

Auckland Architecture

A Walking Guide

John Walsh

Photography: Patrick Reynolds

MASSEY
UNIVERSITY
PRESS



Contents

4

INTRODUCTION

7

A NOTE ABOUT
ACCESS & CLASSIFICATIONS

8

ROUTE ONE
BRITOMART & THE WATERFRONT

22

ROUTE TWO
EAST SIDE

50

ROUTE THREE
WEST SIDE & MID-TOWN

74

ROUTE FOUR
GREYS AVENUE & K' ROAD

92

ROUTE FIVE
TO PARNELL

106

ROUTE SIX
TO PONSONBY

122

A NOTE ABOUT
ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

126

GLOSSARY OF
ARCHITECTURAL TERMS

128

CONNECTIONS

131

FURTHER READING

132

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

132

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

133

INDEX

Introduction

The land now occupied by central Auckland has been inhabited since the fourteenth century, when Māori tribes settled the fertile isthmus they called Tāmaki, a place so naturally favoured it was also called Tāmaki-makau-rau (Tāmaki of a hundred lovers). Tāmaki seems to have been a flourishing, if occasionally contested, region by the mid-seventeenth century, 100 years before the English naval explorer James Cook navigated his way to New Zealand, and 200 years before the establishment of the colonial settlement of Auckland.

Auckland's official foundation may be ascribed to Governor William Hobson, who in 1841, the year after he had signed the Treaty of Waitangi with Māori chiefs, chose to make the place the capital of the colony of New Zealand, a status it lost in 1865. In the way of these things, the new capital was named for an imperial figure who had never been remotely near New Zealand; in this case Lord Auckland, the contemporary Governor-General of India, whose career was about to be blighted by the disastrous British retreat from Kabul in the First Afghan War.

Immigrant ships quickly began to arrive, and a rough and ready settlement coalesced around Commercial Bay, at the bottom of what is now Queen Street, before spreading up the Parnell ridge to the east and the Ponsonby ridge to the west, and south up the

Queen Street gully to Karangahape Road. This catchment, which incorporates the modern Auckland CBD and parts of its central-city suburbia, is the focus of this book. Despite Auckland's often careless approach to its built heritage, this area contains more than 150 years' worth of architectural history. From the street, you can read the story of Auckland's progress, its filling in and its going up, and the architectural evolution that accompanied the city's economic development.

The buildings of a city, whether civic or commercial, residential or religious, express the values, ambitions and aesthetic inclinations of the people who, at a particular moment in time, commissioned their design and construction. Architecture is a good guide to the zeitgeist. Accordingly, central Auckland is a pattern book of the styles that have commanded architectural allegiance over a century and a half: the various Revivalisms — Classical, Gothic and Baroque — that were fashionable in Victorian and Edwardian Britain and exported to Britain's empire; the turn-of-the-century Chicago School that is synonymous with confident American capitalism; soft-core inter-war Modernism in its Stripped Classical and Art Deco guises; International Modernism, house style of the post-war corporation; and current expressive form-making, enabled by computer-aided design and composite material technology.

A city's buildings are also a testament, and a measure, of its architectural talent. Able architects have designed impressive buildings in Auckland. In the nineteenth century most of the city's architects were immigrants, men — the word is used advisedly, given the historically gendered nature of the architectural profession — who often came from modest backgrounds in Scotland or Ireland. In their social circumstances, the pupillage nature of their training and their command of the practical details of construction, Auckland's early architects were not so far removed from the master masons who had shaped European cities for a thousand years. As architecture became more professional, and the city grew, local practices were established; many had their hey-day

and then declined, or morphed into new firms. The fortunate few are remembered in their surviving buildings. As well as providing a guide to Auckland's more interesting buildings, this book acknowledges the architects who designed them.

It is organised into half a dozen walks (with public transport close at hand) around the city and its waterfront, and takes in significant streets such as Karangahape Road and Ponsonby Road, important civic buildings such as the War Memorial Museum and the Art Gallery, and popular urban spaces such as the Domain and Wynyard Quarter. Some of the buildings are monumental, some are modest, and all have a story to tell: a city is the sum of its disparate parts.



A note about access & classifications

This book is intended as a footpath guide to the architecture of central Auckland, but many of the featured buildings and structures are open to closer inspection, at least to some extent. The Auckland War Memorial Museum and Auckland Art Gallery of course welcome visitors, as does the publicly funded Artspace. Holy Trinity Cathedral is open to the public, as are St Patrick's Cathedral and All Saints Church. The Leys Institute is a public library, and the glasshouses in the Wintergardens are open every day of the week.

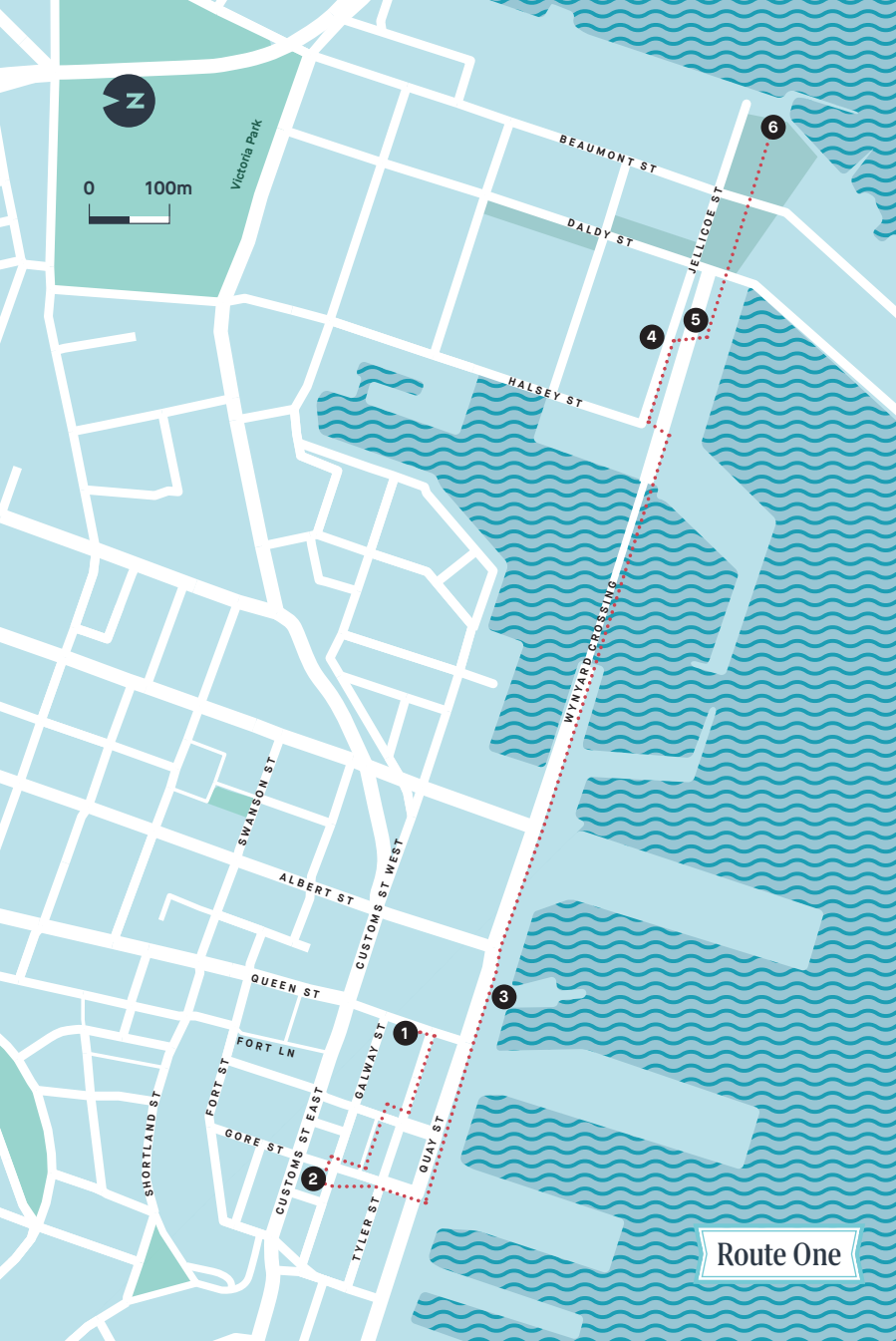
Ellen Melville Hall may be appreciated from adjacent Freyberg Place, and Old Government House from the University of Auckland gardens, which also afford good views of the Maclaurin Chapel. The scene on North Wharf can be observed from the restaurants that front onto the public walkway by the harbour edge, and some of the silos in Silo Park are carved open at ground level. An internal public laneway passes through the Imperial Buildings, connecting Queen Street and Fort Lane. Cafés in the Synagogue and Community Centre, and in St Kevin's Arcade, present leisurely opportunities to experience those buildings.

Smith and Caughey's is a functioning department store, the Civic Theatre is open for performances only, and the Sky Tower can be accessed for a price. (A head for heights is a pre-requisite.) Grafton Bridge and the Lightpath are always open for pedestrians.

Many of the buildings in this guide are listed as Historic Places (Category 1 or 2). These appellations are applied by Heritage New Zealand, a government agency that identifies New Zealand's significant and valued historical and cultural heritage places. Category 1 historic places are of special or outstanding historical or cultural significance or value; Category 2 historic places are of historical or cultural significance or value. It should be noted that listing does not necessarily entail protection.

BRITOMART & THE WATERFRONT

Auckland started out as a port, and the area around the docks was for decades the most vital part of town. For much of the twentieth century, though, the city's waterfront was out of bounds to the public. That's changed now, and the centre of gravity of the CBD is shifting back to the water's edge. This route takes in two urban-revival precincts: Britomart and Wynyard Quarter.



0 100m

Victoria Park

BEAUMONT ST

DALDY ST

JELICOE ST

HALSEY ST

WYNYARD CROSSING

SWANSON ST

ALBERT ST

CUSTOMS ST WEST

QUEEN ST

FORT LN

SHORTLAND ST

FORT ST

GORE ST

CUSTOMS ST EAST

GALWAY ST

TYLER ST

QUAY ST

Route One



Chief Post Office

01

12 Queen Street

John Campbell, 1912

Historic Place Category 1

John Campbell (1857–1942) loved Edwardian Baroque architecture, and he was ideally placed to implement his preference as a national style. The Scot was in charge of the design of New Zealand government buildings for more than 30 years, nearly half of them (1909–1922) spent as the country's first Government Architect. In this nation-building phase of New Zealand's history post offices were essential public amenities — a remote country's portals to the world — and their importance was expressed in their architecture. Made of white Ōamaru stone and Coromandel granite, Campbell's Chief Post Office features a Baroque panoply (London's 1910 General Post Office was an acknowledged influence): arches and cartouches, half-columns with Ionic capitals, a pediment and a parapet and, most flamboyantly, cupolas at either end of the building. In the early 2000s, the Chief Post Office was converted, by Mario Madayag, Jasmax and Salmond Reed Architects, into Britomart Railway Station.



Australis House & A. H. Nathan Warehouse

37 Galway Street

**Mitchell & Watt (Australis House); A. P. Wilson
(A. H. Nathan Warehouse); both 1904**

Historic Place Category 1 — Australis House

Historic Place Category 2 — A. H. Nathan Warehouse

Australis House (formerly the Entrican Building) and the A. H. Nathan Warehouse and Condiments Factory were built on reclaimed land near Auckland's shipping wharves as premises for prosperous colonial importing companies. In the 1990s, a public campaign saved the buildings, and their Victorian and Edwardian neighbours, from ill-considered redevelopment. Restored as one project in 2016 by architects Peddle Thorp, the two buildings are now an integral element of the Britomart heritage precinct. Both buildings face two ways: south to Customs Street, and north (shown here) to the new Takutai Square. Architect A. P. Wilson (1851–1937) topped the Customs Street façade of the A. H. Nathan Warehouse Factory with Romanesque arches; the north side of the building has a plainer neo-Classical façade. Australis House, designed by the practice of John Mitchell (c1859–1947) and Robert Watt (1860–1907), features Baroque detailing on the south face; elegant *sgraffito* (plaster tracery) has been applied by Peddle Thorp to the originally unadorned north façade.



Ferry Building

99 Quay Street

Alexander Wiseman, 1912

Historic Place Category 1

Throughout the twentieth century harbour boards, unsurprisingly in a maritime trading nation, were powerful political entities in New Zealand's port cities, and they proclaimed their importance in their architecture. The Ferry Building, commissioned by the Auckland Harbour Board, occupies an absolutely central waterside site — it is still the downtown ferry hub — at the foot of the city's main street and across the road from the former Chief Post Office (now Britomart Railway Station). The building was designed by Alexander Wiseman (1865–1915), who may have been inspired by a famous precedent in another Pacific port, the Beaux-Arts-style Ferry Building (1898) on San Francisco's Embarcadero, designed by A. Page Brown (1859–1896). Auckland's Ferry Building is designed in the Imperial (or Edwardian or English) Baroque style. Corinthian columns, entablature and gabled pediments in Sydney sandstone leap up and out above a Coromandel granite foundation. The clock tower once housed a time ball; a fifth storey was squeezed into the building in the 1980s.