



Villa Rotunda, Vicenza, Italy © 1991 Ladd P. Ehlinger

VILLA ROTUNDA

Villa Rotunda is this issue's limited edition print of a sketch by Ladd P. Ehlinger, that was designed by the famous architect Andrea Palladio. Otherwise known as Villa Capra, this villa is of the type: *villa suburbana*, as Palladio classed it. It is of the genre of estate mansions favored by the Venetians in the 16th century, that are revivals of the Roman countryside mansions for the landed gentry. Those

and many were designed by Palladio. Villa Rotunda is located just outside Vicenza, west of the Brenta River villas. The influence of these villas was far reaching in time and inspired much of the southern US architecture of the 18th and 19th centuries, especially on plantations. The formal beauty of this particular building inspired several copies of it to be built in England, and numerous other villas similar in design to be built also, particularly by Inigo Jones.

Villa Rotunda sits atop a hill commanding the plowed field beneath it, and the entire countryside around it. The design is very symmetrical, and followed strict mathematical rules of proportion, both in plan and spatially as well. Like many of Palladio's villas, this one is organized around a central room that is topped with a dome. The main temple like entrance with large formal stairs is repeated on the other three sides also. Construction was started about 1550, and was completed after Palladio's death by Vincenzo Scamozzi, his apprentice.

Scamozzi altered the design of the dome by extending the cylinder it rests upon above the roof juncture line, and the shape of the dome itself, and raising

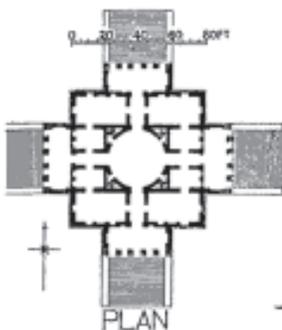
roofs on the tops of the curved corners left by the dome that would have resulted from this approach.

TWO THINGS

Two things need to happen for the New Orleans area to recover from Hurricane Katrina. Before discussing that, I want to tell you about a trip my wife and I made to Managua, Nicaragua in the 90s, right after the Sandanistas were removed from office and democracy supposedly returned. A friend who had recovered his 5,000 acres of land that had been expropriated by the Sandanistas invited us to come see if there were any opportunities, and if we could be of help in their recovery. What we learned was mind boggling — and scary.

There had been an earthquake in Managua in 1955, when Somoza the dictator was in power. The fault line ran right through the middle of town, and everything near it was destroyed. Somoza was thrown out, in part because of the aftermath. Here we were 40 years later, and there were numerous buildings condemned and still unoccupiable, rubble everywhere in the destroyed no-man's land in the middle of the city, raw sewerage in the streets, squatter's huts everywhere, horrible poverty and political chaos — there had been no recovery, only the communists taking power. When our friend asked the government "What about giving me back my 5,000 head of cattle that occupied my 5,000 acres?", he was told that they couldn't give the cattle back because they had eaten them! The political situation was so bad that we demurred getting involved and came home. Recently, the same Sandanista people (Daniel Ortega specifically) were elected democratically! What does this tell you? Is there a parallel with New Orleans?

The results from the governmental systems and the people that have been running the City of New Orleans for the past 40 years or so remind me of the results of the systems and people that



people, the landed gentry, that owned farms would build these types of houses on their lands that were worked by tenant farmers, so as to have a place to stay when checking on their tenants and when escaping the confines of the large city.

The Brenta River that empties into the Adriatic near Venice is dotted with villas like Villa Rotunda on both banks,

the attic (roof slope). If you look carefully, there is a rather awkward curve of the juncture of the roofs with this cylindrical dome support structure that resulted from this change. It is more likely that Palladio intended to extend the square walls that surrounded the cylindrical structure above the roof juncture slightly, and to have almost flat

were running Nicaragua for over 40 years. The first thing: Either the State of Louisiana or the federal government needs to take over the City of New Orleans (revoke the city's charter), similar to the state's take-over of the city's schools that occurred after Hurricane Katrina, that seems to be working better than when the Orleans School Board ran it.

I sat on a board in 2001 that was negotiating with Jefferson Parish Drainage Dept. about drainage across our property. This caused me to inquire of a friend that was Director of the Sewerage & Water Board that managed the 17th St., Canal that the Jefferson drainage emptied into. From him I learned that the S&WB had contracted with Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Alden Laboratories, both in Worcester, Mass., with funding from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build a scale hydraulic model of the 17th St. Canal drainage basin (similar to the Mississippi River model of the Corps' at Vicksburg) upon which "what if?" studies had been performed from 1980 until 2002 or so. I asked for copies of reports and was told that the Corps would have to give permission for me to have them as they paid for it, and was told to call the Corps.

When I inquired of the Corps, the engineer in charge refused to release any of the reports despite them being public records paid for by taxpayers, and when asked what he would do if I sued under the Freedom of Information Act, he replied "Yeah, you'll get them, but I'll redact them so much you won't know what you are looking at!" When I then inquired "What are you trying to hide?", he very angrily said "I'm terminating this conversation!" and hung up! Since Jefferson Parish subsequently abandoned its drainage plans across the property, I forgot about it — until Hurricane Katrina, the collapse of the 17th St. Canal levee / floodwall and the flooding of New Orleans and Metairie Club Gardens that resulted. Since the storm, I have learned from friends in the engineering community that the belief is that the Corps was told over the years that decisions they were making (short sheet piling on the levee flood wall, dredging the canal) would fail the levees and flood wall. I told a TV reporter all this, who began investigating.

The reporter met stiff resistance from the S&WB and the Corps, both of whom refused to provide copies of any reports, citing respectively that the reports were ruined in the flood and that they can't be found. However, Worcester and Alden did provide two reports: one dated in 1983, and one in 2002, and one of these used three others as references — so we know that more reports exist, perhaps as many as two to three per year times twenty-two years. Worcester refused to provide any more, citing the need for the author's names to retrieve them. The reporter was then told by her boss to stop investigating this issue.

When a design professional implements a design he has been advised will fail or that he knows will fail, I don't believe that is professional negligence. I believe that it is criminal negligence. When and if 1,500 people drown because of those decisions, I believe that it becomes criminal negligent homicide. The second thing is: I believe that it is important to conduct a thorough and exhaustive criminal investigation of all the engineers involved (Corps, S&WB, and consultants), and retrieve all of these reports of the studies done on the 17th St. Canal, and compare with all of the advice given the Corps by the consulting engineers involved, and with internal Corps data. After all, what happened is the largest worst engineering disaster in world history. The Corps may be exempt from civil liability in drainage projects, but I don't believe that they are immune from criminal liability.

In the past, I had the experience of being told by the Corps to "Shut up and do as you are told!", when we discovered their required method of design was in error, and we called it to their attention, rather than correct the error, much less look at it. The internal culture of the Corps is not conducive to accepting advice from anyone — not even the President or Congress.

It seems to me that the U.S. Attorney, the State Attorney General, and the District Attorneys of Orleans and Jefferson Parishes, maybe even St. Bernard Parish, all have jurisdiction to investigate this matter. This information was sent to the LA Attorney General with no response. Nothing has been said about any of it in the media.

Incidentally, we did "shut up" and

produced an absurdity of a design following the Corps' faulty methodology, thereby embarrassing them into correcting their design method (which they did), so we could correct the design (which we did) BEFORE it was built.

VULTURES ALL

Charity Hospital in New Orleans was declared to structurally unsound and full of toxic mold and closed. We know one of the engineers that had inspected it and tested it for mold who declares there is nothing wrong with it, nor is there any mold inside.

Aaron Broussard, President of Jefferson Parish (who turned off the pumps) was introduced to the Metairie Rotary Club as "the man who is NOT the father of Anna Nicole's baby!". To which he replied, "That is the one thing that I haven't been blamed for after Katrina", and then told this:

The State of Louisiana's DHHR took the \$500M Charity operating moneys and redistributed them to the other state hospitals in a one time windfall — at New Orleans Expense. East Jefferson Hospital, West Jefferson Hospital, and Ochsner Foundation Hospital have been treating the indigent with no federal or state recompense since Charity has been closed. These hospitals asked DHHR to go the federal agencies and get them reimbursed. Hundreds of millions of dollars were reimbursed to DHHR for the three hospitals, but only \$20M was distributed to the hospitals. Is this an almost \$1 billion rip-off of the New Orleans health care community?

Tim Ryan, Chancellor, told a Rotary club that he feels paranoid because Baton Rouge "powers-that-be" are cutting the University of New Orleans funding to the point that he feels is precarious.

Trial testimony in MS and LA trials reveals that insurance companies have been directing consulting expert engineers they hired to: NOT estimate % attributable to flood and wind, thereby shifting the majority to flood (defrauding the federal government?); change their opinions that were unfavorable to the insurance company; to re-write reports in a more favorable light to the insurance company.

E&A's liability / property insurer dropped us. Our new policy costs three times as much.