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Beachfront Padian

Palladianism and local architectural traditions meet in the Bahamas.

During the American Revolutionary War, a group of Loyalists from the Carolinas migrated to the Bahamas in the hopes of establishing plantation agriculture and brought along with them their tradition of Georgian architecture. Like the Carolinas and New England, buildings of civic importance in the Bahamas are heavily influenced by Palladianism. The Parliament buildings and Supreme Court in the capital city of Nassau, for instance, are influenced by neo-Palladian

styles. Residential buildings also picked up on the style — homes with Palladian influences are built with modest indigenous materials to create a unique Bahamian vernacular architecture.

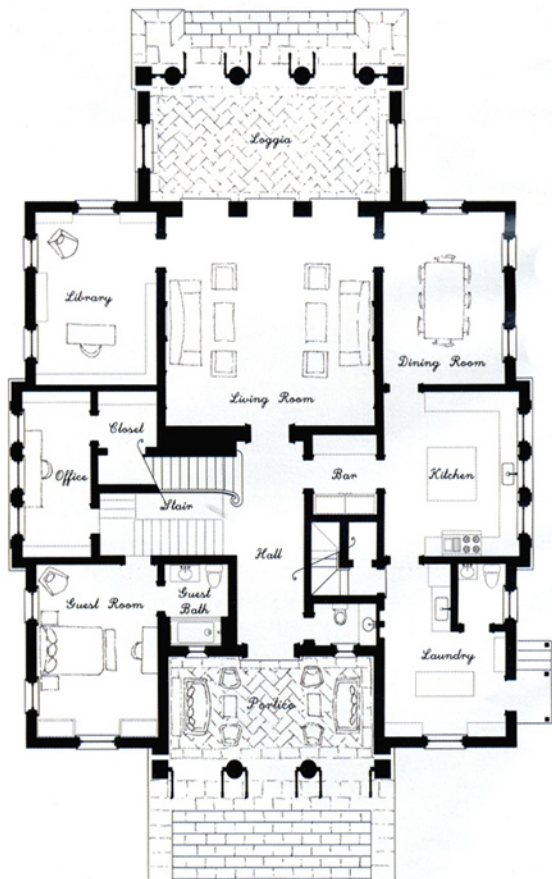
Atop a limestone ridge on the western side of New Providence Island, 10 miles west of the capital city, stands an old fort built by the British and converted into a plantation house during the 1800s. The Old Fort gained notori-

ety in the 1920s when it was inhabited by Mr. and Mrs. Cuttings, who were well known world travelers. They brought home many of their traveling finds, including tiles, ornamental ironwork and lanterns — turning their home into an architectural treasure trove.

Following a restoration in 2003, the Old Fort is now a country club at the heart of Old Fort Bay, a waterfront gated community of 5,000 acres. Orjan Lindroth, the community's developer and a longstanding supporter of Bahamian traditions in Classical architecture, planned to build his home on a lot right next to the Old Fort. In 2005, Coral Gables, FL-based de la Guardia Victoria Architects and Urbanists (DLGV), was hired by Lindroth to design a Palladian-inspired beachfront house named Ca'Liza. (DLGV was recognized in the 2008 Palladio Awards for the Almeria Row townhouses in Coral Gables, FL.) DLGV had developed the regional master plan for Old Fort Bay and was familiar with the community's dedication to preserving the existing rural character and maintaining architectural consistency throughout the region.

Above: De la Guardia Victoria Architects and Urbanists of Coral Gables, FL, designed Ca'Liza — a beachfront home in a 5,000-acre gated community in Old Fort Bay, the Bahamas. The Coralina limestone Tuscan columns were installed by a crew that was specially trained for this project in Classical composition and detailing. All photos: Carlos Ignacio Morales

Right: The arrangement of rooms follows a strong central axis to address the long, narrow lot. Doorways along the axis line up to allow a direct view of the beach when standing in the forecourt entrance. Floor plan: courtesy of de la Guardia Victoria Architects and Urbanists



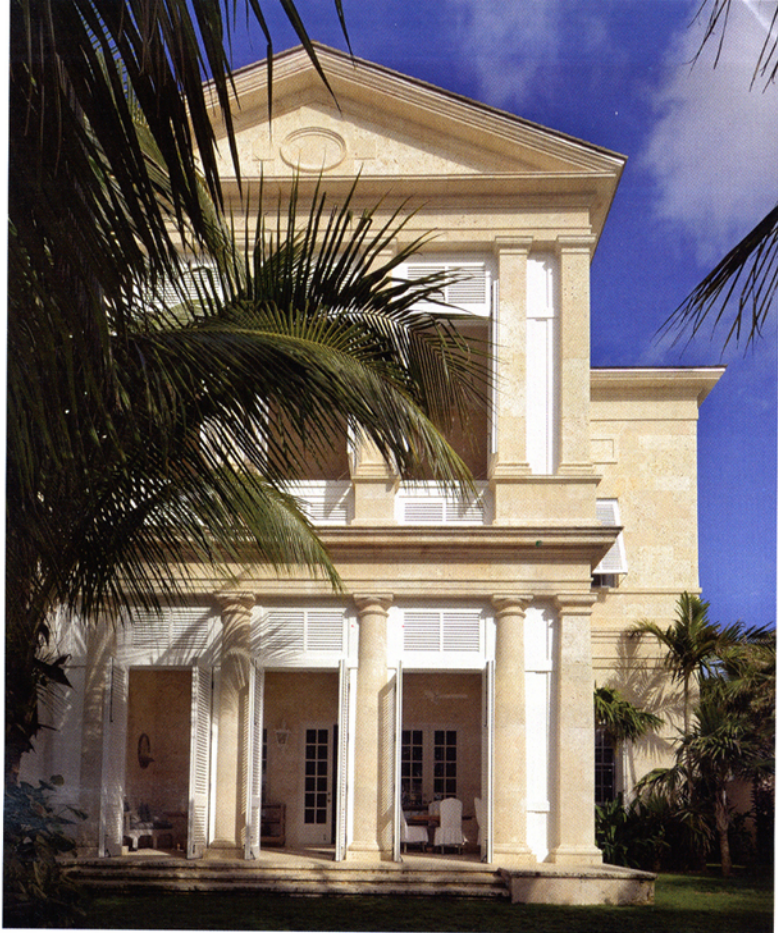
Palladianism was incorporated in the design to give the home civic status, as it was designed for the community's developer.

"In the tradition of Palladio, we thought of giving this house a special status in the architecture of Old Fort Bay," says Teófilo Victoria, principal of DLGV. "We employed this type of architecture so that the house stands out as a different type of building with a degree of importance and responsibility in the context of the development. Together with the clubhouse, the house is a civic contribution to the community."

A two-story pedimented portico is incorporated on the beachfront elevation to suggest stature — a notion that stems from the Palladian legacy. "Before Palladio, the portico pedimented front was reserved only for temples," says Maria de la Guardia, principal of DLGV. "Palladio was the first architect to place the portico or temple-front on a residence." Supporting the portico are columns and capitals of the Tuscan and Doric Orders. According to de la Guardia, the stacking of different Orders is a technique Palladio learned from the Romans, most notably from the Colosseum. "In traditional architecture," she says, "there are some Orders that are more bulky and some that are slender and elegant. We would use the heavier Orders on the bottom and let them carry the weight of the more slender Order above."

DLGV based many of Old Fort Bay's regional master plan guidelines on the urban patterns of the Bahamas that had originated from old English patterns. The height limitations, for instance, were based on Medieval and Renaissance building practices. "We didn't specify height limits in terms of dimensions, as is commonly done today, but rather in terms of stories," says Victoria. "The height limitation in this development called for two stories instead of 25 ft. or 30 ft. This way of looking at height limits allowed us to design a Palladian building. Even though Palladian buildings are not large, they are proportionally cubic. If you have a floor plan of 50x50 ft., it can't be 25-ft. high, it has to be 50-ft. high. We were able to design a home that was, at least in terms of its volumetric constitution, very much like those great Classical villas by Palladio. It was a curious coincidence for an architect to work on a zoning code and also design a building for that code."

Although Ca'Liza had many design principals based on Palladian architecture, it was important for both DLGV and Lindroth to include traditional vernacular architectural details as well. The exterior, and parts of the interior, are clad in Coralina limestone supplied by Marmotech S.A. of the Dominican Republic. Coralina limestone was chosen over the local oolitic limestone for its denseness, which ensured correct compositions for the Tuscan and Doric profiles. "This limestone has a common geologic characteristic with the limestone of the Bahamas," says Victoria. "The Bahamas, Florida and Cuba — all these places share a common geology. It's an indigenous building material throughout the Caribbean."



To complement the limestone, white Mahogany wood shutters, supplied by Dominican Republic-based Salvador Gonzales, were installed on all the window and portico openings. The Bahamas-style shutters are combined with traditional casement shutters to protect the home from strong afternoon winds and also allow the loggia and portico to be habitable spaces throughout the year. "The wood shutters are the most prevalent architectural feature in the Bahamian vernacular traditions," says Victoria. "Everywhere you go in the Bahamas you're going to see entire fronts, porches, windows and dormers protected with these wood shutters. For us, it was an amazing opportunity to combine the limestone with this familiar texture."

Following another Bahamian architectural tradition, cedar shingles were used on the roof. The roofing material supplied by Mikro Corporation of Fort Lauderdale, FL, acts as a cooling device and is quite practical for the island's hurricane seasons. "The roofing material is not rigid, it'll get moved around during a hurricane," says de la Guardia. "You might lose a shingle or two but the whole roof won't be damaged. In terms of building codes, this house is designed to withstand hurricane winds of 150 mph. on the coastline."



Bahama shutters along with casement style shutters enclose the loggia and portico to allow the spaces to withstand harsh hurricane-like afternoon winds.



Following a Caribbean tradition, the living room is finished with a wood tray ceiling.



Exotic Pecky cypress wood paneling is found in the library and dining room, and was inspired by several prominent Bahamian libraries.



The master bedroom on the second floor opens to a louvered porch supported with slender Doric columns.



Instead of conventional concrete blocks, the building is constructed of poured concrete and steel beams. Window units, by Kolbe & Kolbe Windows of Wausau, WI, required stronger attachments, as did the shutters and roof shingles.

The site for Ca'Liza is a long, narrow, trapezoidal-shaped lot with a widest point of 75 ft., so it was a challenge to design the house using the beachfront as its focal point. To address the narrow lot, the project is organized along a central axis, and an enfilade connects the entire site to the ocean. "We had seen and learned this technique from other architecture in the Caribbean, namely from Ernesto Buch, who designed a beautiful house for Oscar de la Renta," says Victoria. "When you arrive at the forecourt, from the entrance you see all the way through to the ocean."

The rooms along the central axis – the forecourt portico, main hall, living room and beachfront loggia – are lined in Coralina limestone to prevent heat accumulation in the main living areas. The living room is capped with a traditional Bahamian wood tray ceiling. On either side of the living room, the dining room and library are finished in a Pecky cypress wood, supplied by the local SMG Cabinets. Found in several prominent libraries in the Bahamas, Pecky cypress has a rustic quality because of a unique grain caused by a fungus that has eaten away at the heartwood.

Completed in the spring of 2008, the house is a harmonic union between Padianism and Bahamian architecture. "A building like this is reminiscent of Palladio's own experience of building what he considered extraordinary buildings in a utilitarian and commonplace context," says Victoria. "Maybe this house will be sold – the significance might change in terms of its use but from an architectural point of view we think it'll remain as something special within the development." – *Annabel Hsin*

WEB ONLY: For additional photographs of this project, go to www.period-homes.com/extras/Sept09Caliza.htm

Padian-inspired pedimented porches, a rarity in the local residential region, are incorporated on the front and rear elevations to give the house a unique style.