

" ... we have no style ... ": New Zealand Architecture 1900-1918: a one day symposium

AMBITIOUS BEGINNINGS

"Maori Architecture 1900 – 1918"

Bill McKay and Antonia Walmsley

This decade can be noted for several distinct approaches to Maori architecture, reflecting a variety of nationalistic impulses. This paper offers a brief overview of the diversity of Maori architecture and ideas in this period.

Pakeha, in the search for national identity, and also reflecting the interests of the global Arts and Crafts movement, were enthused by the local example of the carved and decorated Whare Whakairo and pataka, native timbers, Maori adzing techniques and local flora and fauna. This can be seen in the work of architects such as JW Chapman Taylor, as well as the symbolism and trademarks of popular culture, and the pattern of museum acquisitions.

By the 20th Century Maori were seen as a culture that could soon become extinct and this is reflected in the images of artists such as Goldie ("The Calm Close of Valour's Various Days"), Lindauer's interest in preserving ersatz records of tradition and custom, and Dittmer's interest in myth and legend. Parliamentarian Apirana Ngata, a member of the Young Maori Party, was very influential in the revival of certain customary arts (seen in the later establishment of schools of Maori arts and crafts in Rotorua) but he and his colleagues promoted a form of these arts that while "encouraging national Maori unity"¹ also suppressed the diversity of activity in modern figurative painting and tribal identity for instance.

These approaches can be contrasted with the patterns of building by other Maori movements more opposed to the Government and actively seeking the restoration of Maori lands, rights and mana. Rua Kenana's settlement at Maungapohatu in the 1910s and T.W.Ratana's hall and church building later in the century (his ministry began in 1918) eschew the use of any Meeting House forms or customary motifs – they were turning to new forms and symbols to sustain Maori identity in the new century.

"...scarcely suitable as standards on which to found our national taste": Hurst Seager on the indigenous."

Robin Skinner

Abstract not yet available

"Gerald Jones and Our Dreadful Architecture"

Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins

The early twentieth century is characterised by a number of pieces of polemical architectural writing that followed on the example established by Samuel Hurst Seager's "Architectural Art in New Zealand" (1900). This paper examines two essays "How Houses Might Be Improved: A Plea for Art in House Design" (1912) by Gerald Jones and "The Evolution of Domestic Architecture" (1915) by Basil Hooper. Jones and Hooper were both architects who were willing to take polemical stands on the issues facing New Zealand architecture. This paper uses these essays to examine their own architecture and the state of domestic architecture in the second decade of the century.

"Architecture and Art in the pages of the NZIA Journal to 1920"

Don Bassett

While Adolf Loos had declared in 1910 that architecture and art were two different things, the architectural profession in New Zealand continued to think of architecture as one of the arts for decades after that date. This paper will examine this issue for the period from 1912 to 1920 as revealed in the pages of the *Journal of Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute of Architects*. John Ruskin, always recognised as a major influence upon the Arts and Crafts Movement is shown to have been a forceful influence behind the wider thinking of the architectural profession in NZ throughout this period. This influence concerns matters of style and decoration, materials and above all the integrity and

commitment of the architect. Several lectures delivered to regional institutes and recorded in the journal are examined to reveal on the one hand a confidence that architecture was even perhaps the greatest of the arts but also that recent developments in materials and construction desperately called for the profession to find a new approach.

PLANNINGS AND SCHEMINGS

"Urban and planning improvements in the early twentieth century New Zealand"

Emina Petrovic

Abstract not yet available

"Trams Trials and Tribulations - the development of Cathedral Square, Christchurch 1910-1918."

Jenny May and Amanda Ross

Cathedral Square Christchurch is the City's premier urban space. Yet it is without doubt the most debated and controversial two and half hectares of urban design space in the City. Set out in the shape of cross rather than a square, the last five decades of the nineteenth century saw just as much controversy over its design and use as did the entire twentieth century and on into the beginnings of the twenty-first century. Over this time its design has been the butt of jokes, the subject of constant political debate and subject of many learned articles, seminars and conference papers.

The period 1910 to 1918 was one of intensive design change as Christchurch moved into the era of electric trams, motor buses and motor cars. While handsome buildings grew on the Square's perimeter during this period, in 1907 a less than attractive architecturally designed transport shelter appeared in its centre causing architect Samuel Hurst Seager, a member of the Christchurch Beautifying Society, to describe it as a public building of "...appalling ugliness."

Inspired by the title "tramway trials and tribulations - the saga of the tramway shelter"¹ this paper will examine the design issues surrounding Cathedral Square during the period 1900-1918 – a period that saw the first competition to improve the aesthetic reading of this space.

THE FIGURE OF THE ARCHITECT

"John Sidney Swan: a genuine article"

Kate Linzey

The architect John Sidney Swan (1874-1936) represents a little represented group in the history of New Zealand architecture. At the establishment of the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 1907, Swan was the only architect present who had been trained in New Zealand through the article system. While training 'on the job' was a common occurrence in the early development of the building industry in this country, few of these architects achieved great renown. Swan however, was a prominent architect in his day, designing Erskin Chapel in Island Bay (1906), Saint Gerard's Church in Mount Victoria (1908) and an unbuilt proposal for a Roman Catholic Basilica in Dufferin Street (1912).

This renown may have been due to Swan's mentor, Fredrick de Jersey Clere, the vocal English émigré architect. However this mentorship does not wholly explain Swan's prolific, and sometimes eccentric practice. This paper is part of an ongoing project to document Swan's work, and develop an understanding of his particular style, which, on the one hand, reflects an awareness of the contemporary English fashions, and yet, on the other, rejoices in an almost theatrical excessiveness, quite contrary both to the evolving architectural austerity of modernism, and Clere's more restrained style.

"William Henry Dunning: The Quiet Man"

Michael Findlay

¹ "tramway trials and tribulations - the saga of the tramway shelter", in Alexander, M. **On the Move: Christchurch Transport Through the Years**. Booklet Number 4, Christchurch 1986.

Tasmanian-born architect William Henry Dunning (1872-1933) commenced his New Zealand practice in Timaru in 1907. Initially trained in Hobart under the notable church designer Alexander North, Dunning's experience as a colonial architect was further extended in Cape Town. His association with fellow Tasmanians Alfred and Sidney Luttrell drew him to Dunedin where he supervised the construction of the New Zealand Express Company Building.

Dunning was an ambitious architect. His competition entries included designs for the New Zealand Parliament Buildings (1911) and the Auckland War Memorial Museum (1922). Despite the quality of his work and efforts towards self-promotion, Dunning's most significant contribution to the city's architecture, the National Bank (1911) has been frequently attributed to another designer. The remainder of his work is also little known. This paper seeks to explore the ways in which architects asserted authorship during the period and will attempt to map the shifting responsibilities between architects and builders that allowed Dunning's contribution to the National Bank project to become obscured.

"Edmund Anscombe: early competition work"

Christine McCarthy

Edmund Anscombe is reputed to have begun his architectural career in Dunedin with the success of the University of Otago School of Mines competition, after spending five years in America (1902-1906) studying architecture. His early career is characterised by consistent success in architectural competitions over a short period of time. He won competitions for the University of Otago School of Mines (1908), the Young Men's Christian Association Building (1909), the Hanover Street Baptist Church (1910), the Methodist Central Mission Hall (1910), and the Dunedin Girls' High School (1909) - where he won first and second place. His competition work chronologically culminates in a placing of ninth in Order of Merit in the 1911 competition for a new New Zealand Parliament, which was won by John Campbell and Claude Paton.

This research will examine each of these competitions and evaluate their influence on Anscombe's developing architectural career, especially in the context of his recent time in America and the increasing predominance of the Beaux-Arts curriculum in American schools of architecture. It will also consider the wider significance of architectural competitions in the design of early twentieth-century public buildings in New Zealand.

"'Success of New Zealand Lady Student' Revisited"

Julia Gatley

In 1917 a young woman named Alison Sleight was engaged by Samuel Hurst Seager as an articulated pupil. Her engagement confirms that women were attempting to enter New Zealand's architectural profession from at least this time, and that it was possible for them to find support among male practitioners.

Ten years later, Sleight was identified as the first New Zealand woman to be elected an Associate of the RIBA. As such she holds an important place in New Zealand's architectural history. But she has been given little place in the historical record to date.

This paper considers the lack of scholarly attention that has been given to the contribution of women architects to early-to-mid 20th century New Zealand architecture and, consequently, how little is known about the entry of women into New Zealand's architectural profession.

The paper then outlines Sleight's career and uses her career to demonstrate that early-to-mid 20th century New Zealand was producing women architects whose contribution was such that their names and their stories warrant inclusion in the historical record.

It is hoped that this exposé of Sleight will encourage further research into a little tapped but important aspect of New Zealand's architectural history.

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENTS

"Design No. 3: the influence, if any, this had on the design of the 1930's State house"

Barbara Fill

This paper will look at the influence *Design No. 3*, constructed at Patrick Street, Petone in 1906 as part of Richard Seddon's Workers Dwelling Act scheme, had on the design of the houses constructed under the 1936 Labour Government state housing scheme. A comparison between this house and the First State House at Miramar, designed by the Department of Housing Construction in 1937, will be made.

The style of the house, designed in 1905 by Hurst Seager and Cecil Wood as part of the first state housing scheme introduced in New Zealand, was heavily criticised in its day. Its simple bungalow form was significantly different to the other houses constructed in the street as part of the Heretaunga Settlement. It was also a clear departure from the other house designed by Hurst Seager and Cecil Wood that was on display at the 1906 New Zealand Exhibition in Christchurch and later constructed in one of the Dunedin settlements. *Design No. 3* is reminiscent of the style that emerged as part of the mass 1930's state housing scheme with which we are more familiar.

"The Politics of Empire and the Architecture of Identity: Public Architecture in New Zealand 1900-1918"

Ian Lochhead

During the period from 1900 to 1918 new governmental buildings were constructed throughout New Zealand as part of a campaign to provide accommodation for government departments. Post offices, court houses and departmental buildings appeared in provincial towns as well as in major cities, almost all products of the government's architectural office, led by John Campbell. The exuberant Imperial Baroque style adopted for these buildings reflects a new national confidence but also follows closely the precedent of British public building of the period. Auckland's former Chief Post Office (1908-11) for example, is closely modelled on Sir Henry Tanner's Central Post Office in London (1907).

The extent and consistency of the Government's building programme was intended to promote a sense of national unity although its dependence on British models seems to confirm Hurst Seager's argument that New Zealand had yet to develop a distinctive architectural style. The use of the Imperial Baroque style, culminating in Campbell's design for Parliament Buildings of 1911, reflected New Zealand's strong sense of identification with the British Empire, also expressed through the contributions of its politicians at Imperial Conferences from 1897 to 1911. Unlike their counterparts from Canada and Australia, New Zealand politicians argued for stronger imperial bonds as a way of ensuring greater influence over imperial policies. This paper will argue that in fact, New Zealand public architecture of the period 1900-1918 reflects a clear sense of national identity but one that is defined in terms of Britishness and conceived within the larger framework of the security provided by imperial solidarity.

"Parliament Buildings and the Sinking of the Titanic"

David Kernohan

The RMS Titanic was the ultimate symbol of the power and ubiquitousness of the British Empire. Everything was in the finest Edwardian Classic style. The public rooms were sumptuous with a grand baroque stairway leading into the Grand Salon. There was the first-ever on board swimming pool, a Palm Court, a Parisian Café and a lounge modelled after a room at the Palace of Versailles. On the evening of 14 April, 1912, the ship hit an iceberg. It took two hours and forty minutes after hitting the floating ice for the ship to go down.

Construction of the Parliament Buildings in Wellington began in 1912. The finally approved design was an amalgamation of the winning competition entry of John Campbell and Claude Paton and the fourth placed design by Campbell and Lawrence. The design was in the distinct Edwardian Classic image of the British Empire but with only a little of the exuberance of some of Campbell's Imperial Baroque work. Interestingly, the building displayed some New Zealand character, most notably in the use of materials and in the Maori Affairs Committee Room. The building was not completed, half finished, until 1922.

The paper discusses the nature of the entries to the Parliament Building competition and the politics surrounding the event. It focuses on the architecture of John Campbell, most notably his affinity for the Edwardian Classical style. The paper explores the significance of the style in the New Zealand

context and conjectures on other influences that might have held some sway. Finally, the paper suggests the building might have benefited from suffering a fate similar to that of the Titanic.

^{i ii} Roger Neich, 1993, *Painted Histories*, p241