



# Time Stops For Visitors At Biltmore House

Ed. Note: "Autumn in the mountains of Western North Carolina this year will be just as colorful and as long as ever," according to chief ranger Howard Parr of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Local visitors to the mountains may want to tour the 250-room Biltmore Estate and look at the numerous clocks there which tell more than time. Meandering through George Vanderbilt's 250-room Victorian home, it feels as though time stopped in 1895. Time, however, at Biltmore Estate progresses

gracefully, the estate, and its courtyard area to a Dutch timepieces, taking the century in stride. When Vanderbilt purchased Renairs and Chippendales, Sheratons and Sargents for the estate may be, one of his French renaissance country home in Asheville, he also bought a variety of fine timepieces—all shapes and sizes, from several nationalities of clockmakers and in a wide range of styles. The clocks at Biltmore Estate range from the massive Howard toward the clocks at the Biltmore Estate Winery and in the stable

pendulum continues its endless swing. Werner Katzenberger, woodcarver and furniture repair supervisor at Biltmore Estate, and Ted DeFosse, who has cared for the Biltmore Estate clocks for decades, found the Howard Company still had records of Vanderbilt's purchase. So ordering new parts for the winery clock wasn't much of a problem. What was something of a challenge, however, was constructing the mysteriously missing fourth side of the clock—clock faces existed on the southern, eastern and western sides of the tower, but there was no clock face on the north side. Suspended by ropes and working high above the original dairy barn structures, Katzenberger, DeFosse, worker Steve Ledford and Biltmore Estate's Alvord Nelson installed gears, made new shafts to drive the clock faces and replaced the cable and clock hands. Ray Stafford, a machinist from Black Mountain, reconstructed broken and missing gear parts and Asheville Steel Company copies the clock tower face on the north side of the winery's centerpiece. Now, once a week, a Biltmore Estate employee makes the climb up into the clock tower to wind the massive timepiece, the time displayed to all corners of the estate.

Inside Biltmore House are fine examples of domestic clocks—all of them from the 18th and 19th centuries. The largest and perhaps the most distinctive of the clocks inside the house is the J. Numan grandfather—more accurately called a floor clock—in the entry hall. Built about 1750, the mahogany and walnut three-finial domed clock features a number of tunes to chime the hours. The clock also has a painted dial, which not only displays the time but also the signs of the

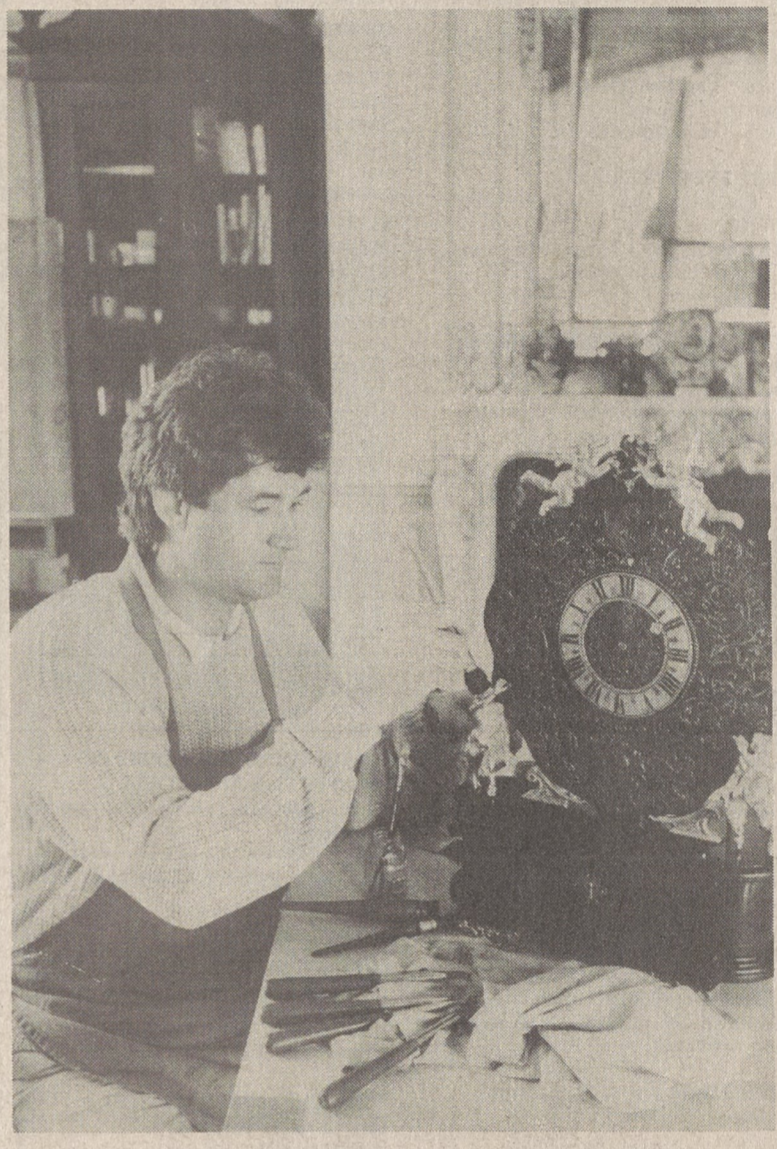
zodiac and phases of the moon, information designed to be helpful to the agriculturally oriented who would have planned plantings by the moon's phases. Other examples of fine clocks include an English Robson balloon clock, built about 1785, cased in waltnut and boxwood inlays; an ebonized basket clock (the "basket" refers to open metalwork on the case top), dated as a creation of London clockmaker Edmond Card in the late 1600s; a gold-plated French ormula clock made

by Louis Jouard in the mid 18th century; a French porcelain asymmetrical mantle clock by the Parisian Michel, dated early 19th century; and an 18th century Dutch bookcase clock, powered by a rope-hung weight and including an unusual alarm system. According to the late Charles Graf of Hendersonville, a member of the Wesern Carolinas chapter of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, Vanderbilt put only Continued On Page 3D



THE RIGHT TIME—Biltmore Estate workers adjust the hands of the massive Howard Company clock atop the Biltmore Estate Winery tower in Asheville. Originally designed at the turn of the century to tell employees across George Vanderbilt's working estate the time of day, the huge clock still runs perfectly - and still tells estate staff the hour.

The system is not unlike alarm bells found in elementary schools. But to have installed the system in 1895, when electricity in a 250-room home was considered quite a rarity, was highly unusual. The Howard Clock Company in Boston, Massachusetts, also provided Vanderbilt with the tower clock now at the winery. A larger version of the stable master clock, the winery clock was part of the original dairy barn structure, designed by architect Richard Morris Hunt, which now houses the winery. When the dairy was remodeled, the clock tower—which had once let estate employees all across the vast fields know the time—became the heart of the European-style winery. The tower was braced structurally underneath and the clock was cleaned, its older mechanisms replaced and a steam whistle (which probably once informed estate employees when it was time to lunch or retire for the day) was removed. The 90-pound



SAVING TIME—Barney Lamar-conservator for Biltmore, Campbell Smith Restorations, Inc., the restoration and conservation company owned by The Biltmore Company - finished restoration of a Baroque 18th Century clock, probably of German origin. The clock is part of George Vanderbilt's collection at Biltmore House in Asheville, North Carolina.

## Casual Elegance Emphasized When Remodeling

When it comes to homes, some people are still living in the dark ages. The layout of tract homes built from the Fifties to the Seventies is fairly standard. Typically there's a kitchen, a dining room, a den or rec room, three or four bedrooms, a bathroom and a powder room. The problem is that now comes between segmenting these smallish homes into so many box-like rooms makes them seem darker and more cramped than necessary. It's why so many people who buy one of these homes today are removing walls and letting

spaces flow. That's what the interior designers at Armstrong did in their update of an older colonial. From a separate kitchen and formal dining room, they created what they call a "suite", an open, sunning, dining, reading, and relaxing. The only thing that formerly separate rooms is as it is useful in remodeling is on casual elegance. The decor is distinctly "country," but far

from rustic. French doors have been installed in the former dining room. Beams crisscross the ceiling, and new arched windows add architectural interest. The modernization involved replacing the old kitchen appliances. The quick-cooking center (nothing more, really, than a microwave oven and a plentiful supply of paper plates, cups and napkins) is ideal for fixing easy meals or nighttime snacks. For preparing more ambitious meals, there's a custom-built cooking island

in the center of the kitchen. It has a full-size range and lots of counter space but also contains a surprising amount of storage space, including plexiglass bins for fruit and vegetables. You can tell at a glance when stock is running low. The choice of floor covering was a terra cotta brick pattern, not for the kitchen only but for the dining and living areas as well. It's important in open-plan decorating to have such "Univiers" to draw together the various parts of a room into a harmonious whole. The same effect can be

achieved with color. In this case, all of the walls are painted the same putty color as the grout lines in the brick-patterned floor. The numerous wood furniture pieces (tables, chairs, hutch, cupboard) in the living and dining areas are replicas of 18th century country classics. The natural light wood harmonizes with the sand color of the kitchen countertops. The upholstered sofa and wing chairs in the living area are covered in flowery chintz fabrics whose background color is white. All these things—the predominantly

white upholstery, light wood furniture, glass-paned French doors, big arched windows, putty-colored walls, sand-colored countertops—make the kitchen suite bright and cheerful, a dramatic improvement from the dark, gloomy atmosphere that prevailed before the two rooms were made one. Finally, there are the accessories and little decorating touches that complete the project: an oriental rug in the living area, hand-carved wooden geese, woven baskets, brass hurricane lamps, ceramic animals, ruffled lace curtains.



UNIFIES DECORATING MOTIF—Two-way fireplace divides living and dining areas from kitchen in this suite created from two smallish rooms.



NEW LOOK—View of suite from living area to dining area. Crisscross beams, French doors and arched windows add architectural interest. Note child-size wing chair.