



VIEWS OF 400 SOUTH OCEAN BOULEVARD, FROM FAR LEFT: THE INTERIOR COURTYARD; THE ROOFTOP POOL; THE BUILDING'S FACADE CIRCA 1980s/1990s. BELOW LEFT: EDWARD DURELL STONE WITH HIS SON EDWARD DURELL STONE JR.

## HERITAGE

# Condo *IN CONTEXT*

*Palm Beach's first condominium building stands as a lasting landmark to NEW FORMALISM's mix of modern-meets-marvelous*

By Marie Penny

The building at 400 South Ocean Boulevard has had many firsts in its history: It was Palm Beach's first condominium, and the town's first building to feature a rooftop pool. It was also architect Edward Durell Stone's first apartment building and first project in Florida.

But 400 South Ocean did not start out as a condominium. Originally, it was intended to be an apartment building with hotel-like amenities for seasonal residents. The rents would have ranged from \$5,200 to \$11,500 per year. However, the developers changed their business plan due to the unstable economic climate. They retained Carl D. Schlitt, a New Yorker credited with creating the first condo building in New York in 1947, who saw the potential for condos to flourish in South Florida. Once the project made the swap from apartment building to condominium, the units were priced at \$47,000 to \$103,000. Today, they sell for close to \$2 million.

Stone—a New York-based architect who is best known for his New Formalism designs of the Embassy of the United States in New Delhi, India (1959) and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Perform-

ing Arts in Washington, D.C. (1971)—was hired to design the project. After construction was completed, more than 200 people attended the building's opening in December 1962. Among the many Palm Beach residents celebrating the new building were architect John Volk, Mayor Claude Reese, and developer Byron Ramsing.

The building is often described as modern, although really it is an example of New Formalism, a 1950s style largely spearheaded by Stone and other architects like Phillip Johnson and Minoru Yamasaki. Incorporating modernist design principles while evoking classical architecture, New Formalism reinterprets ornamentation, seeking to achieve monumentality through the use of proportion and scale, as well as luxe materials like travertine and marble.

Stone designed 400 South Ocean with no interior corridors. He loved corridor-free buildings, as they were not found in classical architecture and he found them "satisfying from every point of view." Similar to the embassy in New Delhi, the condo building boasts a central courtyard. Stone's son Edward Durell Stone Jr., a Fort Lauderdale-based landscape architect, designed the atrium to be a "water garden" complete with a reflecting pool with circular islands, plants, and statuary.

In 2000, the building underwent a major restoration. Hicks Stone, another of Stone's sons (and also an architect), served as a design consultant on the project. Hicks' work ensured that details, such as the design of the interior of the passenger elevator cabs, were preserved.

Today, 400 South Ocean stands out from the other condos on Ocean Boulevard for its timeless elegance. Stone achieved his goal of monumentality, and his contribution to Palm Beach will continue to enrich the town's built environment. The building's protection and longevity were further secured when it was designated as a landmark in 2012.

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