

"redolent of the soil":
New Zealand Interior and Landscape Architecture in the 1890s
a one day symposium held under the auspices of the Centre for Building Performance
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ABSTRACTS

Elizabeth Cox "The Thomas Ward Map of 1890s Wellington"

In 1892, a remarkable map of Wellington was completed. Stretching from Thorndon in the north to Berhampore to the south, and taking in the teeming inner-city areas of Te Aro and Newtown, the remnants of Māori kainga, the town belt, the Basin Reserve, the prison, "lunatic asylum" and hospital, reclamations and every street in between.

The map, drawn by engineer and surveyor Thomas Ward, is actually 103 maps, drawn on A1 sheets. On the map, the exact footprint of every single building in Wellington is recorded – every commercial building and house, every garden shed and outdoor toilets. Bay windows and verandahs are carefully drawn. Data is recorded for every building, including how many rooms it contains, what the roof and walls are made of and how many storeys it has. Legal titles are exactly mapped, as are the city's streams and even the street lights.

Once complete, one full pristine set of the maps was set aside and preserved intact. Another set of the maps was updated regularly, for approximately the next ten years. For that decade, we can follow every change in the city, down to the smallest detail such as the replacement of slate rooves with corrugated iron, but also bigger-scale work such as the reconfiguration of whole streets.

The Thomas Ward map is a touchstone for the history of our city. It is used every day by Wellington's archaeologists and historians. Wellington City Council provides the map online as a digital overlay over modern satellite images of the city, allowing us to compare the city of 1892 to the city of today.

A well-known feature of the history of Wellington in the 1890s was the outbreak of typhoid and other diseases in the inner-city, a result of overcrowding and lack of clean water. To combat this, a number of "slum clearances" were ordered by the city council, resulting in whole streets of working-class houses being demolished. This paper, a part of a much larger project, will examine some of the stories shown in the two sets of maps, with a particular focus of the changed landscape of the inner-city brought about by this "slum clearance" work of the 1890s.

Michael Dudding "Narratives of Empire: Houseplants in the Victorian Domestic Interiors of Lord and Lady Ranfurly's Government House and the pātaka in the room"

Amidst the fervor of Victorian imperialism, houseplants emerged as significant elements within interior design, not only for their aesthetic appeal but also for their capacity to symbolise power, prestige, and connections to distant lands.

Drawing primarily from prints in the Ranfurly family photographs collection, this study explores the role of houseplants in Victorian domestic interiors against a backdrop of New Zealand colonisation, with a focused examination of the Auckland and Wellington Government Houses during the turn of the twentieth century tenure of Lord and Lady Ranfurly.

The presence of houseplants not only introduced an element of nature to the domestic interiors of the Governor's residences but also embodied the transplantation of cultural practices across continents. In this intertwined role, houseplants act as agents of nostalgia, comfort, and botanical curiosity. From this context, the Government Houses' interiors emerge as a microcosm of colonial dynamics, where the juxtaposition of British aesthetics and indigenous elements reflects a broader colonial enterprise. By exploring the roles of houseplants as decorative embellishments and cultural signifiers, this study contributes to an understanding of the complex interactions between imperial aspirations and interior design during the Victorian era.

Scott Flutey ""Style that leaves nothing to be desired": Whanganui's Ladies Club of 1897"

In 1897, a new, purpose-built institution made national headlines when it opened in the colony's fifth-largest centre. The Ladies' Club was marketed as the first and only club of its kind, and was based on a Gentlemen's Club model catering to the upper classes of town and country. Designed by local architect William Pinches, a public tea room allowed non-members access to part of the building and much was made of its points of difference. In the immediate wake of women's suffrage being granted, proprietor Harriett Cameron was riding the crest of a wave of local women leading new, public-oriented lives.

Described as artistic and luxurious, the interior was perhaps the most lavishly decorated in town. Photographs of it were widely published and the Ladies' Club seemed poised to become a fashionable social and political hub of the district. Yet within five years the club had dissolved, and the building would be lost only twenty-five years later. Its demolition reflected a wider shift in values and aesthetics, and the declining influence of the British-modelled established gentry over the region's cultural life.

This talk will visit the interior of the lost Ladies' Club through sharing recent research on the building. It will examine a few contemporary local 1890s interiors which have survived, and look at high society club culture which has survived in the town against the odds.

Eva Forster-Garbutt "Wallpaper patterns in New Zealand's Schools of Art and Design"

Schools of art and design were established in New Zealand from 1875 to foster the development of technical skills in the trades and the creative and decorative arts. These schools flourished throughout the latter two decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. Informed by the teachings of the South Kensington School in England, embedded in the Arts and Crafts movement, students in New Zealand were instructed in the design of patterns for interior finishes, such as wallpapers, tiles, linoleum and textiles, often drawing on inspiration from nature, both exotic and native.

This paper will explore the design of wallpaper patterns by students of the schools of art in Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington and Whanganui, focusing on designs produced between 1888 and the late 1890s. The influence and inspiration for these patterns will be traced, from their roots in England to the natural environment in New Zealand.

Matt Grant "Green Expectations: Hamilton in the 1890s"

In August 1889, Hamilton celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary of European settlement. A public holiday was declared, flags flew from several flagstaff, and the old Fourth Waikato veterans paraded. Despite the fanfare, expectations were low for the decade ahead.

Hamilton had the unflattering appearance of an American Frontier Town. Commercial buildings were made of wood, flimsy, and lacked any appearance of permanence. Two disastrous main-street fires in the 1890s were stopped only by the brick walls of the Waikato Times Building (1878). Livestock was moved through the centre of town by day to sale yards in Frankton, and stray animals roamed the streets at night. Hamilton roads were unformed with open drains, and public sanitation was poor. The population of Hamilton barely changed in fifteen years from 1886 to 1901.

The 1880s Depression hit the Waikato hard. In the early 1890s land was almost unsaleable in Hamilton and there was no money available for investment. Most banks had lent too heavily on farming property, and now found these investments returning no income and unrealisable. Waikato soil was naturally unproductive. Through necessity it was tested and experimented on resulting in the establishment of the Waikato Agricultural College and Model Farm in 1888, which in 1901 would become the Ruakura Agriculture Research Centre. Farming in the Waikato had originally been a combination of grain and other crops, cattle for its meat, and sheep for wool. As late as 1896 the Waikato was still regarded as 'healthy sheep country'. In the Waikato dairy (butter and cheese) was a small-scale and local industry, yet wool accounted for a third of New Zealand export revenue.

After decades of struggle, the fortunes of Hamilton settlers would change for the better in the 1890s. Scientific breakthroughs in soil research, new farming techniques, the introduction of refrigerated freight, and improved global prices for meat and dairy products would all lead to prosperity in the region. New buildings such as the Howden Building (1892), New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Building (1893) and The Hamilton Hotel (1899) indicated a new business confidence in Hamilton.

This paper will examine the context and circumstances that shaped Hamilton's difficult years leading up to the 1890s, and the prosperity that would eventually occur in that decade as a result of its landscape.

Marguerite Hill "Lions and wyverns and dolphins, oh my! Jessie Mitchell Elmslie's Arts and Crafts furniture"

Jessie Mitchell Elmslie was just 22 years old when she carved an intricate and highly decorative oak and kauri sideboard. The 1.8-metre-high sideboard is dripping with Arts and Crafts iconography, including wyverns, lions and a Green Man with a flowing beard. Jessie also incorporated copper tooling into her design, with beaten copper handles and repousse heraldic dolphins.

Jessie's father, Dr Reverend John Elmslie, was the minister at St Paul's Presbyterian Church in Christchurch. One of his parishioners taught Jessie to carve, and she produced at least two large pieces of furniture during the 1890s: the sideboard now in the collection of Canterbury Museum and a walnut settle, now in the collection of Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand.

Decorative woodworking and carving became popular with New Zealand women during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Arts and Crafts movement along with the establishment of art and design schools from the 1870s, meant that women were able to engage in crafts formerly reserved for men. This paper will look at Jessie and her work in the context of other, generally Pākehā, women Arts and Crafts practitioners in New Zealand. These include jewellers such as Annie Buckhurst and Chrystabel Aitken, and another talented carver, Evelyn Vaile.

Adrian Humphris "Relating the location and mobility of architects in the 1890s to urban cityscapes"

Architecture as a profession in New Zealand developed from one with mainly individuals, often entering and leaving the profession as opportunity or available work dictated, operating with a higher level of mobility and few qualified participants, into a more structured profession with a smaller number of larger firms with more rigid composition and roles, and established pathways to qualify and enter the profession. This pattern of mobility and engagement of the profession adjusting roles according to the work available was still prevalent in the 1890s, a decade bisected by the end of a long depression and economic improvements leading to a long boom period.

The 1890s saw increasing urbanisation, as well as the rise of civic and public architecture, from museums and clubs to homes for people coming to urban areas for work. The role of architect was changing, as architects increasingly became professional office workers with well-staffed offices capitalising on the demand for construction.

In the absence of landscape architecture as a profession the aggregation and location of architects (and local authority engineers) directly impacted cityscapes where they practiced. By analysing a large dataset of architects and firms in practice throughout the 1890s this paper will show the changing spatial pattern of architects and their practices and relate this to urban cityscapes at the time.

Adrian Humphris and Geoff Mew "'Money makes the rooms go round': effects of affluence on room size and functions in 1890s houses."

The 1890s was a decade in which a number of very large houses were either built or added to throughout the country. Their owners were commonly wealthy landowners or skilled businessmen.

Room numbers and functions reflected the Victorian lifestyles of such people and tended to reflect similar trends in England although on a somewhat lesser scale. Room numbers of between 20 and 50 contrasted sharply with the 4 to 8 in an average family home of the time. In the latter the rooms were largely functional with the main family life centred around the kitchen and bedrooms. The big houses by contrast had extra rooms such as servants' quarters, ballrooms, billiard rooms, libraries, and dressing rooms and were often designed for entertaining and catering for visiting parties. The economic problems of the late 1880s and early '90s seem to have had little effect on those who might have been regarded as being on "The Rich List" whereas those on low incomes would not have been able to add more rooms such as parlours and bathrooms which became more common as conditions improved.

Nigel Isaacs "Building Paper Arrives in New Zealand"

Building paper, invented in Beloit, Wisconsin in 1869, arrived in New Zealand in the late 1880s. In 1891 it was used under the corrugated iron roof and walls in the four-bed Tasman Glacier Hut. It would have provided relief from condensation on the inside of the corrugated iron as well as reducing the ability of the wind to blow through the hut. Building paper quickly became common place, with advertising from English and American manufacturers appearing daily newspapers as well as trade journals. The paper will trace the first decades of building paper use in New Zealand as it evolved from a novelty to a common building product – hidden under the cladding but improving on the comfort of the occupants.

Nigel Isaacs "'Sanitation and Ventilation as required in a Modern House": a review of by-laws in the 1890s relating to toilets in New Zealand Housing"

Good public sanitation has a long history in New Zealand, with Joseph Banks recording on 21 October 1769: "Every House or small knot of 3 or 4 has a regular necessary house where every one repairs and consequently the neighbourhood is kept clean." Although piped water was in main city centres (e.g. Dunedin, Wellington) by the 1860s, it was not until the 1880s that it became common in houses. By the 1890s "earth" or "water" closets were built onto laundry outhouse or at the farthest corner of the garden. As the population of cities increased, public health issues became more important, requiring the introduction of by-laws. As well as issues of sanitation, the by-laws were concerned with fire and public decency. The paper will review the evolution of council by-laws dealing with privies and toilets in Wellington and Dunedin to the beginning of the twentieth century.

Christine McCarthy "Malta, Bluebooks and Scotland Yard: plans for prisons in NZ"

Two large New Zealand prisons opened in the 1890s: Dunedin Gaol (1895-98), designed by John Campbell, and Mount Cook Gaol (1882-97, dem 1925), designed by Pierre Finch Martineau Burrows. While Burrows had designed Mount Cook (and its sibling at Mount Eden), it was reputedly modelled on a Malta prison and colonial Blue Books - though it would be Dunedin Gaol's architect, John Campbell, who would supervise the building through to completion. The two designs are very different - Dunedin being a courtyard prison, with aesthetic echoes of Scotland Yard in London, and Mount Cook having a radial plan, the antecedent of which Newbold states to be Pentonville (London 1840-42). This paper considers the interiors of these prisons and the reasons for their differences.

Peter Wood "Inside-Out, or Outside-In?: Woman in a glasshouse at the residence of Louis P Christeson at 213 Willis Street, Wellington (ca 1890s)"

This research draws its subject, and its sub-title, from a photograph taken by Louis P Christeson, in which a female figure is depicted tending to the potted inhabitants of a small conservatory. Using this image as a reference point, this paper discusses the conservatory as a transgressive space that is neither properly inside, nor properly outside, the houses and gardens they are associated to. Specifically, a conservatory enables the creation of fertile artificial climates to support flora specimens that would otherwise not find a horticulturally receptive environment. As an architectural technology, its history well precedes the 1890s, but it is in this decade that the conservatory's role expanded from its agricultural origins to affect representations of social and cultural transaction. Or, in simple terms, though the 1890s a conservatory was increasingly just as likely to feature people as it was plants.

With conservatories, simple divisions of interiority and exteriority, and normative expectations of public and private distinctions, become far more mobile in their spatial classifications. In this regard, the 1890s are a particularly important decade for the conservatory as it shifted from being a tool of horticultural propagation to become a new expression of social and cultural production that conflated the distinctions between interior and exterior, and linking this to individual economic progress. Bringing this argument back to my reference photograph, I suggest that for Louis P Christeson, the conservatory was profoundly important symbol of middle-class arrival as exemplified by home ownership and leisure interests, both of which utilised the conservatory as a "third-space". It cannot be claimed that the conservatory led societal evolution, but it does provide a useful architectural touchstone for registering how the relationship between interior and landscape changed as a consequence.