The Biltmore Forest School was a hands-on, non-American style of education. Students would attend lectures by Carl Schenck and then assist him in his duties around the Estate. The Forest School's one year long program of study became a resounding success with a waitlist forming soon after the program's establishment.<sup>12</sup> Carl Schenck's vision of profitable forestry spurred Vanderbilt's grand ideals forward and allowed for great innovations in forestry. While the Biltmore Forest School shut its doors in 1914 when Schenck returned to Germany to fight in World War I, the basis and momentum for forestry from the Biltmore Forest School remained.



*Biltmore Forest School*

The massive amount of land however, proved to be difficult to maintain. Before his death, George Vanderbilt was in talks to sell a large portion of his Estate to the government; he died before the deal and transaction could be completed. This proved to be one of the many markers of overextension at the Biltmore Estate as the vision of George Vanderbilt propelled many forward without check.

One of the many endeavors of George Vanderbilt was Biltmore Dairy. Needing dairy for the Estate and reluctant to find a nearby provider, George decided to self-supply dairy to the Biltmore House. In doing so, he hoped to exemplify how to run a successful farm and to generate income through dairy sales. To George, self sufficiency was the name of the game. Besides bovines, Biltmore Dairy and the larger Biltmore farms

---

<sup>11</sup> "Cradle of Forestry in America: The Biltmore Forest School 1898-1913," Forest History Society, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://foresthistor.org/other-books/cradle-forestry-america-biltmore-forest-school-1898-1913/>.

<sup>12</sup> Society of American Foresters and R.K. Winters, *Fifty Years of Forestry in the U.S.A.* (Society of American Foresters, 1950), <https://books.google.com/books?id=mt0sAQAAMA-AJ>.

included sheep, hog, and poultry farms along with a large produce operation. However, the dairy farm was by far the most successful. Containing what was thought to be the largest concentration of registered Jersey cows in the world, Biltmore Dairy allowed the Estate to remain financially afloat through most of the 19th century. Through full time staff, profitable products, and their well regarded reputation, Biltmore Dairy was one of George's projects that demonstrated that a self-sustaining Estate and community was possible.<sup>13</sup>

As for the physical Biltmore House, construction started in 1889. Designed by Richard Morris Hunt in the French Renaissance style, the 250-room residence took a total of six years to complete and contains 35 bedrooms, 43 bathrooms, and 65 fireplaces.<sup>14</sup> Forward thinking, the entire Estate was fitted with AC and DC electricity during a time when candles were most common for lighting. In fact, the 30,000 gallon swimming pool in the basement of the house has

electric lights.<sup>15</sup> To complete these massive tasks, George Vanderbilt had to pay to extend a railroad line to the Estate, as well as create an entire woodworking factory and brick kiln to supply the builders of the mansion. Once completed, the Estate was a marvel, and the doors opened to family and friends of the family on Christmas Eve, 1895.<sup>16</sup>

### Asheville And Surrounding Area



*Biltmore Village*

At the entrance to the Biltmore Estate exists Biltmore Village. Modeled after an English village, the community was built in order to provide places for Estate staff to live and shop, as well as provide a pleasant first impression to those exiting the train to venture to the Biltmore

---

<sup>13</sup> Kristina Smith, "Biltmore Dairy," Biltmore, May 14, 2019, <https://www.biltmore.com/blog/biltmore-dairy-an-underrated-fascinating-history/>.

<sup>14</sup> Heather Angel, "10 Fast Facts about Biltmore," Biltmore, September 18, 2018, <https://www.biltmore.com/blog/10-fast-facts-about-biltmore/>.

---

<sup>15</sup> Rachel Bertone, "Behind the Biltmore Estate: 7 Things You Didn't Know About America's Largest Home," *North Carolina Field and Family* (blog), May 1, 2015, <https://ncfieldfamily.org/travel/attractions/biltmore-state/>.

<sup>16</sup> Angel, "10 Fast Facts about Biltmore."

Estate.<sup>17</sup> Biltmore Village housed cottages, businesses, a church, post office, a doctor's office, and school. A thriving community on its own, the village provided support for the Estate while becoming a destination of its own.

When the Estate was being constructed, Biltmore Villages were mostly temporary housing for the construction workers. However, while temporary for the contracted workers, these buildings were built to last with electricity and water.<sup>18</sup> In hand with the stores, essential buildings, and services, the constructed Biltmore Village was a self-sufficient town where people could live, eat, and work right at the gate to the Biltmore Estate.

However, while structurally planned for success, Biltmore Village did have many social issues — particularly between the village residents, the workers of the Estate, and the residents of Asheville. Noting racial disparity, Mr. Isaac Dickson and Dr. Edward S. Stephens went to George Vanderbilt to fund the creation of the Young Men's Institute (YMI), a multipurpose space utilized to support the African American workers at Biltmore. Dickson and Stephens called upon George to fund the center because of the

---

<sup>17</sup> "Construction," Biltmore House, accessed August 15, 2023, <http://biltmoreestatebyzli.weebly.com/construction.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Terri, "Historic Biltmore Village," *FemaleSoloTrek* (blog), April 30, 2022, <https://femalesolotrek.com/2022/04/30/historic-biltmore-village/>.

discrimination from the white people living in Asheville towards the African American population. The YMI allowed for community and economic growth for the African American community in Asheville; however, the high profile of the institute provided further opportunity for discrimination. In fact, the YMI also acted to put the African American community under further security and even according to George Vanderbilt, the YMI was a test to determine ability for "self-government". However, working directly with community leaders, George Vanderbilt was able to work to fund projects that were directly thought of by African Americans. This example should be understood to exemplify the massive economic and social influence of the Vanderbilt family, particularly on the region surrounding the Biltmore Estate. When looking to Asheville and beyond, we encourage you to work to create a more equitable society with the Estate's influence.

In 1914, the city of Asheville was becoming a promising destination for many around the United States. With a population steadily growing towards 25,000 people, many came to Asheville for work, leisure, and even health reasons. The Grove Park Inn, opened in 1913, is an impressive hotel and resort that was partially funded by Edwin Wiley Grove — who first came to Asheville under doctors orders to

treat bronchitis.<sup>19</sup> The Grove Park Inn, along with the Langren Hotel opened in 1912, were markers of the city's upward trajectory as the decade barrelled forward.<sup>20</sup> With the expansion of Biltmore Village into the main city of Asheville, the Biltmore Estate's influence grew from simply a political and social presence to a physical presence in the city. The Vanderbilt Family and prominent Estate staff were able to influence the politics of the city in accordance to their needs, and the many businesses operating from the Estate allowed for great economic influence on the many people of Asheville. Overall, even though the 1910's marked a moment of great growth for both Asheville and the Biltmore Estate, growing pains from both were present and became a point of tension as the chain of command shifted at the Estate.

## The Eastern Band Of Cherokee

All of the land that contains both the Biltmore Estate and Asheville is land occupied by the Eastern Band of Cherokee. This is important to acknowledge as 125,000 acres of this land was owned by George Vanderbilt, without respect to those who rightfully belong there. Leading into

the Biltmore Estate was an old trading path for the tribes, and the river bottoms of the Estate were home to indigenous peoples for the previous 10,000 years. These are facts that people such as Olmsted, and therefore others, were aware of when constructing and designing the Estate and grounds, yet chose to ignore. Beside the entrance houses lay the mound site for ceremonies created by indigenous peoples between 200 and 500 A.D. The Estate grounds, however, hold many more indigenous sites and important locations than just the entrance mound site.<sup>21</sup>

The Appalachian and western North Carolina region hold deep history, which all come into play when thinking about the massive wealth and influence of the Biltmore Estate. The cultural significance of the area should be at the forefront of delegates' minds during the committee. When thinking about the importance and use of the land that the Estate sits upon, finding solutions which pay respect to the longstanding history of the region and the indigenous people should be a priority.

---

<sup>19</sup> "Historic Hotels In Asheville NC | Omni Grove Park Inn," Historic Hotels Worldwide, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://www.historichotels.org/us/hotels-resorts/the-omni-grove-park-inn/history.php>.

<sup>20</sup> "Asheville History: Early Settlement to Downtown Boom," RomanticAsheville.com, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://www.romanticasheville.com/History.htm>.

---

<sup>21</sup> "Cherokee Reclaim Landmarks of Ancient Asheville," The Asheville Citizen Times, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2015/08/02/charlotte-reclaim-landmarks-ancient-asheville/31027001/>.

## CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES

### **Margaret Louisa Vanderbilt - Sister of George**

Now the eldest of the remaining Vanderbilt siblings, Margaret Vanderbilt has lots of influence in the public eye. However, she is known to always tell the story of how she, almost, was aboard the Titanic. A proud supporter and philanthropic presence towards the empowerment of women, Margaret donated to the YWCA and created halfway homes for many women in the city of New York. As sights turn towards her late brothers, Estate Margaret sees a grand opportunity to support not only the women who worked at and around the Estate, but in the greater Asheville community.

### **William Kissam Vanderbilt - Brother of George**

Brother of George Vanderbilt II, William Kissam Vanderbilt primarily manages the Vanderbilt Family's railroad investments. He also has a deep love of horses. Living in New York City, William is the proud owner of Madison Square Garden, which he purchased from P. T. Barnum. William's love of spectacle and of money positions him as a worthy face to the mass of the Vanderbilt fortune. However, the Biltmore Estate and its many pathways into the Appalachian economy look to him as a great new business venture — and perhaps a new destination for spectacle.

### **Fredrick William Vanderbilt - Brother of George**

After graduating from Yale University, Frederick Vanderbilt, like many of his family members, found his Lux et Veritas in the railroad business. Working his way around the different sectors of his family business, Frederick grew to have oversight over 22 railroads including: New York Central Railroad, the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad, and the Chicago and North Western Railroad. With a passion for travel, Frederick sees Asheville and the Biltmore Estate as a potential destination for tourists to experience the natural beauty of the region, or perhaps he simply wants to ensure he has easy travel to the region in the possibility he gets tuberculosis.

### **Eliza "Lila" Osgood Vanderbilt - Sister of George**

Eliza Vanderbilt spent a majority of her life dedicated to developing Shelburne Farms in Vermont, a model agricultural estate. Located on the shores of Lake Champlain, Shelburne Farms represents a prime example of an ornamental farm, and like the Biltmore Estate Grounds, was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. Eliza sees the Biltmore Estate as a new location for expansion of her vision at Shelburne Farms. As an exemplification of efficient farming and a location for entertainment and great first impressions, in her eyes,

the Biltmore Estate can be a location not only to show guests a good time, but to inspire guests and local farmers alike to adapt to new and more modern farming practices.

### **Florence Adele Vanderbilt Twombly - Sister of George**

Owning many homes across the Northeast, Florence Adele Vanderbilt Twombly is a textbook socialite whose husband works as a financial advisor to the Vanderbilt Railroad Holdings. Using her charisma to influence powerful families around New Jersey, Florence views the Biltmore Estate as a new possibility to expand her influence to a new region of the United States. In her eyes, she can influence Asheville and the surrounding community to solidify her social and economic position and further work to expand her husband's job offerings. The threads of success are in her hands, and all she needs is influence over the Biltmore Estate.

### **Emily Thorn Vanderbilt - Sister of George**

Emily Thorn Vanderbilt is known for supporting the creation of medical centers for women and children, most notably the Sloane Hospital for Women in New York, which she endowed with over 1,000,000 dollars in 1888. With George's death, Emily sees the Biltmore Estate as the perfect location for a new medical campus and rehabilitation center. Asheville has long been known to be home to naturally healing air and water, with pristine air providing support for respiratory illness. It is also nearby to Hot Springs, N, a destination for those looking for the support of the warm earth to heal their ailments. With plenty of land and infrastructure already created, Emily could give back to the people by establishing a new medical hub.

### **Cornelia Stuyvesant Vanderbilt - Daughter of Edith and George**

Daughter to Edith and George Vanderbilt, Cornelia is just realizing her place in the world after her father's death. With legal claim to many operations of the Vanderbilt family in Asheville, Cornelia looks to the Biltmore Estate as a playground for her personal expression. She enjoys inviting friends to join her on the Estate and creating lavish and exciting adventures for them all to experience. That being said, Cornelia is a strong devotee of the arts, often looking towards the people of Asheville for their creative tendencies. Her position and status, as she sees it, can be used to jumpstart the careers and passions of many of the artists in the area.

### **Emily Rand King - Head Housekeeper**

Having perhaps the most important role of the Estate staff, Emily Rand King works as the point person for all operations at the Biltmore Estate. Organizing staff and partnerships with all other Biltmore ventures, Emily works to keep the 'Vanderbilt' run projects, grounds, and house operational with her amazing



organizational skills. Many in the surrounding Asheville community would do anything she asks, as many know her word to be the working hand of the Biltmore Estate. However, many believe Emily's influence extends beyond the backing of the Vanderbilt family. It's her wish that commands many in Asheville.

#### **Buford Billings - Butler**

Hand-in-hand with Emily Rand King, Buford Billings works to ensure that everything is run smoothly on the Estate. Primarily dealing with the logistical operations of the Estate, Buford can ensure that if something needs to move from place-to-place, it will happen without anyone knowing. With his skill, he is not only able to gather supplies for lavish surprise parties, but he is able to ensure discrete movement of the Vanderbilts around Asheville. With friends in many delivery and transportation services, there isn't a place his packages can't reach.

#### **Frank Baumgartner - Head Groundskeeper**

Having a green thumb since birth, Frank Baumgartner has taken his role as head groundskeeper very seriously. Ensuring that there is not one blade of grass out of place, he provides upkeep to Frederick Law Olmsted's vision of the Biltmore Estate Grounds. Seeing the Biltmore Estate as a nature-filled playground, Frank takes the role as steward to heart, advocating for the protection of green-space around Asheville. He is often heard petitioning the city council to create more public parks and has even started his own nature preservation club that meets on rotating Tuesdays in downtown Asheville.

#### **Wilfred G. Shackley - George's Assistant**

Formally reporting directly to Gerorge Vanderbilt, Wilfred G. Shackley knew inside and out the public and private life of the late eccentric millionaire. However, within the Biltmore Estate, Wilfred is known for providing mentorship to any of the Estate staff, creating weekly board game nights and book clubs that allow him to provide support to the busy staff in a more relaxed way. A strong supporter of political involvement, this also allowed him to teach many about his personal beliefs of supporting democracy and advocating for labor rights for workers of all ages.

#### **Martha Laube - Edith's Assistant**

Reporting Directly to Edith Vanderbilt, Matha Laube had immense responsibilities, working similarly to Wilfred and understanding the intricacies of Edith's life. On her own, however, she worked to unite the many textile workers of the region by establishing the "Shady Lady Quilting Club, which met in Biltmore Village on Thursday nights. While many don't know what was actually discussed during those meetings, their yearly quilt auction sure does draw a crowd. Edith is revered in Asheville for her precise nature of

business and attention to detail. Many would say that Edith would simply wake up in the morning and Martha would then give her a list of tasks, which would act as Edith's schedule for the day.

### **Henry Campbell - Head of Biltmore Dairy**

As the head of Biltmore Dairy, Henry Campbell knows a thing or two about cows, milk, and even ice cream. Fascinated by the delicacy since he was a child, Henry was overjoyed when George Vanderbilt hired him to oversee the Estate's new venture after George Vanderbilt bought a pint of ice cream from Henry's modest shop in Asheville. With expanded financing, premium dairy, and a large staff, Biltmore Dairy is now a revered operation which many rely on for their dairy products. However, recently, a rumors have been circulating about the possibility that Biltmore Dairy may shut its doors due to the overextension of the Estate after George's Death, which is of the utmost concern to Henry.

### **Paul Schnek - Forestry School Head**

Paul Schnek, a career forester, worked his entire life dedicated to the craft and vision of sustainable farming that Geroge Vanderbilt possessed. Working at the Biltmore Forest School, Paul fought against convention to make the Biltmore forest like no other, stopping the use of splash dams and planting more trees than were cut down. Paul has always worked to teach others the importance of giving more than you take to the environment. After the death of George Vanderbilt, Paul's greatest worry is that the amazing landscape will be sold to the wrong hands and that the natural beauty of the Appalachian landscape will slowly deteriorate if pure logging takes control of the region.

### **Lucia Greco - Developer/George's Friend**

One of Geroge Vanderbilt's best friends, Lucia and George would golf most weekends, discussing their grand plans for different business adventures. Most recently, Lucia was in talks with George and other parties to support something their potential business partners called a "shopping mall" — which would be one of the nations' first. Having amassed a fortune through real estate, Lucia hopes that new projects coming to Asheville not only succeed, but have their name on it, and the land surrounding the Biltmore Estate is no exception.

### **Fernando Amador Rojas - Head Logger**

Fernando Amador Rojas started from humble origins in Appalachia, working after school hours with his father learning the trade of logging. After his father's passing, Fernando took control of his fathers company, Rojas Lumber, and continued his fathers legacy by creating the most profitable logging organization in the Southern Appalachian region. Before George's death, Fernando was in talks to purchase parts of the

Biltmore Estate to use for his business. However, with his previous talks up in the air, he is now taking matters into his own hands and is prepared to negotiate with all parties involved to take control of the wooden goldmine sitting at the feet of the Vanderbilt family.

**Thomas D. Johnston - Mayor of Asheville**

As Mayor of Asheville, Thomas D. Johnston was invited to the Biltmore Estate on occasion to discuss possible partnerships and ventures with the Vanderbilt family, many times in exchange for special privileges around the city. With his sights set on a larger political career, Thomas hopes for further public and financial support from the Vanderbilt family as he looks toward state government. Not afraid of supporting the highest bidder, Thomas is looking for new supporters after George's death, or perhaps a new way to have greater influence over Asheville now that one of its most prominent figures has passed away.

**Margaret "Maggie" Schwab - Ladies Garment Workers Union Representative**

Maggie Schwab is a textile worker in a factory outside of Asheville. She belongs to the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, which had a prominent presence in the Southern United States in the early 1900s. She is passionate about the rights of women and workers, and organizes with her community to provide aid to those in need. Maggie is also a member of a leftist book club that meets weekly to discuss issues such as working hours, land usage rights, and wage equity.

**Jill Jones - Representative of the Religious Community**

Jill Jones is a prominent member of the religious community in Asheville. She is responsible for church maintenance, laypeople services such as adoration, parish banquets, and celebrations for early sacraments, including baptisms and First Communions. The entire town of Asheville knows Jill whether or not they attend weekly services, and she is well-respected as a person who works to better the lives of everyone in the community. While Jill is friends with Maggie Schwab, she does not approve of her leftist book club and holds a competing weekly bible study.

**Pete Williams - Government Official**

Pete Williams, known to many in Asheville as "Fed" Williams, is an employee of the United States Federal Government. Specifically, Pete works in the Department of the Interior, and was sent to Asheville to monitor ongoing opportunities for the sale or acquisition of Federal Land. He works closely with those involved in forestry at Biltmore, and was invited to all social gatherings at the Estate by the late Mr. Vanderbilt. He wields modest, but certain, government authority as well as a wealth of connections around the eastern United States.

### **Dean Taylor - Mercantile Owner**

Dean Taylor owns the largest mercantile in Asheville. He knows just about every person who lives in the area and provides the town with goods ranging from nonperishable foodstuffs to linens to gardening tools. He lives above his store with his wife and three children, who are also involved members of the community. Although he lives a simple life, it is well known that Dean is one of the wealthiest people in Asheville, excluding the Vanderbilts.

### **Ron Lakert - Real Estate Developer**

Ron Lakert was born all the way up in New York City in the 1880s. He is the son of a wealthy real estate developer there, and decided to follow in his footsteps. The city proved to be a crowded market, so Ron forged his own path and brought his expertise to North Carolina. He owns a few of the buildings in “downtown” Asheville, and has his eye on purchasing some land from Edith Vanderbilt as soon as things settle down. Ron is charismatic and has access to his father’s checking account, which has proven to be a great asset as he builds a life in the South.

### **Felicity Henry - Horse Owner and Agricultural Specialist**

Felicity is the only child to a couple of farmers based just north of Asheville. As she grew older, she inherited more and more of the family business, and recently took full command after the passing of her father. She runs a horse stable and makes sizable income from boarding and taking care of horses owned by the well-to-do in the area — mostly the Vanderbilts and their friends. Felicity is very skilled in agriculture, horticulture, and animal husbandry, making her a regular Johnny Appleseed! She gets along well with all the folks in Asheville, but admittedly has a stronger connection with the Estate thanks to her line of work.

### **Carolyn Richards - School Teacher**

Carolyn is the only full-time school teacher in the little red schoolhouse of Asheville. She teaches children a wide range of topics, including history, penmanship, natural sciences, home economics, and physical education. Families adore Carolyn and appreciate her work for the community. In a recent parish meeting following Sunday service, someone made a remark that Asheville would be in good hands if Carolyn were in charge! Ever since then, there have been whispers about mayoral candidacy, although she has made no comment.

### **Xavier Brousseau - USPS Officer**

Xavier is the United States Postal Service Officer assigned to the greater Asheville area. He knows everyone very well, including those living at the Estate, and is never seen without his dog, Buddy. He makes a

respectable salary and is the best athlete in the area, walking or traveling on horseback for tens of miles each day. Xavier has a unique position of public influence and the ability to enter the Estate gates every week, which is envied by some of the people in Asheville proper.

#### **Mabel Moore - Owner of an Asheville Bed and Breakfast**

Mabel is a beloved member of the Asheville community, having run her little B&B for as long as anyone can remember. By some estimates, she has to be pushing 90 years old, but remains sharp as a whip and celebrates her 29th birthday every year on September 14th. Mabel mills about town and knows almost all of the town's happenings at all times. She is also regarded as one of the most worldly citizens of Asheville, having met people from all over the United States, and even other countries. She is friends with tradesmen in neighboring cities who help keep her business stocked on linens, toiletries, and different foods. Everyone loves Mabel, and she is looking forward to helping the Estate make choices that support the goals of the people of Asheville.

#### **Jefferson Turner - Local Physician**

Dr. Jeff Turner is the only accredited physician in Asheville, and doubles as the on-site doctor for Biltmore on the weekends. He runs a small doctors office along with his two daughters and son, all of whom are nurses. Dr. Turner serves Asheville very well, treating broken bones, head colds, and everything in between, but he has had some trouble seeing everyone in a timely manner as the city grows. He and his family struggle keeping up with weekday calls at Biltmore too, as they request urgent care and pay for it accordingly. Dr. Turner is managing his business the best he can while trying to provide care for everyone in need. He plays a pivotal role in both the Estate and the city of Asheville, and is a good person to see both sides of the various issues that this committee will face.

#### **Thomas Pascal - Biltmore Head Chef**

Thomas knew from the age of five that he wanted to be a chef. He used to help his parents make food for their restaurant in Washington, D.C., which served a wide variety of cuisines. Every year when the holidays came around, he asked for another kitchen implement to add to his collection. On his 21st birthday, he decided to spread his wings and start his own restaurant in the new, up-and-coming city of Asheville. He successfully ran Pascal's Italian restaurant for 6 years before the Vanderbilts came to town. Thomas had built quite the reputation for his cooking over time; word of mouth spread far and wide after visitors tasted his *cacio e pepe*. Long story short, George Vanderbilt insisted that he be the head chef of the Biltmore Estate. Thomas didn't want to leave his restaurant, but the pay package at Biltmore was something he couldn't refuse. The family offered free education for his children, an on-site doctor on the weekends, and they had

access to almost all of the amenities that the Vanderbilt family themselves had. Now that he lives on the Estate full time, Thomas has a unique perspective as someone who came to Asheville, lived there for several years, and made the transition to life behind the Biltmore gates. He checks on Pascal's, which is now run by his previous sous-chef, every week.

**Abe Froman - Foreman of Biltmore Construction Crew / Chief Architect**

Abe Froman spent most of their life building things. From Lincoln logs to tiny outdoor structures, Abe knows just how to piece things together to make them stick together. After attending the University of North Carolina to study architecture, Abe soon grew to prominence as one of the most revered architects in North Carolina; he worked near the state's capital in order to help design and construct many of the most beloved buildings around Raleigh and Chapel Hill. However, born in the mountains, they eventually returned to their roots, working primarily around Asheville and contributing to the design of some of the newest developments in the region. Noting this, George Vanderbilt looked to him to become the Chief Architect of the Biltmore Estate, trusting Abe with the vast purchasing power of the Vanderbilt family to fulfill his wildest dreams (as long as it was approved by George, of course). From an indoor bowling alley to an underground pool, Froman's knowledge of how to construct buildings, contraptions, and install wiring systems made him the best person for the job.

**Samantha Crawford - Local journalist / newspaper editor**

Word travels fast in and around Asheville, especially surrounding the extravagant Vanderbilt family. However, as many know in Asheville, all things come back to Samantha Crawford. Starting out with a personal publication, Samantha Crawford's career began by exposing corruption in the Asheville government and releasing pamphlets for the citizens of Asheville to spread the news fast. When the Vanderbilt family began moving into the region, Samantha knew that the affluent group would have secrets — many of which needed to be uncovered. Swiftly, Samantha created a network of information surrounding the operations of the Biltmore Estate, making knowledge her greatest asset. With connections in multiple local papers and personal printing abilities, the word of Samantha Crawford is trusted and listened to attentively as the people of Asheville wait to hear the most recent happenings

MUNUC

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Biltmore House. "Construction." Accessed August 15, 2023.  
<http://biltmoreestatebyzli.weebly.com/construction.html>.
- Biltmore House. "George and Edith." Accessed August 15, 2023.  
<http://biltmoreestatebyzli.weebly.com/george-and-edith.html>.
- Angel, Heather. "10 Fast Facts about Biltmore." Biltmore, September 18, 2018.  
<https://www.biltmore.com/blog/10-fast-facts-about-biltmore/>.
- Bertone, Rachel. "Behind the Biltmore Estate: 7 Things You Didn't Know About America's Largest Home." *North Carolina Field and Family* (blog), May 1, 2015.  
<https://ncfieldfamily.org/travel/attractions/biltmore-estate/>.
- Biltmore. "Edith Stuyvesant Dresser." Accessed August 15, 2023.  
<https://www.biltmore.com/our-story/biltmore-history/key-figures/edith-stuyvesant-dresser/>.
- Biltmore. "Estate Timeline." Accessed August 15, 2023.  
<https://www.biltmore.com/our-story/biltmore-history/estate-timeline/>.
- Forest History Society. "Cradle of Forestry in America: The Biltmore Forest School 1898-1913." Accessed August 15, 2023.  
<https://foresthistry.org/other-books/cradle-forestry-america-biltmore-forest-school-1898-1913/>.
- Foresters, Society of American, and R.K. Winters. *Fifty Years of Forestry in the U.S.A.* Society of American Foresters, 1950. <https://books.google.com/books?id=mt0sAQAAAMAAI>.
- Historic Hotels Worldwide. "Historic Hotels In Asheville NC | Omni Grove Park Inn." Accessed August 15, 2023. <https://www.historichotels.org/us/hotels-resorts/the-omni-grove-park-inn/history.php>.
- HISTORY. "Cornelius Vanderbilt - Biography, Children & Facts," March 26, 2020.  
<https://www.history.com/topics/19th-century/cornelius-vanderbilt>.
- N/A, N/A. *Biltmore Forestry School*. 1900. Photograph. *GetArchive.Net*, August 19, 1900.
- King, Moses. *Cornelius Vanderbilt*. 1899. Photograph. *NYPL Public Archive*, September 8, 1899.
- RomanticAsheville.com. "Asheville History: Early Settlement to Downtown Boom." Accessed August 15, 2023. <https://www.romanticasheville.com/History.htm>.
- Smith, Kristina. "Biltmore Dairy." Biltmore, May 14, 2019.  
<https://www.biltmore.com/blog/biltmore-dairy-an-udderly-fascinating-history/>.

Tarbell, John H. *Biltmore House of Reflections*. 1900. Photograph. *Loc's Public Domain Archive*, August 19, 1900.

Terri. "Historic Biltmore Village." *FemaleSoloTrek* (blog), April 30, 2022.  
<https://femalesolotrek.com/2022/04/30/historic-biltmore-village/>.

The Asheville Citizen Times. "Cherokee Reclaim Landmarks of Ancient Asheville." Accessed August 15, 2023.  
<https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2015/08/02/cherokee-reclaim-landmarks-ancient-asheville/31027001/>.

The Biltmore House: <br /> The Great Depression's Influence <br /> on the Vanderbilt Legacy. "The Vanderbilt's Effect on the Local Community." Accessed August 15, 2023.  
<http://aosborneckp.weebly.com/the-vanderbilts-effect-on-the-local-community.html>.

*The New York Times*. "TimesMachine: Saturday March 7, 1914 - NYTimes.Com." Accessed August 15, 2023.  
<http://timesmachine.nytimes.comhttp://arch-timesmachine-fe-prd-40741-2-575473780.us-east-1.elb.amazonaws.com/timesmachine/1914/03/07/issue.html>.

The Collector. "Biltmore Estate: Frederick Law Olmsted's Final Masterpiece," June 10, 2022.  
<https://www.thecollector.com/the-biltmore-estate-frederick-olmsted-masterpiece/>.

