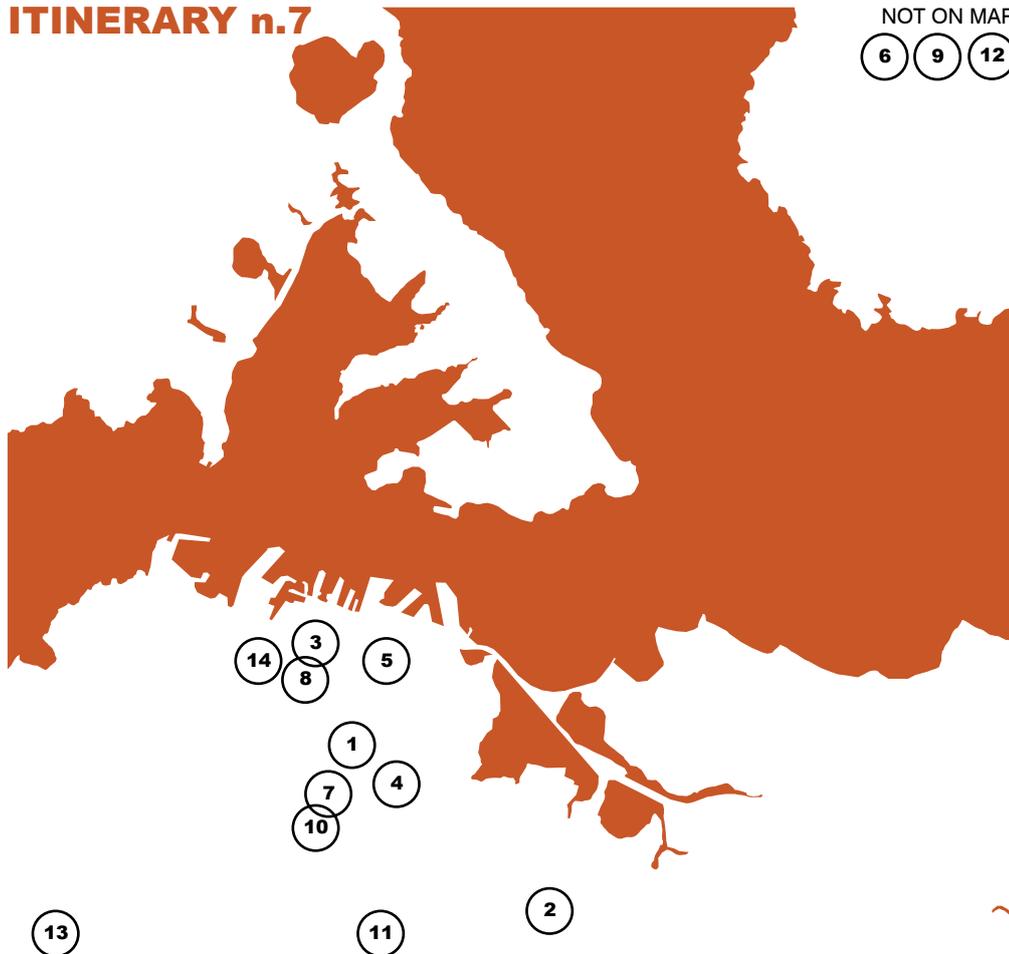
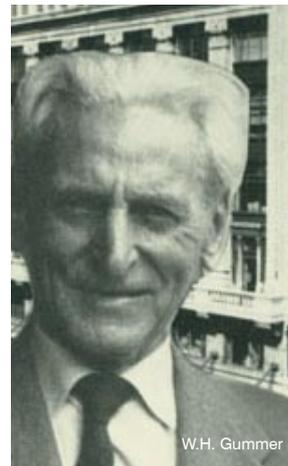


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Photos: Auckland Architecture Archive

Gummer & Ford 1 - Public Buildings

Between the wars, Gummer and Ford dominated the Auckland scene and were New Zealand's most prominent practice of the period. William Gummer and Reginald Ford's forty years of practice together spanned New Zealand's transition from colonial dependence to full nationhood. A Beaux-Arts architect was expected to be capable of working confidently in a number of styles, as required by the architectural program and the wishes of the client. In an era of rapidly changing social and economic conditions, the Gummer and Ford mastered a succession of "manners", imaginatively adapting first traditional architectural styles, and then modernist ideas, to the rapidly evolving requirements of their times. This culminated in the local emergence of what historian Bruce Petry has described as a "moderate modernism."

The firm's work was technologically advanced. Gummer's time under Daniel Burnham, a leading figure in the 'Chicago school', had exposed him to the latest structural ideas for multi-storey commercial developments, and Ford wrote one of the earliest books in English on seismic engineering. The 1935 Dingwall Building became a structural test case for New Zealand, and the building proved pivotal in the development of multi-storey construction in this country. Even relatively small buildings such as the classroom blocks for St Peter's school were constructed with sophisticated concrete frames.

At the time Gummer passed through Burnham's office, it was the world's largest architecture firm. This background, and Ford's commercial and organizational acumen, allowed the practice to take on some of the nation's biggest and most complex commissions. The firm's development tracked the rise of professionalism in New Zealand's architectural production, and it became an important training ground for young architects, with key members of NZ's first generation of modernists emerging from the firm – Gordon Wilson, Horace Massey, Geoffrey Rix-Trott, and Robin Simpson. Most, however, were able to produce thorough-going modernist projects only after leaving the firm – Simpson's own house (1938) was one of NZ's first modernist houses and Wilson's Berhampore Flats (completed in 1940 when he was Architect to the Department of Housing) have been described as the nation's first full expression of the ideals of European Modernism.

The Depression and then the advent of the Second World War drastically slowed the firm's momentum, and in the post-War period it struggled to re-establish its ascendancy. By the 1950s, Gummer and Ford's "moderate modernism" seemed less exciting. The avant-garde torch had passed to younger architects whose more assertive brands of modernism were either more resolutely international (Paul Pascoe, T.K. Donner) or more regionally inflected (John Scott, Richard Toy).

In transposing and adapting ideas from abroad – first the Beaux Arts tradition and later modernism – to a New Zealand context, Gummer and Ford had not only prepared the ground for the full flowering of modernist ideas, but in doing so had produced some of the nation's most assured buildings.

Andrew Barrie & Julia Gatley

Biography:

William Henry Gummer (1884-1966) was born in Auckland and served articles under Auckland architect W. H. Holman before travelling to England in 1908. He studied at the Royal Academy of Arts, qualified as an associate of the RIBA, and worked for Sir Edwin Lutyens in London and briefly for Daniel Burnham in Chicago. On returning to NZ in 1913, Gummer entered a partnership with Hoggard and Prouse, where he was able to establish himself as the partnership's chief designer.

Charles Reginald Ford (1880-1972) was born in London. He served in the Royal Navy and travelled to Antarctica as the youngest member of Scott's 1901-04 expedition. He established himself as a real estate agent in Christchurch, before setting up the architectural practice of Ford & Talboys in Wanganui.

Gummer and Ford was formed in Auckland in 1923, and the practice's 1924 competition winning design for the Auckland Civic Centre was a huge early boost to their standing. The pairs' joint practice lasted almost 40 years. Both Ford & Gummer served as presidents of the NZIA. The partnership was dissolved in 1961, when both men retired.

1

1916–28

Auckland Winter Gardens
Domain Drive, Grafton



The Wintergardens have been a favourite promenade for Aucklanders since 1921 when the Cool House was opened. The earlier building commemorated, and was built with profits from, the Industrial, Agricultural and Mining Exhibition of 1913-1914. In the tradition of Burnham's World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1893), the pool is located centrally, meaning that even though the architectural language is classical, building users cannot walk on the lines of symmetry and do not approach the buildings frontally. Rather, the landscaping forces them to make conscious decisions about turning left or right and to approach the buildings obliquely. See *Architecture NZ* Nov/Dec 2004.

2

1925

Remuera Public Library
429 Remuera Road, Remuera



The architectural language of this institutional building is again classical – not the grand and even monumental classicism of Burnham and the American Beaux-Arts movement, but rather a restrained classicism that is best described as Neo-Georgian. The building is symmetrical about a colonnaded portico and entry, with a series of arched multi-light windows extending from it on either side. Use is made of the contrast between the red brick skin and white facings to achieve both horizontal and vertical articulation. This building was awarded an NZIA Gold Medal in 1928. See *NZIA Journal* April 1929.

3

1925

Dilworth Trust Building
Cnr Queen & Customs Sts, City



Faced in Portland stone, the Dilworth Building's crisp, strongly modelled façade reveals the strong influence of Gummer's former employer, Sir Edwin Lutyens. A celebrated watercolour by Gummer entitled *Urbis Porta* shows that a mirror image building was envisaged on the other side of Queen Street (the land was owned by the same client), forming a monumental gateway to the city from the water's edge. The building's dramatic black and grey marble vestibule was demolished in the 1980s. Much of the building has now been converted to apartments. See *NZ Arch. & Bldg. Review* Jan 1927 and *Architecture NZ* July/Aug 2005.

4

1924-58

Jubilee Institute for the Blind
George Street, Newmarket



The Institute for the Blind's brick headquarters were built by architect Edward Bartley in 1909. Gummer and Ford designed a series of additions and new buildings, including the neo-Georgian Pearson House men's quarters on Titoki Street (1924-25), an L-shaped workshop block (1926), the Home for Aged Men (1933), and an addition to the Hutchinson Block (1958). Towards the end of last century, the institute sought to integrate its members into the community and scale back its operations. Activities were consolidated in a new building on the site, and the older buildings were converted into a community centre and commercial space.

5

1927

Auckland Railway Station
132-148 Beach Road, City



One of the biggest and most ornate railway stations in the country, the station was unprecedented as civic architecture – it was at the time the largest independent construction contract ever issued in the country. Modelled on American prototypes, clearly defined forms in granite and detailed brickwork have been draped over a reinforced concrete structure. Within, the facilities of the main concourse included waiting rooms, dining rooms, shops offices, and even a barber's shop. With the transfer of the rail node to the Britomart, the building was converted into a student hostel, although the dramatic entrance lobby space – with its classical decoration and coffered ceiling – are still accessible to the public. In 1931, the building received an NZIA Gold Medal. See *NZIA Journal* April 1930, and *Architecture NZ* May/June 1989

6

1928–30

Dingwall Orphanage
8 Dingwall Place, Papatoetoe



The Dingwall Orphanage is highly derivative of British garden city/suburb precedents in its layout and its architectural language. The scheme is located at the end of a cul-de-sac and comprised "cottages", each of which was to accommodate a "house mother" and between twelve and twenty children. The original design included two pairs of cottages on either side of an open green space with a larger building at one end. The cottages and the larger building are all linked by covered walkways, together forming a U-shaped layout, i.e. three sides of a quadrangle. However, only three of the four cottages were actually built.

7

1931–43

St. Peters School
Reeves Road, Mount Eden



In 1925 Gummer & Ford refurbished a church for Rev. James Liston (later Bishop and Archbishop), a project that began a long relationship with the Auckland Catholic Diocese that provided the firm with a series of commissions, including a number of churches, schools, a convent, and work at St. Patrick's Cathedral and St Barnabas' Church. Gummer and Ford designed a primary and secondary school for this site; run by the Christian Brothers, it opened in February 1939. Gummer and Ford twice extended the classroom block to the West but, strangely, a section of the building has been removed so that the original complex now stands as two separate buildings. While on site, be sure to explore Architectus' award-winning Technology Block (2001) and Middle School Building (2003).

8

1934–35

Dingwall Trust Building
87–93 Queen Street, City



This 8 storey commercial building provided income to support the Dingwall Orphanage. It is important in the development of highrise architecture in New Zealand, signalling a shift from Skyscraper Gothic and Art Deco to modern, most obviously apparent in the reduction of ornament and the introduction of large expanses of glass. In addition, new earthquake resisting measures were introduced after the Napier quake of 1931 and it was in buildings like the Dingwall that these were first realised. See *NZIA Journal* Dec 1935 and *Home & Building* Oct/Dec 1936.

9

1935

Good Shepherd Home for Girls
Cnr. Dominion & Hillsborough
Roads, Waikowhai



In 1931 the Sisters of the Good Shepherd opened the old house on this site as a home for girls. Laundry work was the main occupation of the home's residents, although they also made lace, linen and church vestments.

In 1935, Gummer & Ford designed a new Girls' Home and a large laundry on the site - its three-storey concrete residential block housed 200 girls. When the Home closed, the property passed to the Catholic Diocese of Auckland and it was sold in 1985 to the Chase Private Hospital Group who developed the Hillsborough Heights Retirement Village on the site. Gummer & Ford's much altered building still stands, now surrounded by residential units and a bowling green.

10

1952

Auckland Grammar School Old
Boy's War Memorial
Mountain Road, Epsom



In 1921, while working with Prouse, Gummer designed a series of First World War memorials, including the Dunedin Cenotaph and Christchurch's Bridge of Remembrance, as well as the memorial at Auckland Grammar. Standing across from E. Abbott's encrusted Spanish Mission block, Gummer's column is full of restraint and gravitas. In 1952, Gummer and Ford designed the school's World War II Memorial - a series of bronze plaques fixed to the walls of the Memorial surround. Gummer's own house, "Stoneways" (1924-25), is across the street at 46 Mountain Road. See *Art New Zealand* No. 47 (Spring 1988).

11

1952-53

Cornwall Park Steps
Olive Grove, Greenlane



Built to commemorate John Logan Campbell, the Auckland 'founding father' who donated the land for Cornwall Park, this project consists of a series of stone landscape walls, rocks, steps, seating, and terraces in grass and pre-cast concrete paving. The composition sets up a grand axis, but one in which neither an origin nor a termination are apparent. Now covered in lichen, the steps read as a romantic ruin, a remnant of some previous occupation. The Acacia Cottage has been relocated close to the steps, exaggerating its fragmentary character.

12

1953

Mangere Memorial Hall
23 Domain Road, Mangere



When this surprisingly conservative design was published in 1958, it was explained as follows: "The architects felt that a building of this nature had to be worthy of the sacrifice of those it commemorated. With this major function in view the planning was kept traditionally formal and the detail made severe, bordering almost on the ecclesiastical." The building has suffered remarkably few changes (only the addition of a wheelchair ramp and a suspended ceiling), and the view from the slopes of Mangere Mountain alone is worth the trip. See *Home & Building* May 1958.

13

1955-57

St Mary's Catholic Church
20 Kitenui Ave, Mt Albert



Roughly contemporary with John Scott's Futuna Chapel and Richard Toy's All Saints', Ponsonby, the church made the cover of *Home & Building* when it was published in 1958, but shows the gap that had opened up between the soon-to-retire Gummer and Ford and NZ's regionalist avant-garde. Wrapped in an elegant brick skin, a steel structure finished with plaster sought to provide maximum seating for minimum cost; the most striking feature of the interior is a series of octagonal skylights. (The interior has been dramatically re-arranged - the altar is now in the centre of the space, so that the two halves of the congregation face each other.) See *Home & Building* Aug. 1958.

14

1961

Liston House
30-32 Hobson Street, City



Gummer and Ford worked on various alterations to St. Patrick's Cathedral, including an altar and ciborium. Liston House replaced an old wooden building on the site, and was constructed to accommodate various organizations and facilities connected with the Cathedral and the Diocese. The T-shaped building absorbs the one-storey change in ground level between Hobson Street and the St Patrick's Square, and smoothly incorporates an existing brick building at the upper level. Published as the work of Gummer, Ford, Hoadley, Budge & Gummer, the building was completed the year William Gummer and Reginald Ford retired. See *Home & Building* July 1961.

Other Addresses:

Guardian Trust Bldg (1914)
101-107 Queen St., City

This innovative steel-framed building was produced while Gummer was practicing with Hoggard and Prouse, and is his first important design for the New Zealand Insurance Company, a company which become one of Gummer and Ford's most important clients.

Grey Lynn Library (1923)
474 Gt. North Rd, Grey Lynn
Opened in 1924, this building is now the oldest purpose-built library still operating in Auckland.

Elliot Memorial Gates (1935)
Park Road, Grafton
George Elliot had been the major sponsor of the Wintergarden - Temperate House (1916-1921) and Tropical House, Pergola and Courtyard (1927-1928). The gate was commissioned as a bequest by his brother William.

ANZ Bank (1962)
149 Upper Symonds St., City
In the late-50s, Gummer, Ford, Hoadley, Budge & Gummer completed a number of ANZ Bank branches around Auckland (incl. Wakefield Street, Newmarket, Panmure, and Papakura). This branch, although not in good shape, is one of the few not to have been demolished or drastically altered.

Sources:

The photographs are by Julia Gatley and Andrew Barrie. Many thanks to Maria Ericksen at the University of Auckland's Architecture Archive for her invaluable help.

The most comprehensive source on Gummer & Ford's work is Bruce Petry's 1992 Master's thesis, *The Public Architecture of Gummer & Ford*. Kieran Shanahan's 1983 undergraduate thesis, *The Work of William H. Gummer, Architect* is also a valuable resource. Both theses are held by the Auckland University Architecture Library. Gummer & Ford's work is covered extensively in local architecture histories - Shaw, Stacpoole & Beavan, Hodgson, Haarhoff - and the various buildings were widely published in the journals of the day, but two of the most useful journal articles are the respective obituaries of Gummer (*NZIA Journal* March 1967) and Ford (*Home & Building* June 1972). Paul Waite's exhibition catalogue *In the Beau-Arts Tradition: William Gummer Architect* (Napier: Hawke's Bay Cultural Trust, 2005) is useful, but deals primarily with Gummer's residential work in the Hawkes Bay. See also *The Story of Dingwall* (Auckland: Dingwall Presbyterian Orphanage Trust Board, 1951).