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ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST



A Simple Plan

Hilary and Galen Weston go public with their private corner of Windsor, Florida, the New Urbanist community they founded more than 20 years ago

TEXT BY JESSE KORNBLUTH

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIGUEL FLORES-VIANNA

PRODUCED BY HOWARD CHRISTIAN

Architect Clemens Bruns Schaub designed this house in Windsor, Florida; John Stefanidis handled the decor. **OPPOSITE, FROM LEFT:** Hilary Weston, who owns the home with her husband, W. Galen Weston. The inner courtyard in bloom. For details see Sources.



When you own a few grocery and department store chains and the address of your English getaway is Windsor Great Park,

you can take the sun wherever you choose. So it may raise eyebrows to read that, for many years, Hilary and W. Galen Weston rented a series of “little shacks,” as Hilary puts it, on Eleuthera and Harbour Island, in the Bahamas, for their winter retreats. They might still be going there if their children hadn’t grown up and discovered they needed more than a beach and a bicycle.

In the mid-1980s the Westons, who are based in Toronto, decided to build a vacation house in Florida. When they counted up all their relatives and friends who might also like to escape the Canadian winter, they determined that 416 acres would be about right. The couple chose the Vero Beach area, 90 minutes north of Palm Beach but without any of that resort town’s social buzz. “It was still citrus groves and bungalows, dirt roads and wooden walkways,” Hilary explains. “Time, blessedly, had stopped here.”

The Westons nurtured a dream of elegant, old-fashioned simplicity for the new resort community they named Windsor. So it was almost inevitable that they’d join forces with Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, the architects/town planners who had

cofounded the New Urbanism movement. Very quickly, the team had a vision: no more than 350 houses built around a central square, with strict regulations about size, height, and style. The prevailing vocabulary would be neoclassical, inspired by the domestic traditions of Charleston, South Carolina, and the English West Indies; there would be a golf course, tennis courts, a full-scale equestrian center, and restaurants, all designed to be both sublime and subliminal.

Because Windsor’s rules were new to buyers unfamiliar with New Urbanism, the Westons constructed seven dwellings as examples, with Hilary serving as master contractor and design director. Starting in 1991, the couple lived in three of them in succession. “It was great fun,” she says, “and by the time we were ready to build our own place, we knew exactly what we wanted.”

Her desire was a modest one: to live in harmony with the sea and the sun. Designed by local architect Clemens Bruns Schaub, who has worked extensively at Windsor, the Weston house is positioned to take advantage of two spectacular views—the ocean in the morning, and a vast greensward in the afternoon. The interiors were more





FROM TOP: An oceanfront porch features lounge seating and a table set for lunch; Stefanidis designed all the furnishings, including dining chairs that are an homage to architect Robert Mallet-Stevens. Limestone consoles topped with hurricane lamps flank a passageway with rough stucco walls and a scored-cement floor. **OPPOSITE:** At one end of the T-shaped pavilion is a hip-roofed pavilion; Schaub planned the border of loose stones.





FROM TOP: In the pizza room (the dedicated oven is out of view), the zinc-top table and slipcovered high-back armchairs are all by Stefanidis; 19th-century paraffin lamps that have been electrified hang from the ceiling, and the painted Vitruvian scroll border echoes the palette of the kilim. Candy-striped tulle curtains brighten the living room, where a monumental fireplace and overmantel of carved Mexican shell stone fills a wall; the seating and embroidered fire screen are by Stefanidis.

challenging. By the late '90s many houses had been built at Windsor, and the possibilities of Charleston- and Caribbean-style decorating had been thoroughly explored. By waiting, the Westons forced themselves to create a home uniquely their own.

John Stefanidis, who had worked with the couple on a number of their residences in Canada and Great Britain, welcomed the chance to move beyond what he calls the “hot-climate colonial with Indian furniture” approach. His goal was to make the rooms “spirited and idiosyncratic”—airy, unpretentious, and inviting in the extreme. There would be antiques, but just a few.

The living room sets the tone. It is large, with a high, white-painted king-post ceiling, French windows that fairly beg to be opened, blue-and-white candy-striped tulle curtains, and stone floors. And yet for all its beauty, there is nothing intimidating about the space. That understatement is carried throughout the public rooms: For instance, tables are heavy while chairs are light and often the folding type, ready to be moved to suit the occasion. →





FROM TOP: The living room's massive marble-top table with a cut-stone base and slipcovered chairs were all designed by Stefanidis; the floor is gray-stained wood inset with stone squares. In the library, Stefanidis conceived the stone fireplace, detailed with a large central scallop shell and conch-shell finials to either side; the throw pillows are of Indian silks.





FROM TOP: Bowed organza skirts the sink vanity and dressing table in the master bath; the faux-coral mirror and chandelier were commissioned from British artist Oriel Harwood. A Swedish-style bedroom features a circa-1900 French tub chair and a fanciful chintz bed canopy.

OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: In the bamboo-themed guest room, a Regency bed has curtains of white linen trimmed with grosgrain ribbon; the walls are stenciled with a motif taken from a Stefanidis-designed fabric used in an adjacent sitting room, and a kilim covers the floor. The master bedroom's four-poster is draped in muslin; the commode is Louis XV, the Louis XVI-style chair is 18th century, and the walls have been hand-painted with an intricate lace pattern over a chocolate-brown base.



“The point,” says Stefanidis, “was to avoid easy description.” He means it; surprises abound. In the master bedroom, a stenciled white lace design provides a crisp contrast on chocolate-brown walls, while an important circa-1760 Louis XV walnut commode is placed next to a simple straw floor mat. A Swedish-themed guest room boasts walls painted a deep rose-madder and an elaborate bed canopy of pink chintz. In the library, a massive stone scallop shell embellishes the fireplace mantel. But the decorator’s favorite luxury is experienced only by overnight guests: “Mrs. Weston has the best linen I’ve ever seen,” Stefanidis observes. “I wouldn’t have dreamed of making such lovely beds if I didn’t know they’d be so well looked after.”

Windsor is now a mature neighborhood. “The ‘young people’ have children of their own, so many marriages were made here,” Hilary notes, and her pride in the community she’s mothered is unmistakable. But when she talks about her home, pride is second to delight. “This is a real beach house—water-friendly furniture, sand on the floor,” she says. “It’s about the way we live now.” □

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10680 BELVEDERE SQUARE VERO BEACH FLORIDA 32963 TEL 772 388 8400 OR 800 233 7656

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