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THE BAHAMIAN REVIEW



MRS. WALLACE GROVES

A City Looks for Culture

Living in Freeport

—Photo-etching by Sy Fox,
Lucaya Studios, Freeport

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MRS. WALLACE GROVES; FREEPORT'S FIRST LADY

The enthusiasm with which Freeport is seeking to better itself as a community, to mould itself into an interesting and desirable place in which to raise a family, is best seen perhaps in the personality of its First Lady, Mrs. Wallace Groves.

Better known to her friends as Georgette, this warm Montreal-born and American-raised mother of five is a pacesetter for Freeport home-makers.

Whether she's entertaining one of her husband's internationally famous guests in their magnificent beachside home, or having lunch at Freeport/Lucaya's beautiful golf club, she is gracious and thoughtful of the other person.

Although there are few at Grand Bahama who would pretend that the creator of Freeport and president of the Grand Bahama Port Authority, Limited, is popular with everyone, there is unanimity in praise of his wife.

This is no reflection on Mr. Groves except that as president of the Port Authority he is sometimes required to make decisions and stick by them despite the loss of some goodwill.

As for his wife, one licensee when he heard that she was to be on the magazine cover commented: "Everybody has a good word for Georgette Groves."

Another person, a receptionist in one of the new city's busy offices, told of the friendly reception she and her fellow-singers got when they went carolling outside the Groves home at Christmas of 1961.



Primarily a homemaker, Georgette Groves, Freeport's first lady, is most herself in the relaxed companionship and warmth of the family circle. The happy Groves children gather in the entrance court with their mother. They are Gary, 9, Gene, 15, Gayle, 9, and Graham, 10. Standing is fourteen-year-old Gordon.

"She gave us a complete tour of the house and was very hospitable. And then they served us champagne." The next Christmas the Freeport International Choir dropped by to sing carols they got the same treatment.

Seventh in a family of ten — four boys, six girls — Georgette Groves is

By Terry McLaughlin

looked up to at Freeport as a sterling example of a devoted mother.

Obviously well brought up, the Groves' three boys and two girls are said by one close friend to be "well behaved at critical moments".

Although a person of her social and economic position easily could have left to a battery of servants, including nannies, the time-consuming responsibility of bringing up a family, she has let no one come in between.

She is the first to point out a son's collection of marine life or to speak of a daughter's fondness of riding. When a city-bred reporter comments on "the sailfish" and is shot down by a carrot-topped nine-year-old with "That's a Marlin!", she nods her head and commiserates with the non-fisherman.

She herself in fact is an avid fisherman and has landed several prizes — the marlin in the children's spacious ground-floor playroom, the wahoo over the cozy bar and sailfish.

The results of her attention to the

children's upbringing are obvious in their demeanor. "She has really painted their character," comments a friend.

The three boys, Gordon, Graham and Gary, all go to Eaglebrook, a boarding school at Deerfield, Mass., during the winter months. Their daughter Gene, eldest of the children, is going to Stoneleigh Prospect at Greenfield, Mass., and Gayle is at Lake Placid's North Country School. All raised at Little Whale Cay, the Groves home since 1937 and still used on holidays, they decided to stay in Freeport this summer. "There's so much for them to do," said their mother.

Poised and confident, Gordon is 14; Graham, 10, seems sensitive and introspective, while nine-year-old Gary is personality-charged, inquisitive, and stresses that he's really nine-and-a-half. Gene, 15, and nine-year-old Gayle are just what one would expect of daughters, with Gene using the latest teenage idiom to express her likes and dislikes.

In addition to fishing Mrs. Groves is particularly fond of gardening and is said to have transformed their once bush-covered property at Little Whale Cay into its present lushness.

At their Freeport home verdant gardens and leafy conversation areas abound, interspersed with appropriate and exquisite "objets d'arts". Lavish use of water in a swimming pool, an entry court pond and decorative indoor pool, complement the shrubbery.

Designed by Alfred Browning Parker



Luxuriant foliage surrounds marble walkway of the pool-flanked entry court of the residence.

of Coconut Grove, the large home is very tropical in decor and though elegant maintains the casual welcoming feel of home.

Approached on a long roadway, it is marked by Spanish-style arches over the drive, and the sea-coloured green tiled roof of the house is pointed out to most Freeport tourists as an outstanding example of local architecture.

A button set into a small lion's head sculpture in the wrought iron gates sets chimes off inside the house and floating back along the partly-covered entry court.

Marble flooring, modern archway and the pond festooned with rich green shrubbery provide contrast and an intimate refreshing look for the entry court.

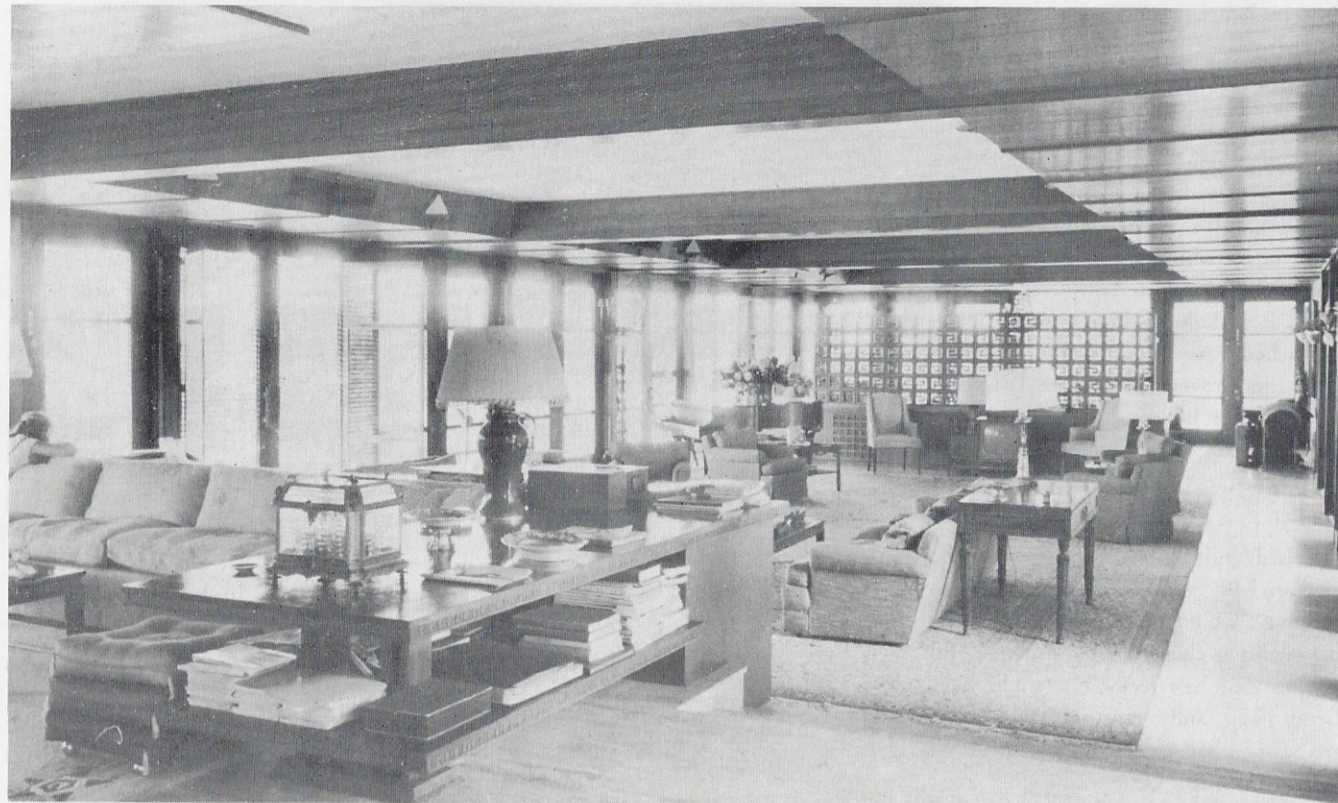
The vastness of the split-level living room, illuminated during the day by natural light filtering through hundreds of louvres, is broken up tastefully with several conversational groupings, massive furniture including a large room divider, and tall candelabra. Rock crystal wall fixtures, classic paintings, a magnificent staircase and small decorative detail, give the home untold vistas on which to focus.

A large refectory table and chairs give an air of antiquity and permanence to the dining room area as does the baronial fireplace in the living room.

In the bar, guests sit in handsome wood and leather chairs and an aquatic theme is suggested by one of Mrs. Groves' prize catches as well as by two rope-entwined glass fish balls. The un-



Seen at a distance, the most remarkable feature of the Groves home is the green tile roof that blends with natural colouring of surrounding sea, sky and landscaping.



An interesting play of louvered light and clean uncluttered lines lend to the spaciousness of the living room. Keenly interested in things cultural, Mrs. Groves once hosted 150 guests for a piano recital in this room.

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usually-large balls, used by commercial fishermen with their nets, were found on the beach near the home.

Off the enclosed swimming pool area is the indoor playroom for the children, with bedrooms on the second floor.

Taking Cultural Lead: Conscious of her role in fostering and encouraging community projects, Mrs. Groves is particularly interested in the development of a cultural centre for the City of Freeport—an amenity not yet conceived in



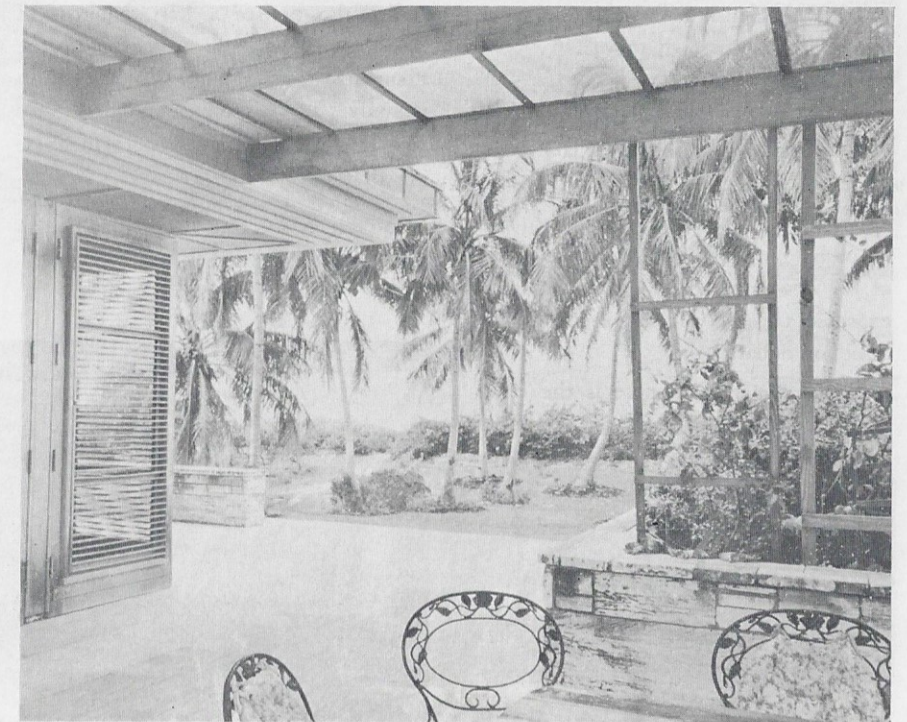
Another unique space-creating feature is the staircase design angled above an interesting pool and garden arrangement. The dragon figurine is typical of attention given to detail in tasteful decor throughout the home.

the much older and larger capital, Nassau.

A gracious chatelaine, she hosted some 150 people in her living room one evening to hear a recital by a visiting European pianist.

She feels the time has come when public accommodations suitable for such concerts and for the highly-successful productions of the Freeport Players Guild are constructed.

Music rooms, dance studio, galleries for paintings and sculpture as well as studios for training budding artists, are being considered as part of the new building. A museum, she hopes, also



A breeze-swept patio facing the tropical sea-side landscaping is an ideal breakfast locale.



Substantial wood and leather accent the nautical tone of the bar. One of the family's prize catches decorates the bar. Both oversize glass fish-balls were found on the beach near the Groves home.

will be included and "when we expand, it will be the first to move".

The theatre likely will be in the 500-seat range, with provision being made for addition of a balcony at a later date.

A non-profit project, it is expected by city planners to tie in well with the proposed redevelopment and expansion of the downtown commercial area. It is expected to cost well in excess of half a million dollars.

Set up for this purpose is the Freeport Foundation in which Mrs. Groves is determined to play an active part. Its aims, set out in the papers drawn

Photographs by
Roy Newbold, Jr.

up for its incorporation, are "to provide a community centre for Freeport, in order to promote culture so that the individual finds purpose, achieves self-expression in service to the community and learns to live a fuller life."

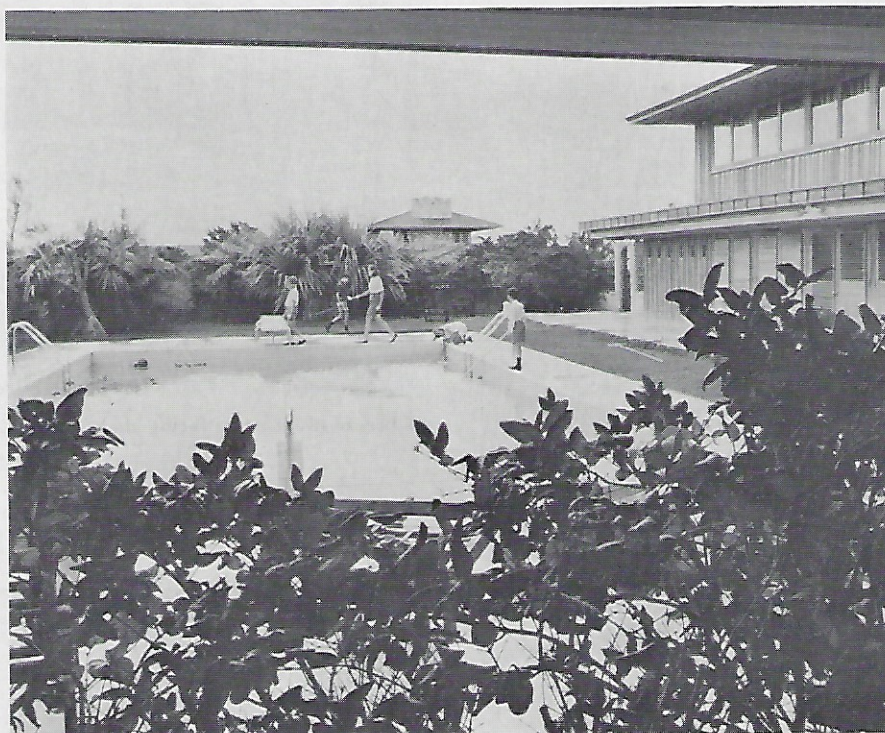
Spreading out papers concerning the project on one of the massive living room tables, Mrs. Groves informed us that she has been thinking of this project for the better part of the year and credited orchestra leader Tito Fuentes of Freeport with helping to spark initial interest.

She also praised a Mrs. Melrose of Florida, a lawyer who helped set up the Foundation, and Jack Hayward, Keith Gonsalves and Gordon Mosvold of Freeport, for their active support in these initial stages.

Interest in the fine arts in the Groves family is not limited to the parents.

Beams Georgette: "Graham is the artist in the family . . . he was awarded a medal at school for creativity . . . that's out of 250 children. Gayle and Gene are learning the piano. Gordon used to play beautifully but he gave up the piano and now he plays the melophone.

"Am I pleased!"



A close family, the children enjoy each other's company, in the outdoor pool area as well as in the adjacent indoor playroom. The home seen beyond the shrubbery is that of neighbour Jack Hayward.