Biltmore Forest
Our History
Our Lives
Biltmore Forest

Our History

Our Lives

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Mimi Cecil  Ramona Rowe
The Town of Biltmore Forest

“The verdure of trees, the scent of flowers, the songs of birds, views of great range and Beauty, these stamp Biltmore Forest with the impress of Nature and of that charming atmosphere which Nature alone can provide.”

D. Hiden Ramsey;
The Story of Biltmore Forest, 1925

Original Biltmore Forest Town Hall, Vanderbilt Road,
On the site of Bourne Lane Condominiums.

Although the years have quietly slipped past and we are now celebrating the 75th anniversary of the founding of Biltmore Forest, it is remarkable to note how true to the original intent the town has remained.

Biltmore Forest Our History - Our Lives offers an opportunity to enjoy glimpses into the early years of Biltmore Forest and to add to your knowledge of its origins. David Schulman and the research committee have accumulated a great deal of anecdotal and other facts and have strived to be as accurate as possible. Nevertheless, errors may occur and every effort to correct these will be done for future editions of our history.

The philosophy of creating a community of homes offering serenity and sanctuary in an area of great natural beauty continues to this day. Let us take care to preserve its unique character throughout the years to come.

Mayor Glenn Kelly
Commissioners Charles W. Grimes
Commissioner Ramona C. Rowe
Commissioner Weldon L. Shipley
1998
Junius Adams in his own words….

In 1916, following the unprecedented flood and resulting damage to Biltmore Village and the Biltmore Estate, the trustees of the George Vanderbilt Estate requested me to make a survey and study the property and recommend plans to reduce the cost of maintenance.

My report included, among other things, recommendations that Biltmore Village is sold and that some 1,500 acres of Biltmore Estate bordering on Hendersonville Road, which was unproductive and bearing a heavy burden of taxation, be declared a restricted residential section and sold off as lots.

Following conferences with the trustees my response with its recommendations was approved and the trustees instructed me to proceed with the project, which I advised against at the time on account of the threat of our involvement in the First World War. It was then agreed that we would go forward with the plans when conditions were regarded as favorable.

In August 1920 Biltmore Village was sold and conditions were regarded as favorable for the development of the Hendersonville Road property of the Estate. As a result the Biltmore Estate Company was organized in August 1920, with a paid-in capital of $100,000 (in which the Vanderbilt Estate was not a stock-holder) and 1,451.85-acres of Biltmore Estate was conveyed to that company at the agreed price of $355,790.00 paid $20,000 in stock (which I acquired from the Estate) and $335,000.00 in First Mortgage fifteen-year Sinking Fund bonds.

In the contract it was regarded as essential to the success of the undertaking that a golf course and country club be provided as part of the development and the trustees of the Vanderbilt Estate agreed to lend the development company $100,000 in November of 1920 to be used for that purpose.

In July 1921 it had become apparent to all concerned that the capital available to the Biltmore Estate Company was not sufficient to finance the construction of the character of Golf course and clubhouse that would contribute to the success of the undertaking………
OUR HISTORY

In 1925, Hiden Ramsey eloquently described the prevailing vision for the Town of Biltmore Forest.

“They wished to create and abide in a community where persons of moderate means could build homes that would embody on a smaller scale the same ideals which actuated Mr. Vanderbilt in the creation of the Biltmore Estate…. Not a tree was felled nor a bush disturbed until the atmosphere of the community had been determined and the whole plan of development had been worked out in the minutest detail.” And so it began.

In 1920, four men, Junius Green Adams, Thomas Wadley Raoul, Burnham S. Cogburn and William A. Knight with the co-operation of Mrs. Edith Vanderbilt, her daughter Cornelia, and the trustees of the estate of George Vanderbilt formed the Biltmore Estate Company, not to be confused with the Biltmore Company, which owned the Biltmore House. Their intent was to develop on almost 1,500 acres one of the finest residential parks in the country. The Town was officially chartered in 1923.

Junius Adams was a respected lawyer who also served as a local legal representative of the trustees of the late George Vanderbilt’s estate. He was known as Judge Adams though it appears his experience on the bench was spent as a Police Judge of the City of Asheville from 1911-1915. A 1928 biography of North Carolinians by Robert Conner, credits Adams with driving the ‘blind tigers’ and the ‘red light district’ out of Asheville. In March 1919, Adams was appointed executive secretary and counsel of the U.S. Liquidation Commission at Paris until the Treaty of Versailles was signed.

Thomas Raoul became involved with the Town of Biltmore Forest after his successful development of The Manor and Albemarle Park in North Asheville. Colburn was described in the Asheville Citizen as a capitalist from Detroit and Asheville involved in local banking and having been a principal in the company that built the famous Quebec Bridge. Knight was described by the same article as being a “golf enthusiast" and retired businessman from St. Augustine and Asheville

The general plan of the town included restrictions, which included that no lots would be subdivided for 21 years. Lots were mostly 3 to 5 acres and priced from $5,000 with a minimum cost of house to be built on each lot varying from $7,500 to $25,000.

Anecdotes of Biltmore Forest history include Dick Covington's remembrance that the country club was first envisioned when an existing country club in North Asheville would not let Edith Vanderbilt smoke on the premises. Donald Ross was retained to design the golf course, Edward L. Palmer of Baltimore was commissioned architect of the château Clubhouse, and Chauncey Badly of the Biltmore Estate was employed as landscape architect.
It appears that not enough funds were sufficient to complete the country club part of the project by the Biltmore Estate Company, and Cornelia became the owner advancing funds for furniture and equipment. The Club opened on July 4, 1922 with the price of a daily lunch at $1.00. Bachelor rates for rooms at the club were reduced to $3 during the Depression. Many nationally acclaimed tennis and golf tournaments were held with the likes of Bobby Jones and Bill Tilden participating as well as guests that included Al Smith, John D. Rockefeller and General Pershing.

There seems to have developed disagreements between the principals of the Biltmore Estate Company themselves and possibly the trustees of the Biltmore Company during the real estate bust in the last 1920’s and early 1930’s. When sales of lot slowed, the Biltmore Company apparently took back the land, which is currently known, as the “new section”. Judge Adams found himself being both a counsel to the Biltmore Company and a participant of the Biltmore Estate Company.
Throughout this book you will find memories and history, good times and tough times, times gone forever and times forever remembered.

We proudly present our town,

*Biltmore Forest.*
“I’ve had to wrestle a few people before,” he said, “but I’ve never used my gun.” Paul Jones retired from the Biltmore Forest Police Department after 41 years of never using his gun or his handcuffs. “I doubt if there’s a police station in the country that has had as many kids hanging around it.” Jones was quoted as saying in an Asheville Citizen article. “I remember when I first took the job there was a six-year old boy who used to stay here all the time. Now he’s a grandfather.” Jones said.
For 29 years Roy R. Creasman headed the Police Department of Biltmore Forest. A close personal friend of Thomas Raoul, he was said to have known personally everyone that resided in the town and was always ready to lend a hand to serve the community. Creasman joined the Police Department while at Oteen Hospital where he was employed as an electrician during the building of the facility. He was also an avid hunter, sportsman and pilot. He died of a heart attack while on duty at the age of 53.
March 20, 1923
First meeting at real estate office. Standing committees formed for: fire, parks, lights, streets, police, finance, sanitation, public safety and building. Any prostitute or other woman whose general reputation for chastity is bad... $25 each offense. No women of ill fame allowed at public or private dances. Charles Parker designed police and fire station. Police chief was paid $90 per month, apartment above station and 2 uniforms per year. Biltmore Village paid 1/3 of his salary, and he made 4 rounds per day thru Village on his Harley Davidson motorcycle. The fire truck was on a Packard chassis.

Late December 1926
$20,000 bond to erect streetlights, purchased from United Ironworks, Oakland, California. 36 Standards -$3,680. 36 Brackets and holders- $1765 81 Sign Plates-$800

August 24, 1927
Mayor directed to protest to Southern Rail against loud and unnecessary whistling on Busbee Hill, which was agreed was a common nuisance.

October 27, 1927
Thomas Raoul appointed town manager to serve without pay.

1936
Police Station gets hot water!

October 1942
Mr. Hartshorn moved that the old horse-drawn mowing machine that had been out of service for over a year be sold to the Club for $25.

May 1946
Police instructed to enforce the 35 mph limit without fear or favor. Biltmore Forest Stage Company was the bus service with Pierce Arrow buses.

May 1948
Mushroom road markers @ $3.75 each from Reed & Abee.
1953
Thomas Wadley Raoul dies. Roy Creasman, Police Chief 1926-1953, dies. The loss of these two beloved citizens marked the end of an era for Biltmore Forest.

September 1957
Police instructed to stop practice of people picking up night crawlers on Club property.

December 1964
Petition from some of residents asking town to provide relief from deer.

December 16, 1970
William Cecil suggests we prevail upon CP&L to put all new power underground.

July 21, 1971
Sallie Middleton at meeting to explain gamecock on her premises... only temporary and for her profession. Action by board postponed until further complaints registered provided cock is kept in basement at night.

September 17, 1975
Highway Commission is importuned for stop light at Busbee and Hendersonville roads.

March 16, 1982
Sign erected at Vanderbilt Rd. entrance, stating not an entrance to Biltmore House. Police chief Ledford had turned around 109 vehicles in a month.

September 1982
Noted a letter from Department of Transportation concerning installation of stop light on Busbee.

September 19, 1989
Musselwhite resigns as town manager to pursue a lifelong dream of flying.

October 17, 1989
Town Board adopts a tree ordinance resolution at request of Buncombe County Board of Commissioners.

January 1990
Nelson Smith becomes town manager.
William Waldo Dodge Jr.

An Architect, An Artist and Silversmith
Of the Arts and Crafts Movement
 Educated as an architect at MIT, William Dodge took up silver craft while he was recuperating from World War I wounds, at Oteen Veterans Hospital. His hand wrought silver designs and business became world renowned after he moved his silver shop to 365 Vanderbilt Road in 1928, from Charlotte Street.

Blending his architectural style with his craftsmanship he often accented his Biltmore Forest Home Designs with his own carvings, paintings, copper lanterns and leaded windows.

Some of his carvings are preserved as a part of the entrance to the Bourne Lane Condominiums. With his three talented assistants, Johnny Green, Ray Yeomans and Dick Shuford, Dodge’s work became known as Dodge Silver.

Dodge also led the Civitan Club program to eliminate the “menace of smoke” in Asheville Air Quality and was a founding member of Six Associates. He died on February 21, 1971.
Bob Moore remembers…

When I moved to 34 Hilltop Road with my family in 1938, there were only six houses on Westwood Road-Hilltop Circle. They were the Fuller-Browns, The Jordan Browns, the John Izzards and the Norburns. On Hilltop there were John Sprunt Hill house, the Julian A. Moore House and ours.

Mr. Frank Coxe coached a Biltmore Forest Youth football team that played other teams of equal size from other residential areas such as Beaver Lake and Grove Park. The Biltmore Forest Team wore white jerseys with three or four vertical stripes. The games were played in the park on Vanderbilt Road. (It was also reported that Hall of Famer, Charlie “Choo Choo” Justice played in these games.)
The Biltmore Forest Stage Company had a school token during the late 1930’s. The buses were dark green with white trim.

Below the Norburn house was one of the most beautiful pine forests laced with riding trails for the Biltmore Forest stables, later to become the Biltmore Forest Bridle and Saddle Club. Mr. Alexander was the stable master and one winter when we had heavy snow, he harnessed two horses to an old sleigh and took people on a midnight ride…. What happy times they were.
Jane Raoul Bingham remembers…

It was the spring of 1924 before our own house was built and ready for occupancy. My sister and I were quite thrilled at this move to the country but from the bits of conversation we heard many people were fraught with doubt about this development south of Biltmore Village. We were truly disappointed when we learned that the family had no idea of having a cow, or chickens, or pigs. Kathleen and I missed friends in the Manor grounds, augmented by more children of the summer Manor guests.

We heard a lot of conversations around the dinner table. (In those days families sat down to large meals together. The children said little, but they heard a lot.) Almost every day father announced at lunch the sale of another lot. Apparently he knew this would not go on forever, and so in 1927 he took Mother to Europe for six weeks. This was a great event. All their friends assembled at Biltmore Station to wave them goodbye.

All of the concerns of the Town seemed to also be personal concerns of my father. Judge Adams was a busy lawyer, Mr. Colburn had the bank, and Mr. Knight was often in Florida. Father had never been cured of tuberculosis and only worked in his little office till lunch. His great gift was his relationships with people. He was loved and respected by his family, his peers, and by all who worked with him.

There was Roy Creasman, Chief of Police. He lived above the Police Station with his beautiful wife. They raised four children. Roy was a friend to all the little boys in the neighborhood. They took their bikes to the station for air in the tires.
Mr. Frady lived in a house on Hendersonville Road. He was a genius of an electrician, and when the electricity went off, as it frequently did after a storm, Mr. Frady would be out there in the cold, climbing the poles in his climbing irons. His son Glenn later became the Chief of Police. The Simpson brothers figures in other ways. Bill had a sawmill and Charlie was a cheerful bus driver.

In the very early days there were no streetlights. I remember father grumbling and saying “I sell lots to people who say they want to move out in the country. No sooner are they here, that they start complaining because their maids are afraid to walk to the bus stop at night.” So we did get beautiful streetlights. We soon acquired a pony. The first one was named Circus, and then we added Crybaby, Sonnyboy and Biltmore Girl. The Morgans at 379 Vanderbilt Road attached a stall to their garage for their “Daisy”, and Mrs. Jones at 19 Browntown converted a fancy tool house into a stall for “Beauty”. The real horse activity centered around the Biltmore Forest Stable opposite the Police Station. The riding ring was on the southwest corner of Vanderbilt and Busbee.

My father perfectly realized that this attitude of leniency towards the horse activity was probably contrary to the ideals of the Biltmore Forest development, but his wife and daughters kept him in
line. When a group of girls assisted by a loan of horses from Mrs. Wheeler wanted to play polo in the park on Sunday afternoons, father said I would have to get permission from Mayor Bryant. A shy fourteen-year-old girl walked over to the stone house on Eastwood. Ushered in by the butler, face to face with the Mayor, I was given permission.

Mary Armstead Heywood remembers...

Living near the upper Estate gate, we became great friends with the gatekeeper, Mr. Bell, a most kind-hearted man who seemed to like children. As we grew older, a pass allowed us to bike the roads to the Estate. Several times we rode to the lower Estate gate in Biltmore. After a big ice cream sundae at the dairy, we tackled the hill beyond the dairy. We walked this one to the top of the hill then it was down the hill to Biltmore. Daddy was always there to take our bikes in his car.

We had rules for behavior, for the most part we didn’t consider breaking these. Biltmore Forest changed little until World War II descended on our generation. We fell out of the magnolias abruptly, but the values we were taught gave our generation a special strength, not only in Biltmore Forest, but also throughout the country.

Virginia King remembers...

I was born in Biltmore Hospital in June 1925 and lived year round with my family on Cedarcliff Road. Back in those days Biltmore Forest was really a forest. While at the time Cedarcliff had some sort of rough pavement, I remember that Forest Road was still dusty and rutted with red clay. By mid-September the open and sunny verges sported clumps of beautiful field daisies, which we gathered in armfuls for Mother to use in her flower arrangements.

Another fond memory I have is of rock hopping in Ram Branch. Even today quite a few old time residents in the Forest are not aware of the small stream that flows under the bridge at the bottom of Cedarcliff at the entrance to Forest Road. In the winter if weather conditions were right, long icicles would form and hang from the arch on the bridge. What fun it was to climb down the bank to beak them off and take a lick or two.
The verges also served another purpose, which was to provide a meeting place for us youngsters, and our “nurses.” At that time and in that type of residential community it was proper to call any black or white person responsible for the care of children a nurse. After naptime the neighborhood nurses would come strolling with their charges from various homes on Vanderbilt and Cedarcliff. They would select a certain spot to sit on the roadside, either on the ground or low bank while we children played nearby.

It was along about that time that the Lindbergh baby had been kidnapped. Our guardians were very aware of that, so when any car slowed down upon approaching our roadside group, the nurses were quick to determine whether the occupants were friends, friendly visitors, or possible harmful strangers.

One last note, on the western edge of our rectangular lawn at 11 Cedarcliff Road there is topographical evidence of what could have been the connection of a train trestle, which spanned the Ram Branch to the Estate.

Alison M. Moon remembers

Mickey changed things for me. He gave me the freedom to roam and roam I did. Why? He was the most beautifully hideous or hideously beautiful English bulldog in the county, and everyone was afraid of him. We went everywhere Bobby, Mickey and I. We turned over rocks in streams to find crawfish and salamanders; we picked fox grapes for Minnie to make wonderful jelly; we knew where to find watercress growing. In the winter we rode our sled down Greenwood and Stuyvesant and in the summer we rode Mickey in the large red wagon with us down the hills.

We had favorite places and didn’t tell others where they were or why they were important to us. One little spot was a very small dip beside the path under the wires on our shortcut to the Club. It was special for the tiny wild flags that grew there in the spring. The cobalt flowers are long gone by now lost to the new neighbors houses. The woods are tame now with only a few of the wild creatures of our play in the thirties and forties.

Dolly Loughran Adams remembers

Our parents built our house at 395 Vanderbilt Road in 1928. Dr. Ambler built the house on the right of us; the McDonald family built the house on our left, and Mr. Robert Harris the next house, all within a few years of each other. Mr. William Coxe built the only house on Park Road. We played in a garden behind the Speas’ house and had our Tarzan camp in the woods. Houses were never locked back then no need. Our world in the 1930’s consisted of the park on Vanderbilt and the Police Station and the area in between. We rode our bicycles in the middle of the street, as there were few cars. Biltmore Forest was the country.
The annual Fourth of July parade started in 1960 with 17 people participating from the bus stop on Hilltop Road to Eastwood. The families that organized this parade were the Robert Griffins, The Lees, The Moores and the Plesses.

Carrington Herbert remembers

There were Christmas parties where Mr. Cecil was Santa, and there were the Fourth of July fireworks, where Dr. Ambler was a pyrotechnic hazard. There were horse and dog shows at the riding academy run by Mr. Wheeler. There was a Boy Scout troop. These people (residents of Biltmore Forest) were very conscientious citizens who ran a food kitchen. Several War Bond drives, Bundles for Britain and other civic and charity causes. With their privileges also came responsibility.
In 1996, Louise Sawyer Brackett’s son, John A. Brackett, Jr. collected three generation’s thought in a beautiful book about a special neighborhood. Excerpts of these memories follow.

Laura Cummings McCue

Mimi (Cheesborough) lived at 4 Busbee when I lived at 4 White Oak Road. We had videophones long before anyone else. When I stood in my kitchen and she stood in hers, we could clearly see each other while we talked on the phone. Mimi’s mom had a beautiful rock garden in her front yard. There was a drainage tunnel that ran through it that we were frightened of. When our dog Beau would come through it his eyes would glow yellow, and we imagined a terrible monster coming after us.

Bob Izard, Bob Carr, Jack Izard and family dog “Peter Bounce”, 1934

Elizabeth “Betsy” Bynum Justice Willingham

It was a treat to walk to Avery’s Pharmacy next to Mr. Ingle’s tiny grocery store on Hendersonville Road for a nickel double dip ice cream cone. Oh those were Halcyon days. We had the same friendly folk for years delivering Biltmore Dairy products, Tranthams groceries, and Swannanoa Dry Cleaning, right into our homes, milk in the fridge, groceries to the kitchen table, and cleaning into the left hand front hall closet.
Betty Shuford Briggs

Canie’s front yard was best suited for football and was at one point the scene of our most ambitious theatrical production. It was a war epic, untitled, and involved a cast of thousands. I remember we made our initial call after they moved in (the Wilsons). Mr. Wilson greeted us with “come in and exchange bubble-gum. I remember riding to the school bus stop hanging onto the milk truck.

Canie Smith

I remember the great acorn crab-apple fight with the older group – Kent Williamson, Jimmy Wolcott, etc. Our fort was the Shuford side porch. We had acorns for ammunition, not realizing they had crab apples, we lost.

Fuller Shuford

The Pruden Smith porch was more for sitting and talking particularly after the ‘opposite sex’ lost its peskiness and became the object of much discussion.

Dorothy June Radeker Rickey Spiller

Some of us (not the Elias girls) but Edith Redwood and some more kids were Holy terror on Halloween (before trick or treat.) One time we went over to Jean West’s new home and did something to her yard light. When I got home, I heard about ‘these awful kids’ who messed up Jean West’s yard who could have gotten electrocuted, we were never found out.

Hildreth (Hildy) Wilson Walker

Betty S. and Louise tied me to a chair in Louise’s attic and left me there to die. I think because I was a Yankee from way up in Washington DC. On Saturday mornings, I would go to Louise’s house and we would make fudge! It never solidified, which didn’t concern us at all; we’d get big spoons and dig in.

Ida Schilthuis Merfa

I remember when Fuller was stricken with polio. I remember he came back to school in his wheel chair. I shall always admire his courage and his family’s faithfulness with his treatment and exercises, Wow!

Alan Haigh Shaw

During the years we lived there a very good system of communication existed between the parents and the households, it was impossible to get away with anything.
Louise Sawyer Brackett

We were members of the Junior Commandos during the War and one of our duties was to collect scrap metal and take it to the Police Station (two blocks away) to be picked up and recycled.

James Arthur Griffin

My Favorite playmate was Jimmy Henritzy. My most vivid memory of him was his telling me that there was no Santa Claus.

Betty Colburn Williamson

(Putting on skates) and Cockie Smith Kinney assisting.

William F.P. Coxe III

Jay Cheesborough and I once shot ten squirrels with .22 rifles in the woods behind the house. For some reason the Police did not come back, very few squirrels did either for a long time.

Sally Kaltreider

Courtney Chambers and I used to love to run into Grand Sallie’s dining room which was painted with a mural of fruit trees and get Grand Sallie to pick a piece of fruit for us. She would show us her empty hands, the reach up the wall and pluck off a pear, or peach or apple, a little candy that taste like the kind of tree from which she picked it. She was so incredibly magical.

John Brackett Jr.

Probably the best iced tea ever created was made in that little kitchen on 15 White Oak Road. It was pure Southern iced tea with lemon and fresh mint that grew outside in a patch by the kitchen door. In such a complicated and changing world we were awfully lucky to have White Oak Road in our blood, awfully lucky indeed.
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<th>Mayors</th>
<th>Tenure</th>
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<tr>
<td>Junius G. Adams</td>
<td>2.20.23 to 4.21.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frederic Boyer</td>
<td>4.1.29 to 5.10.29</td>
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<td>Walter P. Taylor</td>
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<td>Charles S. Bryant</td>
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<td>Shelton Leavitt</td>
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<td>Edwin S. Hartshorn</td>
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<td>John F. Shuford</td>
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<td>George F. Goosmann, III</td>
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<td>C. W. Hensley</td>
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<td>Roy Creasman</td>
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<td>Edward M. Jones</td>
<td>02-20-23 to 10-25-23</td>
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<td>R. J. Jones</td>
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<td>Thomas W. Raoul</td>
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<td>Frank H. Keener</td>
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<td>Jonathan B. Kanipe</td>
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