

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

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| 1. STATE North Carolina | 2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. <u>XIX - Conservation of Natural Resources</u> |
| 3. NAME(S) OF SITE Biltmore Estate and Biltmore Forestry School Site | 4. APPROX. ACREAGE 12,000 |
| 5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) the Estate office, Biltmore Plaz Quarters of former Biltmore Forestry School are in / Ashville, N. C. The estate l in Buncombe County. | |
| 6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) The Biltmore Company (Mr. George H. V. Cecil, Pres.), Asheville, N. C. <i>PO Box 5077</i> | |
| 7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant) | |

Biltmore Estate is the "Home of Conservation" in the United States. In 1888 George W. Vanderbilt began the purchase of 125,000 acres of farms, woods and forested mountains where he proposed to build the finest country home in America. Frederick Law Olmsted, the great naturalistic landscape architect, assumed direction of the development of the estate. His plans included a large arboretum, a game preserve and a managed forest. The forest was expected to be not merely ornamental, but a demonstration of a paying business.

In 1890 Gifford Pinchot returned from studying forestry in European universities determined to convince the American people, especially the lumbering industry, that their forests were not inexhaustible and that their treatment of them was all wrong. Pincho European teachers of forestry had all emphasized the fact that no real progress could be made in America until someone had demonstrated that a scientifically managed forest would be commercially profitable.

Biltmore Estate provided Pinchot the opportunity to begin his successful experiment in scientific forest management—a work and career from which much in the broader field of conservation has flowed. George W. Vanderbilt in December, 1891 appointed Pinchot his manager to plan and develop the rebuilding of the Estate woodlands lying east of the French Broad River. These were lands whose fertility had been depleted by primitive farming. They had then been allowed to grow up in scrub oak and sassafras—truly a discouraging prospect for profitable forestry.

Not only was Pinchot's work at Biltmore trail-blazing in its purpose, but also in many of his methods. On hundreds of points his European-learned forest science had to be adapted to American species of trees, types of soil and climate. After a day with such problems, Pinchot restudied his books at night and hoped for the best when he had to
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8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works) David C. Coyle, Conservation--An American Story of Conflict and Accomplishment (Brunswick, N. J., 1957); Loomis Havemeyer, et al., Conservation of Our National Resources (New York, 1933); Horace M. Albright, Great American Conservationists (Univ. of California Lectures, 1961); A. E. Parkins and J. R. Whitaker, eds., Our Natural Resources and Their Conservation (New York, 1939); Arthur A. Carhart, The National Forests (New York, 1950); Hans Ruth, Nature and the American - Three Centuries of Changing Attitudes (Univ. of California Press, Berkeley, 1957); Ovid Butler, American Conservation in Picture and Story (Wash. 1941); Biltmore House & Gardens (The Biltmore Company, 1959).

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| 10. PHOTOGRAPHS* ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. CONDITION Excellent | 12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Managed Estate | 13. DATE OF VISIT Dec. 4, 1962 |
| 14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) <i>Horace J. Steely, Jr.</i> H. J. Steely, Jr. | 15. TITLE Historian | 16. DATE Mar. 28, 1963 | |

* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

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SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

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This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name and the word (cont'd), as, 6. Description and Importance (cont'd)....

| State | Name(s) of site |
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| North Carolina | Biltmore Estate and Biltmore Forestry School Site |

invent new answers. To the surprise of the many skeptics, the first year's work showed a small profit, and the forest was much improved. Though many years of conservation effort lay ahead, with this first comprehensive and systematic forest plan, Pinchot had proved his basic point.

Pinchot very soon widened the theatre of his efforts to lay effective foundations for conservation. In 1896 he was made a member of the National Forest Commission that worked out the plan for the U. S. forest reserves. Two years later he was named head of the Forestry Division, later the Bureau of Forestry, in the Department of Agriculture. He continued his interest in Biltmore, and new ideas and innovations continued to be tested in the Biltmore forests.

Dr. C. A. Schenck of the University of Darmstadt was brought over from Germany to succeed Pinchot as Chief Forester at Biltmore. The need for men with technical forest training was becoming increasingly apparent. In the last decade of the 19th century the country had less than half a dozen trained foresters, and they had all been educated in Europe. A new profession was in the making, and there were no sources of training in America. Recognizing this need, Dr. Schenck founded the Biltmore Forest School in 1898. Following the German precedents of technical forest education, young men simply gathered around a capable practitioner or "master" who supplemented experience in the forest with lectures. Biltmore later became a traveling school, the classes visiting different parts of the United States and Europe. With World War I the school was discontinued. By then it had trained many of the foresters who later dominated the field in this country for some years. The Biltmore Forest School was discontinued in 1912.

The first State forestry school, the New York State College of Forestry, was established at Cornell University later in the same year in which the Biltmore Forest School was founded. Both, however, were run by German foresters, and Pinchot felt the need for something purely native. He therefore persuaded his family to finance a school of forestry at Yale in 1900. These early schools served as the foundation for present-day forestry schools in the United States and many of their graduates helped to found the forestry schools that soon grew up in other American universities.

Other notable forestry experiments were conducted at Biltmore under Pinchot, Schenck and later successors. In 1894 Vanderbilt greatly enlarged the scope of operations by purchasing some 80,000 adjacent acres known as the Pisgah Forest. Pinchot initiated planned management in these woodlands. In the course of his work in this section of the Estate, Dr. Schenck developed the basis for the "land use" concept of forestry and conservation. Several of the early experimental plots are still being studied. Record of plant growth, results of thinning and other studies are being continued by the U. S. Forest Service. In 1915, following passage of the Weeks Act of 1911, the Federal Government acquired nearly 87,000 acres around Mt. Pisgah from the Vanderbilt Estate. President Wilson the next year proclaimed this the Pisgah National Forest--the first national forest to be created in the East.

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In addition to its importance as the first scientifically managed forest in this country, and for its continuing importance in forestry training and research, Biltmore estate illustrates and commemorates the basic contributions of Gifford Pinchot to the field of conservation. With his successful start at Biltmore, Pinchot steadily enlarged his concept of conservation and correspondingly his national influence. He saw the inter-relationship of the forests with other resources and extended his campaign of education to include the conservation of all natural resources which are limited in amount. The opportunity to break through popular indifference and launch a nation-wide program of conservation of all such resources came with the election of Theodore Roosevelt to the Presidency. Pinchot took this idea of a national policy integrating the prudent use of all resources to Roosevelt who immediately adopted it. President Roosevelt has called Gifford Pinchot the man to whom the nation owes the most for the preservation of the natural resources of our country.

Since 1930 the Biltmore House and Gardens have been open to the public. The house is designed in the manner of the French Renaissance chateau of Blois and Chambord. The gardens are extensive and one of the horticultural show places of America.

Important from the standpoint of conservation is the fact that there are still several hundred acres of white pine which were planted by Pinchot and Schenck. Today the Biltmore Forests are being harvested on a sustained yield basis consistent with the best ideas of modern forestry.

The building in which the Biltmore Forest School was conducted is still actively used by the Estate. This large story-and-a-half white stone building with brick and wood trim is substantially unchanged. It is located on the place of what was formerly Biltmore Village, but is now a part of Asheville. Today the city uses it and rents space to the Estate for use as its office. The upstairs area where the school was located is now occupied by a branch of the Asheville Fire Department.

Biltmore Estate was included about 145,000 acres; the present estate includes 12,000 acres.