



Steve Dixon/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Six-year-old Jacquelyn White of Fort Mill, S.C., runs ahead of the rest of her family Friday as they leave the Biltmore House. The historic mansion is celebrating the 75th anniversary of its opening to the public.

Biltmore Estate

For 75 years, it's been WNC's main attraction

By Paul Clark
STAFF WRITER

Not long ago, Burt Butler was flipping through the channels in Boise, Idaho, when he saw the Biltmore Estate on TV.

There it was, with Peter Sellers and Shirley MacLaine in "Being There."

"Huh," Butler said. "There's Asheville."

Drive more than a couple of hours out of the area and tell people you're from Asheville, and they'll mention the Biltmore Estate. For 75 years, the 250-room house and 8,000-acre estate have been the city's biggest landmark. And in many cases, its name recognition is bigger than the city that hosts it.

Biltmore House first opened to owner George W. Vanderbilt's family and friends in 1895, but it wasn't until 75 years ago on Tuesday that the rest of the world got a chance to see inside the country's largest home.

How it got started

On March 15, 1930, John and Cornelia Cecil, Vanderbilt's son-in-law and daughter opened the Biltmore House to the public at the request of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, which was hoping the move would drive tourists to the Depression-affected city.

"Mr. Cecil and I hope that through opening Biltmore House to the public, Asheville and Western North Carolina will derive all the benefit they deserve," Cornelia Cecil said. On that day,



SPECIAL TO THE CITIZEN-TIMES/BILTMORE ESTATE
Cornelia Vanderbilt Cecil and husband, the Hon. John Cecil, open the Biltmore House to the public on March 15, 1930.

Web Extra CITIZEN-TIMES.com

For a photo gallery of Biltmore Estate down through the years, visit CITIZEN-TIMES.com.

Coming up

Coming Tuesday: An interview with William A.V. Cecil Sr. and Bill Cecil Jr.

Coming Wednesday: Coverage of the anniversary

Want to celebrate?

What: Biltmore Estate celebrates 75 years of being open to the public with comments by William A.V. Cecil Jr., Biltmore CEO and president, Asheville Mayor Charles Worley and others. Several 1930-era automobiles will also be on display.

When: 9:30 a.m. Tuesday
Where: Front door of the house
Tickets: North and South Carolina residents half-price through Tuesday
ON THE NET: www.biltmore.com

297 people walked through the house.

Since then, the names Asheville and Biltmore have been intertwined,

such that the city and its biggest attraction are virtually one to most visitors to the area.

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Visitors speak

"I want to know more about the Vanderbilts. I just wonder how they came to Asheville."
— Randy Murphy of Richardson, Texas, visiting Biltmore Estate with his wife Rebecca



Jamaican-born Christopher Service visited Biltmore Estate

because he heard that Asheville was "an artsy, kind of liberal place." He's a student at Wake Forest University.



Lisa and Matt Kirby

first heard about the estate two years ago after her parents visited Asheville. The Dallas, Texas, couple moved to Raleigh a few

months ago. On Tuesday, they were exploring the estate on their vacation.

