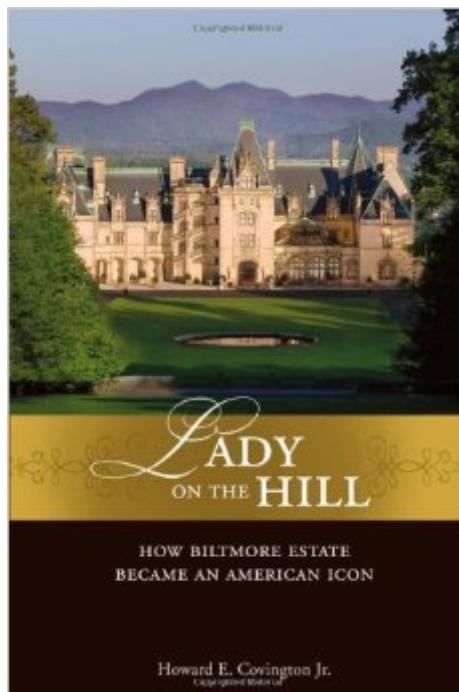


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# Lady On The Hill: How Biltmore Estate Became An American Icon



## Synopsis

"What William Cecil has accomplished at Biltmore Estate is one of the great preservation success stories of all time. He has set a high standard for what all historic house museums strive for: magnificently preserved buildings and grounds, engaging interpretation, and--perhaps most challenging of all--economic self-sufficiency. It is no surprise that Biltmore Estate is widely recognized as one of America's finest places to visit." --Richard Moe, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation "Biltmore is a glorious national historic landmark that, through creative vision and entrepreneurial management, preserves and provides insight into a way of life in the early 1900s. Bill is the imaginative and multifaceted leader who has built this great monument to enrich his community. George and I admire his dedication and success." --George and Abby Rockefeller O'Neill "Bill Cecil and his team at Biltmore Estate have sure proved that they know how to build a successful business. They did it the old-fashioned way: embrace a bold idea that others said could not be done and--through commitment, determination, and hard work--bring it to life. Their achievement against the odds is inspiring, and their vision and perseverance are valuable lessons to us all." --Don Logan, Chairman, Media & Communications Group, Time Warner "If George Vanderbilt did nothing more than engage the two most prominent and storied designers of their time, architect Richard Morris Hunt and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, to carry out his vision of a European estate in the southern Appalachians, he would have created an American icon. The beauty of the method by which the estate was executed and, even today, the meticulous attention to detail, in the presentation and care of the estate by William Cecil, have brought history to life." --Gary J. Walters, Chief Usher, The White House

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The real surprise about Biltmore is not that it was built, the rich-rich back in those days had lots of money to spend on things like this. Instead it is that Biltmore has been brought back from being a somewhat shabby Grand Dame back into splendor. Over the decades it was restored and brought up to date, but even more important it, and its surrounding were turned into a profitable enterprise that shows that all these old houses do not have to be turned over to the government to survive. The estate incorporates some 12,000 acres near Asheville NC. In the late 1950's the smart money advisors recommended that it be sold off for a suburban housing development. Instead George Vanderbilt's grandson William Cecil began the project that lasted for forty years to bring the estate back. It now produces wine and visitors to the area. He has become as or perhaps even more popular destination than Monticello, Mount Vernon or Colonial Williamsburg. This is the story of how Mr. Cecil made the whole thing happen.

I've read and studied regarding the lives of the Vanderbilt families and the Biltmore in particular. This is truly one of the BEST books I've read. We've all learned about the house and George Vanderbilt's ideas and thinking on building Biltmore. This book describes the life of his wife Edith and their daughter Cornelia after his death and what they had to go through to keep Biltmore after his death. The research is absolutely amazing. For anyone who is interested or obsessed with The Biltmore, this is a MUST read.

This book is intriguing for those who enjoy nonfiction. It describes how Biltmore formed a business to keep from being sold and subdivided, what happened to the family members since George's death, and the relationship between Biltmore and the city of Asheville, among other things. It is extremely interesting if you would like to know more about the history of the estate and its families.

I read the book this week after visiting Biltmore for the first time. The book focuses on Biltmore from a business perspective, telling how the estate was preserved through the years. It touches just briefly on the early years under the builder George Vanderbilt and focuses more on the challenges that came later on preserving the estate and even making it profitable. I had assumed that this was just a big home for a rich guy, but George Vanderbilt's goal was to make it a working farm that supported itself, just a really huge one. That did not work out for him but eventually it did for his

grandson, William Cecil. The main theme of the book is that private ownership of historical properties that are run to make a profit can make for better preservation than non-profit organizations. The book is written to boost Biltmore and has an afterward by William Cecil, so expect the book to take the Biltmore line. Taking that into account, the book is very readable and I found myself squeezing in time to finish reading it. It also got me thinking how this can apply to other historic properties.

There is not a whole lot of literature around when it comes to the Vanderbilts and the Biltmore. SO this book is a refreshing and very easy to read story about the Vanderbilts and their successes leading up to the building of Biltmore taking 6 years. Everyone that can find the time and is planning to visit the Biltmore should read this before going. The Biltmore is so large and there are so many things to see that a visit requires some advanced planning to get the whole picture about this family and this American marvel. After our first visit to the Biltmore during this year's Christmas lights, we bought an annual access pass (upgrade while your day pass is still valid and you save a bundle), this and a picture history book. Now we are planning to go back and be prepared to really understand this marvellous site.

We grew up visiting The Biltmore and this book is very accurate. The details, pictures and biography of this home is outstanding! Makes me want to go back again to see things we have missed!

I LOVED this book. From the mouth of G. W. Vanderbilt's grandson, it is a first hand account of how he inherited his birthplace as a money pit, saved it from being demolished to make room for an airport, wouldn't take no for an answer, refused to be defeated by countless people who told him to give up and transformed the nation's largest private residence into a travel destination that welcomes millions of visitors through its doors every year.

Having been to see Biltmore in the summer of its centennial, I was thrilled to find a book that told the story of how such a wonderful home was saved. The story is a unique and fascinating one that tells of one man's struggle, against advice and odds, to save his grandfather's beautiful home and in the end fulfill his grandfather's dream of a self-supporting estate.

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