

arched ceiling standing 70 feet above the 72 x 42 foot area is a tapestry display of scenes from the "Odyssey" — the only known 16th century Flemish tapestries woven from the Venus and Vulcan designs. The backs of the throne chairs surrounding the specially-designed table and the sculpture of "The Return from the Chase" over the triple fireplace are works of artist Karl Bitter.

Another rarity is the twelve Meissen Apostles. These porcelain figures, designed by Johann Joachim Kandler, are the only complete set still in existence marked with the Austrian crest. (The figures were made for Empress Maria Theresa of Austria between 1735 and 1741.)

A walnut-paneled library on the upstairs level contains more than 20,000 volumes, dating back to 1914. Books of various topics and written in several languages reveal Vanderbilt's broad interest. The room also houses two goldfish barrels from the Ming Dynasty.

The house covers four square acres of land. The downstairs includes the main kitchen, a pastry kitchen, laundry room and spacious servant's living and dining areas. Also downstairs are recreational facilities which include a gymnasium equipped with parallel bars and exercise equipment; and an indoor swimming pool which, for its day, was unusually luxurious.

A long hallway with 17 dressing rooms leads visitors to a bowling alley. The balls were made of wood and designed to vary in

weight. The maple and pine alleys were installed by Brunswick-Balk-Collender Company and are probably the oldest in existence.

There are 32 bedrooms in the Biltmore House, not including servant bedrooms. Though most of the rooms were designed for guests, the family bedrooms reveal the personality of its occupant. For instance, Vanderbilt's bedroom was designed with walnut wood in the style of Louis XIV. The furniture is from 18th and 19th century Spanish, Italian and Portuguese designers. Engravings on the walls, door and hinges reflect Vanderbilt's passion for fine art. From the window, he had a clear and magnificent view of all the land that he owned — as far as the eye could see.

The presence of bathrooms for every bedroom was a rarity in houses of Vanderbilt's day. Hot water, heated in a radiator, was pumped through pipes to each shower, which shows the advanced planning of Vanderbilt's mansion. Electricity was the first heating resource, followed by coal. In 1974, during the first energy crisis, the Biltmore House converted to oil. However, the house used 60 gallons of oil per hour and it cost \$100,000 a year to heat the house. Plans are now underway to use natural resources as a mode of heating the house.

Anyone touring the house gets the idea that Vanderbilt must have been a family man because of the many portraits of each of his family members throughout the

house. In addition, he paid to have pictures painted of Hunt and Olmsted in appreciation of their work.

Acorns, which are the most important symbol in the Vanderbilt Coat of Arms, can be spotted throughout the House to signify the importance of the preservation of the family.

The gardens immediately adjoining the house are quite remarkable. The square flower beds within the Walled Garden are replanted three times; first, with tulips, then summer bedding plants, and finally with fall chrysanthemums. The flowers are known for their beauty in the spring and early summer.

The lower half of this area houses the Rose Garden with 3,000 of the finest variety of roses. These flowers are used for daily decoration of the house. In the spring, the azalea garden blooms to ethereal beauty. Greenhouses are also used to house plants from all over the world.

After a tour through the garden's of the Biltmore Estate, Deerpark Restaurant invites you to try the Continental cuisine along with the pastoral setting of the open-air restaurant and surrounding court.

Biltmore Dairy Farms, Inc., run by George Cecil, has become a leading dairy business establishment in the South. His brother, William, manages the Estate. There is also an ever increasing interest by the Biltmore Company to grow and produce grapes to develop and expand several acres into a winery. Biltmore's winery was bonded in 1977 but efforts are continuing for expansion.

If you are ever near Asheville, take time to explore the magnificence of Biltmore House and Gardens. It is truly the masterpiece of its time... a far away place that's not far away.

Tammy Davis is a staff writer for The Daily Tar Heel.

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