

KÚYA

A LIDO OF LOVE
IF WALLS COULD TALK
THE AGE OF
PSYCHEDELICS
PORTMORE RISING
A WINDOW ON
THE WORLD OF
THE DOUGALLS

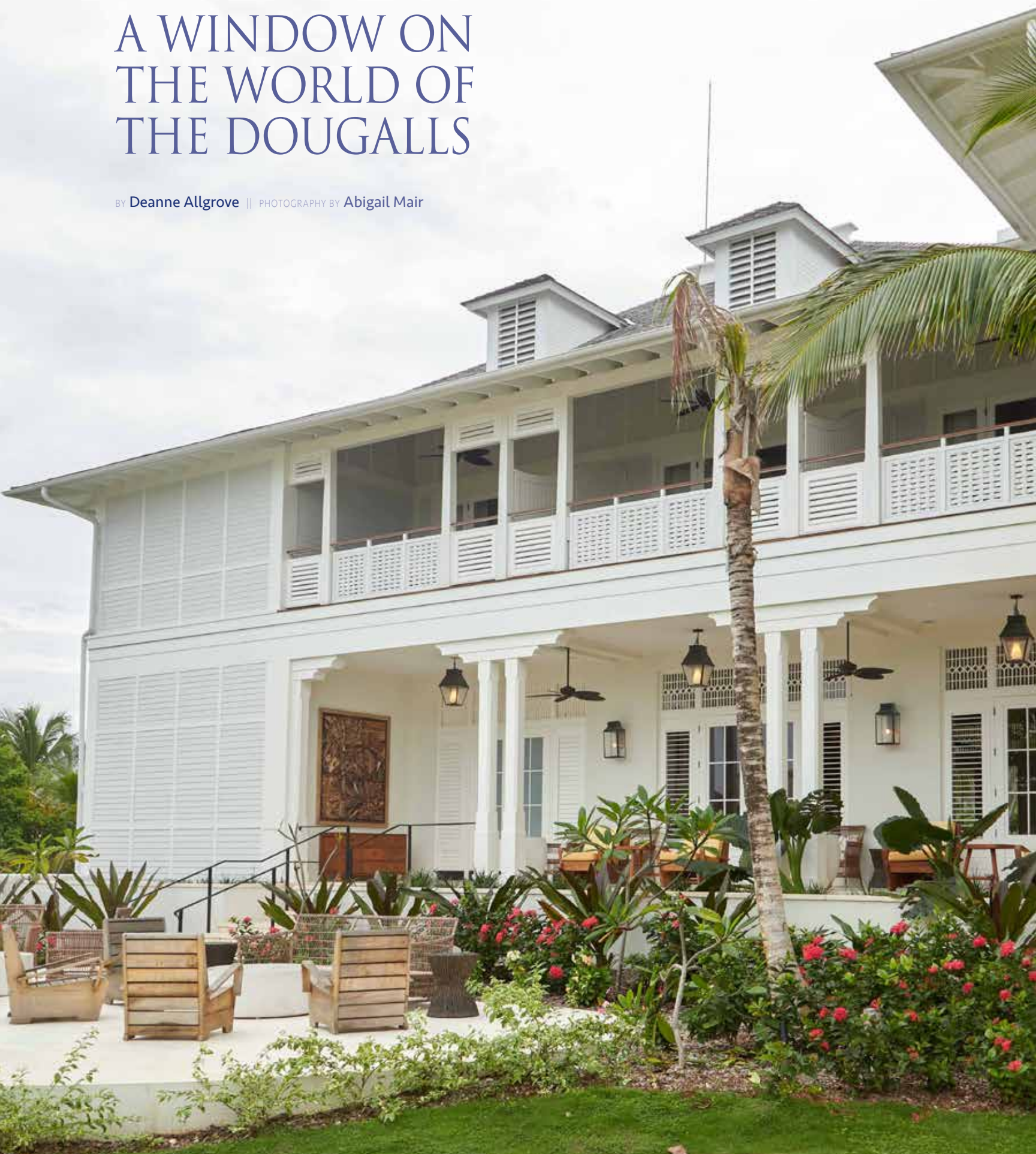
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COLDWELL BANKER
JAMAICA REALTY

A WINDOW ON THE WORLD OF THE DOUGALLS

BY Deanne Allgrove || PHOTOGRAPHY BY Abigail Mair





THIS PAGE Design features by Dougall
Flooring at Half Moon Resort,
Montego Bay, St James
AT RIGHT Alex Dougall with sons
Jonathan and Anthony



Across Jamaica, many windows and doors open out onto stunning vistas of verdant hills, lush vegetation laden with bounty, or the various hues of the Caribbean Sea sparkling in the sunlight. Step away from some of these notable properties and you will see the gleaming tropical wood framing these views. These are the much sought-after, customized creations of Dougall Flooring.

Hearing the name Dougall Flooring doesn't immediately conjure up an impression of designer windows and doors, but the company, started by Alex Dougall in 1984, has evolved over the years as his children, at different times, have come to work by his side. Nowadays, he and his two sons, Anthony and Jonathan, embody Dougall Flooring and all that that name means in Jamaica and beyond.

When Alex Dougall first decided to create beautiful wooden masterpieces for us to walk on, there was a great building design demand for parquet flooring. It was this signature architectural element that would begin his journey of



providing stunning wood accents to homes and commercial properties. At the time, he knew little about the process and, as proof of his ingenuity and determination he managed to negotiate a USAID grant, not normally accessible to his circumstances. This grant facilitated the arrival of Cyril Stock to Jamaica. "He had been the technical expert for Vickers Parquet Flooring in England, a major manufacturer in the last century," says Alex, "he came and stayed with us for months." This expert had been recommended by Helmut Schroeder, owner of Schroeder GmbH in Germany, which produced machinery to craft parquet tiling. The Dougalls to this day, cultivate and nurture these relationships with top companies in Europe with an eye to continuously improving their own offerings and maintaining a world-class level of product.

Still back at the beginning, Alex, with guidance from an expert, and financing for machinery and training, honed the product. Importing was challenging in those early years due to a lack of foreign exchange so he used local wood like guango and breadnut. Over time, his fledgling company negotiated contracts to produce labour intensive hand assembled parquet flooring for large internationally recognized names. Five million square feet were turned out and were over time delivered to names like Home Depot, Price Club and the prestigious Bruce Harwood Flooring, synonymous to this day with top-of-the-line flooring.

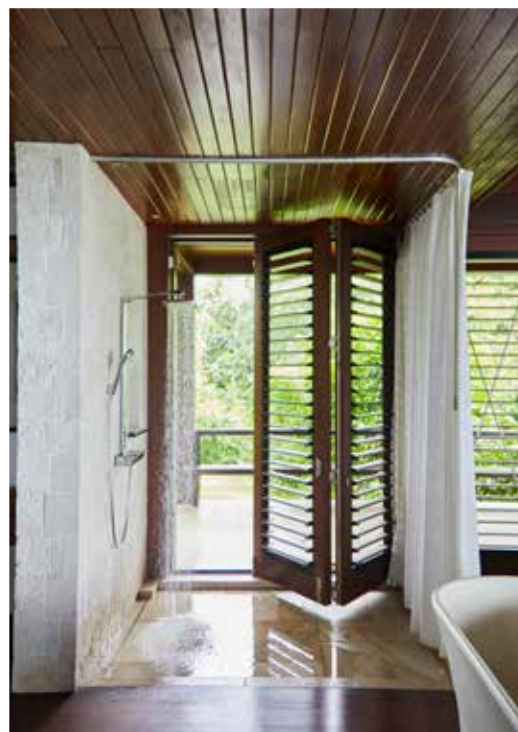
Times change however, and flooring, similar to fashion, has trends that come and go. "Parquet was on its way out and we had to decide what to do next," Alex shares. The company had to pivot along with demand. This would be an ongoing strategy for growth over the years. Anticipating demand for certain products and adjusting to allow for growth. The company evolved into producing T&G strip flooring in the early nineties, which the market embraced, being both more aesthetically pleasing and technically sound (nailed down versus glued down).

As the company grew so did the family. Alex and Susan Dougall had four children, Anthony, Jonathan, Anna and Julia. The first three would eventually play their own part in expanding Dougall Flooring, while Julia, the youngest, would carve a path in the music business. Susan Dougall, in the meantime, started her own extremely successful catering business which flourished for many critical years while Dougall Flooring evolved.

While the nineties brought other products on line in the factory — like vinyl and click-laminate flooring, mouldings and decking — it was the 2000s that brought about a lot of change. During this time siblings Jonathan, Anthony and Anna would join forces with their father to further innovate the scope of the family enterprise. Anna travelled around the Caribbean establishing partnerships with architects and builders many of whom are important customers to this day. Anthony took charge of overseeing the day-to-day factory manufacturing challenges, import purchasing











and flooring sales. Jonathan, the first of the children to join their father, quickly gained considerable manufacturing and equipment knowledge from the company's "crazy" focus on modifying standard equipment in order to create "click" laminate flooring locally, an unimaginably difficult but successfully completed challenge. Soon afterwards he found himself captivated by the challenge of manufacturing world class wooden doors and windows right here in Jamaica.

In the mid-2000s, Paul "PB" Scott a client who had his flooring done by the Dougalls, made a request that would move the company into its next phase. He simply stated, "I'd like my doors and windows to be made out of the same Jatoba hardwood as my flooring." PB gave Dougall the contract even though the company had never made a door or a window - the rest is history. The company purchased traditional equipment and successfully completed the contract. From there, Jonathan began a quest to educate himself on modern manufacturing methods for wooden doors and windows, leading to an investment in mid-level technology in 2007, followed by the company installing the finest world class equipment in 2018. Jonathan immersed himself in manufacturing techniques, acquiring and mastering the associated design software, learning from the best companies in Europe, many of whom were also generational family businesses.

The new branch of Dougall Flooring took off and contracts began to roll in. Private clients not only sought to enhance the design of their villas but also sought out quality flooring for their own homes, and wanted matching wood to frame their views. Nicola Melhado is a repeat client

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who has redone various aspects of her home over the years. “You’d have a hard time telling what was done ten years ago versus their most recent work. It’s that good,” she shares enthusiastically. “They are very easy to work with, extremely professional and deliver on their promises. They do what they say they are going to do. Windows and doors can be so finicky, but their installation is a painless experience that takes no time at all because their preparation is so good, and they pay attention to detail. They are always a pleasure to work with ... always.”

In addition to homes and villas, their portfolio also includes high-profile commercial projects in and around public buildings in metropolitan areas. These include the GC Foster College Sports Hall, the BOJ Conference Centre on the waterfront in Downtown Kingston, and the Edna Manley School of Dance.

In 2012, Paul Burke of International Built Environment Consultants (IBEC) began working with the Dougalls on resort properties, most recently, properties at Round Hill and Eclipse at Half Moon in Montego Bay. “Recommending the Dougalls to our clients has been a win-win — we get to work with a really great team with extraordinary attention to detail, and our clients have always been happy with the final product. We are excited about their expansion into cabinets and our next chapter of projects with Jon and the team.”

While Dougall Flooring simply provides the material for floors and at times ceilings and other features for buildings according to the design specifications, for windows and doors the Dougalls work hand in hand with the project team leader from the beginning and throughout the entire process. As the specialized offerings (such as the windows and doors) by Dougall Flooring has grown so has the amount of machinery needed. For example, machines with two cutting heads were upgraded to six and diamond tooling became the norm. “We built our range out of necessity to deliver on a particular design direction from architects and clients,” says Jonathan. “We are constantly reinvesting, with four generations of equipment over a fifteen-year period. Our customers’ faith in us and the work we have done has funded our development.”

Design elements by the Dougalls in high-profile properties such as Canoe Cove in Jamaica, Casa Luna in Grand Cayman, or Secret Bay in Dominica are well known and admired by the general public. However, within the inner world of the construction industry, Dougall Flooring’s general product range is equally lauded and offers elements contractors or architects can, in turn, offer their clients, from large features like flooring and customized windows and doors, to finishing elements like beams, posts and table tops to wax finishes, wood preservatives, varnishes and stains.

Elizabeth Newman of Portico Ltd. is currently working with the company on a villa in Old Fort Bay, “I refer to them as ‘the BMWs’ of producing doors



Half Moon, Montego Bay ■

and windows! Working with the Dougall family is like being a part of the Dougall family. Their service, attention to detail, patience and commitment to doing an excellent job for us and our clients is superb. Their flexibility, high standards and level of customization produce everlasting, beautiful units, complementing both traditional and contemporary tropical architecture.” With each new project completed to international standards of excellence, the Dougall name continues to gain greater respect and prestige.

The family too has continued to grow over the years. All four children are married and Alex and Susan have a wonderful brood of grandchildren that they dote on. Rachel, Anthony’s wife, and Jennifer, Jonathan’s wife, have also added their multitude of skills to the business. Their roles cover accounting, marketing and a range of other necessary day-to-day elements that need addressing to keep the business running smoothly. Does the family hope a few of the grandchildren will eventually join the business? “Of course! That would be wonderful,” says Anthony, “but I would never expect it. We support whatever path they choose. But yes, it would be great!”

In 2023, Dougall will begin the production of world-class cabinetry for kitchens, built-in and closets of all types. Their aim is to continue to provide their clients with additional world class custom made wood options, which will last for years to come, as undoubtedly, will the Dougall legacy. Δ