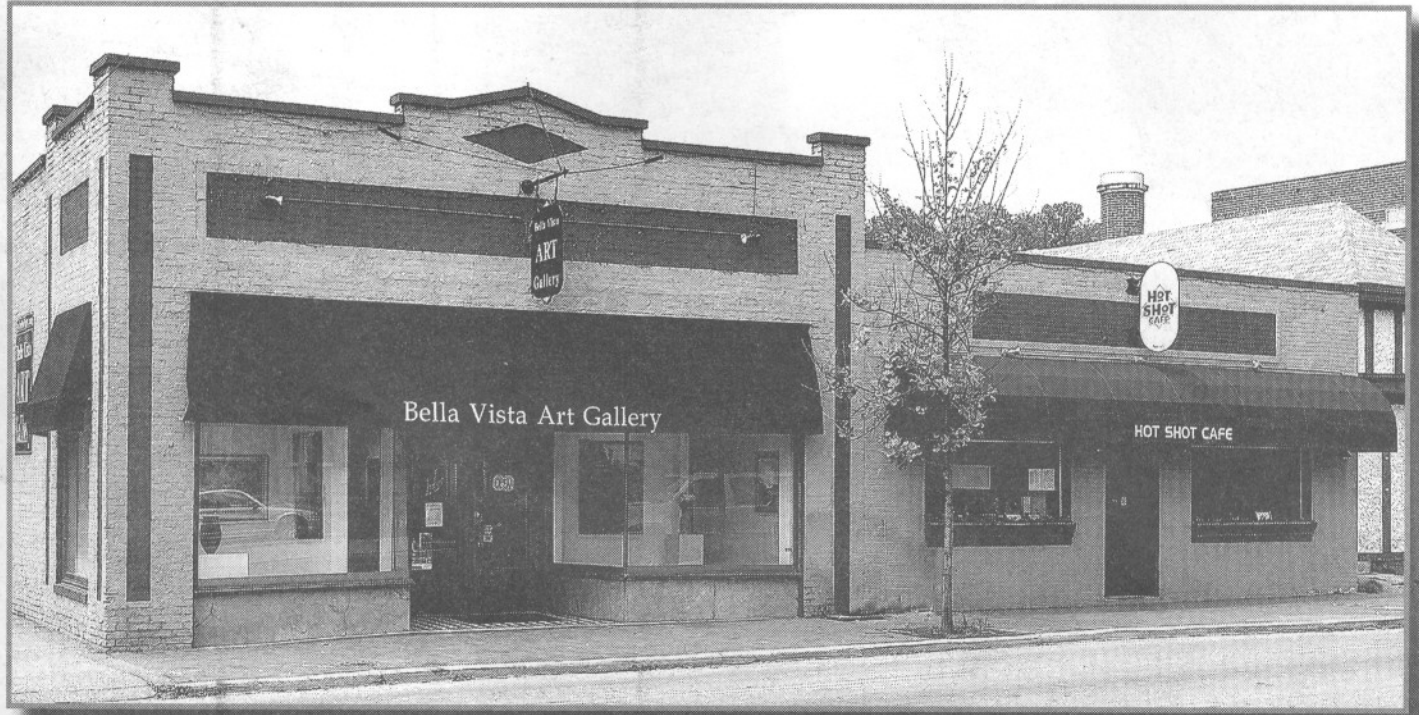


BILTMORE VILLAGE

The re-renaissance of Biltmore Village has begun

BY SARAH MEAD



Two of Biltmore Village's upscale establishments, Bella Vista Art Gallery and the newly revamped Hot Shot Café

The well-dressed woman seated in the booth of Asheville's oldest restaurant had a hint of surprise in her voice as she said to her companion "Who would have thought? Eggs Benedict at the Hot Shot Café!"

The woman never connected her breakfast with the flood of 2004 that made many question the long-term viability of Biltmore Village. High quality and a convenient location are driving Biltmore village to grow, and recover from the flood of 2004.

Other established stores in the village also recognize the attraction of higher quality to locals and tourist-visitors. John Bell says that his store, Biltmore Village Company, has seen the demand for his high-end furniture climb as he has sought to offer higher and better quality to his customers.

Gloria Babcock, the manager of the Hot Shot Café, says that the more the café improves the quality of

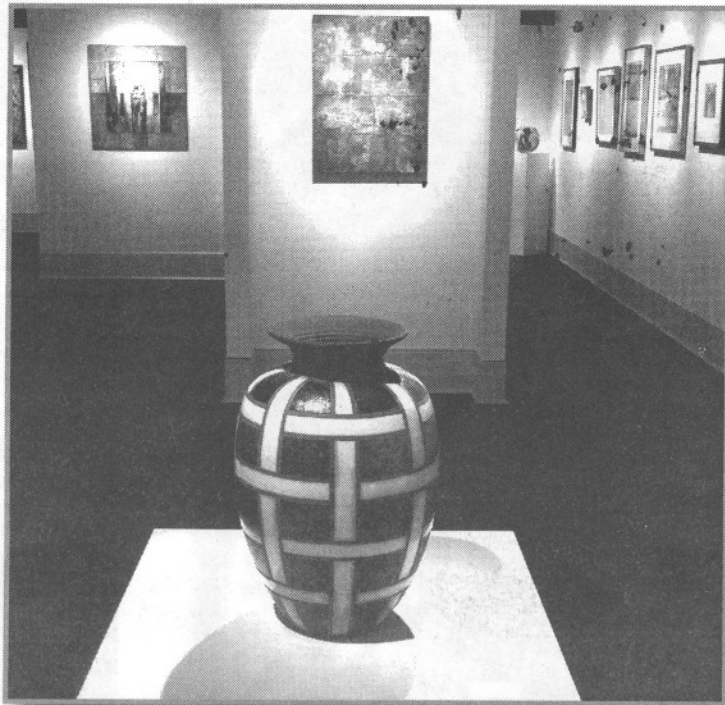
their breakfasts, such as offering fresh squeezed orange juice, and vegetarian eggs Benedict in a Beur Blanc sauce, the better business has been. "You just can't

give it to them" she says seated at the cashier's desk as some music played gently in the background. Alma Allen the 81-year-old waitress zipping around the floor chimes in "Let'em have it!" and gives one of her great smiles before she darts off to greet another customer.

Biltmore Village is in the midst of a renewal. Construction for a four-story boutique hotel in the heart of Biltmore village, as well as a new 70,000-square foot retail and office building on Brook Street have both begun in the last few months. The Biltmore Oteen Bank Building is being refurbished and should open as a Prudential Realty office in the near future. David Ross's company, Falcon Design and Development, is restoring the old Shoeshine store next to the bank. The sprouting of various new high-end specialty shops in Biltmore Village in combination with the construction are foreshadowing a powerful revitalization of Mr. Vanderbilt's fantasy Tudor village begun in the late 1880's.

After the one hundred year flood of 2004 Biltmore Village Association President Stan

Collins recalls how the Biltmore estate  
**'Biltmore' continued on pg 26**



An interior shot of Bella Vista Art Gallery.

go wrong by offering your customers good quality. People want to eat good food here in Asheville, and we want to

# New and old businesses make Biltmore Village a shopping destination

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stepped up to the plate that year to fund the Dickens Festival; the festival was a resounding success and the village began a strong recovery the following year.

Stan pointed out that many original residents returned after the flood and with insurance money rebuilt the village even nicer than before the flood.

John Bell, whose father started the up-scale men's clothing store, Bell's Traditionals, in Biltmore Village during the 60's, observed that after the flood some storeowners who might never have left decided to rebuild elsewhere.

In doing so they freed up some properties along Brook street that might not have been immediately available giving way to the National Specialty retail project that John and some fellow Charlotte investors have planned on that site.

Bella Vista Art Gallery, which opened it's doors in April, next to Rezaz's restaurant, has raised the bar for

contemporary fine art in Asheville, and is an example of the new wave in Biltmore Village.

Other newcomers to the village are Susan Marie Designs (see page 11) which opened its doors in the village four weeks before the flood, and Richard Yaffin who opened Estate Jewelry Ltd. in the Fireside Gallery about 14 months ago. All three merchants pride themselves on high quality, unique product lines and specialized service for their discriminating customers.

Christin Zelenka, the Gallery Director for Bella Vista Art, says she loves her new location in Biltmore Village because the people who go to Chelseas for a relaxing out-door brunch on their veranda, or to the Corner Kitchen for a breakfast, or Rezaz's Mediterranean restaurant for dinner, are exactly the type of people who are interested in putting beautiful art in their homes.

Visitors come every day to the village because they've heard about the fine Appalachian crafts to be found at John Crams New Morning Gallery and unique woman's apparel carried at Bellagio, when they walk across the street they are pleasantly surprised when they see the new Bella Vista Art Gallery with its offering of both local and national artists.

"The people attracted to fine food and high quality crafts, are the same people that want art in their lives" says Christin.

In addition to the wealth of specialty merchants found in the Village there are also several events that are attracting larger crowds of locals and out-of-towners each year.

During the first Saturday and Sunday in August there is the Annual Village Art and Craft Fair, sponsored by New Morning Gallery and Bellagio, which focuses on high quality arts and crafts. It has been running for over 30 years.

The other big event is the Annual Dickens Festival which is a three day celebration with vocalists and musicians in period costumes strolling the village.

Locals as well as out-of-towners are visiting Biltmore Village in search of Quality and specialty products and services.

The variety of Restaurants, Galleries, clothing stores and Fine Jewelry combined with their unique offerings mean that there are practically no other retail areas in Western North Carolina that can compete.

The proximity of Biltmore Village to Asheville, the Biltmore Estate, and Interstate 40 make it convenient and easy to get there.

The tide seems to be rising for the village and a piece of historic Asheville appears to be recuperating strongly from the 2004 flood.