



THE DESIGN OF THE DOMAIN WINTER GARDENS

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Abstract

First constructed in 1916, the Winter Gardens in Auckland was William Gummer's first public building in New Zealand. Listed as Category 1 by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga and beloved by Aucklanders, the gardens remain under-researched in Aotearoa New Zealand's architectural historiography. This paper aims to comprehensively analyse the Winter Gardens, exploring their historical context, architectural design, and the unique relationship between architecture and garden.

This study sheds light on the distinctive architectural character of the Winter Gardens. The spatial organisation and layout between the indoor and outdoor spaces, the enclosure of space, and the structural system, materials and architectural elements that define this character can be understood by examining the architectural principles employed by William Gummer, learned during his time at London's Royal Academy of Art and under the tutelage of Edwin Lutyens. This paper will also discuss the client's motivations and the building's construction history.

This research aims to deepen our understanding of the architectural significance of the Winter Gardens in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

Keywords: Winter Gardens, William Gummer, Gummer and Ford, Auckland architecture, classical architecture, traditional architecture

Introduction

The Domain Winter Gardens were designed around 1916 with funds left over from the Auckland Industrial, Agricultural and Mining Exhibition of 1913–14, to commemorate the exhibition. It was

built in four stages: the Temperate House was completed in 1921, the Tropical House and Pergola were completed in 1928, and the Fernery was completed in 1930. Although the complex holds a Category 1 listing from Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga and is a popular Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland destination, it remains vastly under-researched in Aotearoa New Zealand architectural historiography. This article aims to fill in the details about the buildings' design, what motivated the clients, how the architect, William Gummer, approached the architectural design, both in theory and in practice, and how these design principles and influences are evident in the building.

Background

The Auckland Industrial, Agricultural and Mining Exhibition was opened by its chairman, George Elliot, on 1 December 1913 to a crowd of 18,000 people (including the Prime Minister, William Massey, and thirty-five Members of Parliament¹) in the Auckland Domain.² Closing after Easter 1914, the Exhibition was considered a success, turning a surplus of about £3,000, and leaving a built legacy of flower beds and lawns, Domain Drive (the scoria was mined from the quarry behind the Winter Gardens, now the Fernery), a refurbished Bandstand Rotunda, and the Tea Kiosk.³ A total attendance of about 870,000 people was estimated, with the average season-ticket holder attending roughly thirty times.⁴

The surplus funds were "intended for the beautification of the domain."⁵ The allocation of funds took shape in September 1916 when William Gummer called tenders to construct one of the buildings for the Winter Gardens.⁶

3 "Table Talk," *Auckland Star*, November 29, 1913, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/AS19131129.2.2>

4 "Auckland Exhibition Opened," *NZ Truth*, December 13, 1913, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZTR19131213.2.27>

5 "The End of the Exhibition," *New Zealand Herald*, April 20, 1914, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19140420.2.36>

6 Ibid.

7 "Local and General News," *New Zealand Herald*, May 14, 1914, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19140514.2.31>

8 "Building Notes," *N.Z. Building Progress* XII, no. 1 (September 1, 1916): 728, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/periodicals/P19160901.2.20>

The Brief

According to the *Auckland Star*, the Winter Gardens “shall constitute a permanent memorial to the exhibition.”⁷⁷ The client, the Auckland City Council, had been considering a proposal, but “William Gummer, who, as secretary of the Town Planning League, took the initiative in suggesting something better than the council had under consideration.”⁷⁸ The question becomes, what would a memorial to the Auckland Exhibition be as an architectural proposition? There were two reasons for holding the Auckland Exhibition. For the Auckland business community, it was to promote the industrial, mining and agricultural sectors in the upper North Island after the examples

set by Melbourne, Dunedin, Christchurch and the previous Auckland Exhibition in 1898.⁹ For the Auckland City Council, it was to use the exhibition as a catalyst to develop part of the 40 hectares of land left under-developed as a recreational area since the area was set aside by the New Zealand Government in 1840.¹⁰

The exhibition was a varied and sprawling venture covering over 50 acres with six entrances and up to 400 exhibitors installed in the mining section, educational court, the tourist department’s court, an aquarium, and various government departments (insurance, postal, marine, defence, labour and



Figure 2. “The Exhibition Buildings from Across the Miniature Lakes,” *New Zealand Herald*, December 1, 1913. Note that the shape and position of the Concert Hall behind the Tea Kiosk could well have acted as a formal precedent for the Winter Gardens, see Figure 3.



Figure 3. Showing the new Winter Garden building (left), a building left over from the Auckland Exhibition, 1913–14 (centre behind the trees), probably the Art Gallery, and the Tea Kiosk (right) in the Auckland Domain, Parnell. Auckland Libraries Heritage Collection 35-R2296.

9 “Untitled,” *Auckland Star*, August 10, 1916, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/AS19160810.2.30>

10 “Building Notes.”

11 “Exhibition Closes,” *New Zealand Herald*, April 20, 1914, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19140420.2.111>

12 “A Great Exhibition,” *New Zealand Herald*, December 1, 1913, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19131201.2.130.2>

printing). The Machinery Hall and Palace of Industries featured motorcars and various futuristic engineering appliances. There was a concert hall, an art gallery, and exhibitions from Fiji, Southland and Northland, the latter featuring a “cleverly contrived 25-foot stone representation of the Whangarei Waterfalls.”¹¹ The exhibition’s very popular playground was called Wonderland; it had a water chute, toboggans, a figure-eight railway (a precursor to a rollercoaster), a hippodrome, a haunted castle, a merry-go-round, a cyclorama depicting “Scott’s Dash to the Pole,” a model railway and other “amusing games.”¹² There were events planned every day from marching bands to flower shows to an exhibition basketball game.¹³

The Exhibition wasn’t without architectural merit, either. Covering the crest of Domain Hill, the buildings were designed in a “free classical style ... constructed from cost-effective, modern material, including three-ply, asbestos, corrugated iron, and plaster.”¹⁴ It commanded beautiful views, and, according to the *New Zealand Truth’s* Auckland Representative, the

overall visual effect of the Exhibition was that it was “picturesquely situated, architecturally it is neat but expensive, yet not gaudy or over-gay.”¹⁵ Construction started for the iconic Auckland War Memorial Museum on this site in 1925, after an extensive international competition, and was completed in 1929.

However, the main area of inspiration for William Gummer for a memorial to the Exhibition is in its landscaping legacy. As previously stated, this consisted of establishing gardens, lawns and winding pathways, transforming the bare volcanic clay into grass lawns and flowerbeds with “cleverness, care, and patience.”¹⁶

The site wasn’t limited by specific boundary lines – the area was bound by the quarry to the south, Domain Drive to the north, and somewhere opposite the Tea Kiosk. It appears that the only limiting factor was the amount of surplus funds available to be spent on the memorial, which would only cover about one-third of the cost of the scheme William Gummer put forth.



Figure 4. View of Wonderland, Auckland Exhibition, Auckland Domain, looking towards the water chute. Price, William Archer, 1866–1948: Collection of postcard negatives. Ref: 1/2-001132-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/22865253

13 “Machinery Hall,” *New Zealand Herald*, December 1, 1913, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19131201.2.130.18>

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Ibid.*

16 Lucy Mackintosh, *Shifting Grounds: Deep Histories of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2021).

17 “Auckland Exhibition Opened.”

18 “A Beautiful Situation,” *New Zealand Herald*, December 1, 1913, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19131201.2.130.4>

The Client(s)

The client for the project was ostensibly the Auckland City Council, but the driving force behind the scheme was the Chairman of the Auckland Exhibition, George Elliot. Born in 1865, after migrating to New Zealand he ran a newspaper in Tauranga before moving to Auckland to go into business. He became the president of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce in 1911–12, was the President of the Auckland Patriotic Society during World War One, and was the Chairman of the Bank of New Zealand from 1922 to 1931. He was knighted in 1923 at the age of 58. He was very well connected, “an arch-insider”¹⁷ in the Auckland business world. He was known to use insider knowledge from his myriad of business connections to outsmart the financial markets in a fashion that would not be possible today.¹⁸ He is best known today as the benefactor of the George Elliot Charitable Trust, which he set up prior to his death in 1956 to provide tertiary scholarships for Auckland students and grants for community building in New Zealand.

George Elliot knew that there wasn’t enough money in the surplus funds to cover the cost of the complex that William Gummer proposed, so after the Temperate House was completed in 1921, he led

a fundraising effort by contributing £4,000 of the £9,500 donated to have the complex completed by adding the Tropical House, the Pergola, the Lily Pond and the Fernery.¹⁹ The Pergola and the Tropical House were constructed by 1928, and the Fernery by 1932. In the spirit of civic-minded generosity, Gummer and Ford, and the building contractor Fletcher also donated a large portion of their professional fees.^{20,21}

The Architect

William Gummer was born in Auckland in December 1884. After an eight-year apprenticeship with Auckland architect W. A. Holman, Gummer travelled to London in 1908 for a three-year study tour of Europe. He was a student at the prestigious Royal Academy of the Arts, where he studied architecture under Reginald Bloomfield, Renee Spiers and William Lethaby, and worked for, among others, Edwin Lutyens. After arriving back in New Zealand in 1911, Gummer was invited to join the architectural firm Hoggard and Prouse, renaming it Hoggard, Prouse and Gummer, as the head of its newly opened Auckland office. Gummer had designed a kiosk for the Auckland Exhibition and had spent most of his time on domestic architecture commissions in the North

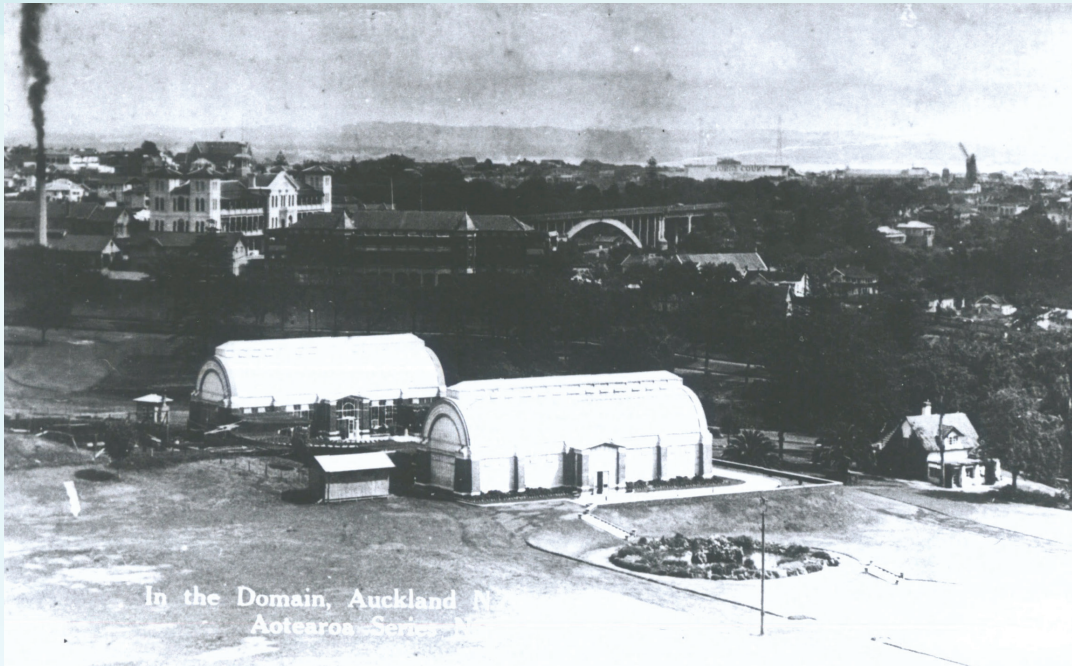


Figure 5. “In the Domain,” Hocken Snapshot, accessed September 1, 2023, <https://hocken.recollect.co.nz/nodes/view/4242>

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- 19 “The Life and Times of Sir George Elliot,” Sir George Elliot Charitable Trust, accessed July 21, 2023, <https://www.elliottrust.org.nz/about-the-trust/sir-george-elliott/>
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 “Gift to Auckland,” *New Zealand Herald*, April 16, 1927, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19270416.2.35>
- 22 Jack Smith, *No Job Too Big: A History of Fletcher Construction*. Volume I, 1909–40 (Wellington: Steele Roberts, 2009).
- 23 “City Management,” *New Zealand Herald*, November 30, 1928, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19281130.2.145>

Island, notably the residence of the incoming Mayor of Auckland, James Gunson, in 1913.²²

Gummer was attested into the New Zealand Army in September 1917, and was posted to the First Machine Gun Section in Egypt on the last day of 1918. He was discharged in Cairo in late August 1919,²³ after which he spent a few months travelling before returning to New Zealand. His time away from the profession goes some way to explaining the five years between the conception of the Winter Gardens and the start of their construction.

In 1923, William Gummer partnered with Reginald Ford to form Gummer and Ford, which would become one of the most influential architectural firms in New Zealand. Their work includes the Remuera Library (1926) and the Auckland Railway Station (1928), both N.Z.I. A. Gold Medal winners. Other notable public buildings include the Grey Lynn Library in Auckland (1923) and the Carillion and Dominion Museum in Wellington (1932, 1936).

Description

The Domain Winter Gardens consist of two barrel-vaulted glasshouses, the Temperate House to the east and the Tropical House to the west, separated by a rectilinear pond and connected by a Pergola on each side. The primary axis runs perpendicular to Domain Road, forming the main entrance stair to the gardens, running through the middle of the pond, the central pillar, and the entrance to the Fernery. This entrance is indicated by the semi-circular Pergola to the south. The cross-axis runs through the length of the interior pool and forms the entrances and exits to the two glasshouses. The Temperate House has another entry/exit to the complex on this axis. The predominant materials are red bricks with plaster accents, timber beams, rafters, and purlins. The two glasshouses have steel-framed vaulted glass roofs topped by elongated glass lanterns. The complex is surprisingly large – about 70 metres wide and 90 metres deep. The Winter Gardens glasshouses follow a tradition of iron or steel-structured glasshouses dating back to Joseph Paxton's Chatsworth Conservatory in 1837–40, followed after a few years by Richard Turner and Decimus Burton's Palm Stove at Kew.²⁴ According to Nicholas Pevsner, this typology became synonymous with large exhibition buildings in Europe, culminating

with the design of the Galerie du Machines designed by Ferdinand Dutert and Victor Contemin.²⁵ Perhaps the decision to design glasshouses as part of the memorial to the Auckland Exhibition was more than a functional one for Gummer – it is likely that he associated the glasshouse typology with large exhibition buildings, so the architectural character of an exhibition was carried through as well.

Design Influences

Gummer's most significant design influence can be traced back to the Royal Academy of Arts in London. This education instilled in Gummer an appreciation for a traditional design approach, which he summarised in his 1914 address to first-year students titled "The Study of Architecture."²⁶ In this address, Gummer emphasised the importance of functional considerations in building design, and understanding the characteristics and limitations of construction materials. In the Winter Gardens this is most seen in the choice of brick piers (to emphasise its compressive qualities), and with the timber beams and rafters to express the tensile quality of wood. The steel trusses in the glasshouses are also very expressive of the structure. In his address, Gummer also emphasised integrating architectural design with the site's natural features. In the Winter Gardens, this is best seen in the conversion of the quarry into a fernery. He urged students to familiarise themselves with the needs and preferences of building users and fully express themselves through mass, line, proportion, light and shade, and scale. At the Royal Academy, these were achieved using the principles of symmetry and axial compositions, a modular approach to design where the Greek and Roman orders influenced a building design's proportions, a comprehensive knowledge of architectural elements, and their incorporation into larger compositions. These design principles are all seen in the Winter Gardens, described in detail below. Gummer was also conscious of the visual impact of structural elements and understood the significance of proportion in infusing buildings with a humane and cheerful character.²⁷ He viewed ornamentation as a way to accentuate the already pleasing proportions of the structure on its façade.²⁸

This section also aims to unpack the assertion that the Winter Gardens were designed in the style of Edwin Lutyns.²⁹ As stated, William Gummer worked

24 Bruce Petry, "The Public Architecture of Gummer and Ford" (Master's thesis, The University of Auckland, 1992), 24.

25 A. B. Moore, "WW1 Corporal William Henry Gummer," Ministry of Defence Service Record, January 28, 1986.

26 Nikolaus Pevsner, *A History of Building Types* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 240, <http://archive.org/details/historyofbuildin0000pevs>

27 Ibid, 248.

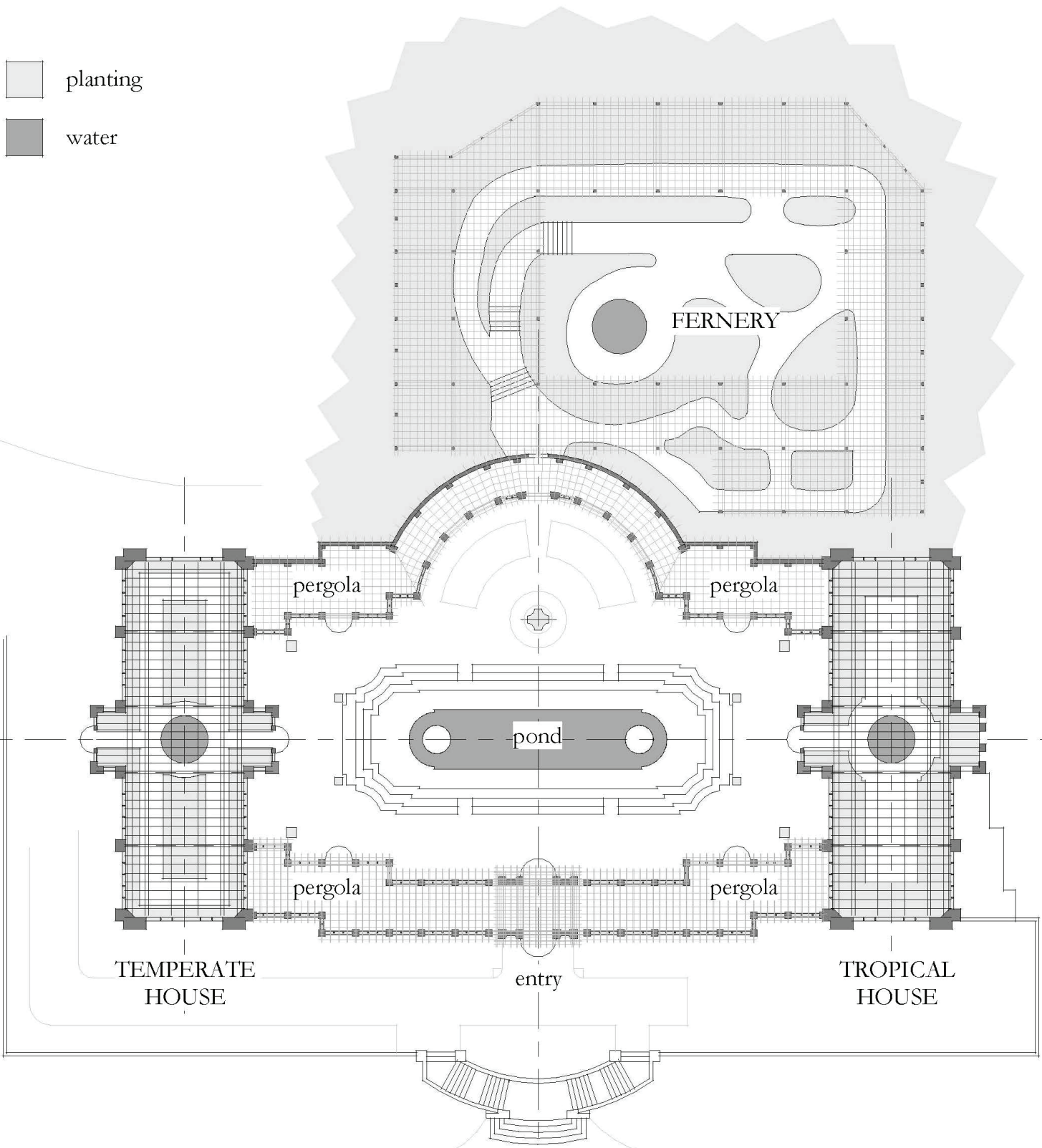
28 William Gummer, "The Study of Architecture," *N.Z. Building Progress* X, no. 9 (May 1915): 293–298.

29 Cameron Moore and Milica Mađanović, "The Design of the Dilworth Building," *Asylum* 1 (2022): 264–273, <https://doi.org/10.34074/aslm.2022102>

30 William Gummer, "Bridge Architecture," *N.Z.I.A. Journal* (October 1929): 88–95.

31 "Auckland Domain Wintergardens," New Zealand Gardens Trust, accessed July 28, 2023, <https://www.gardens.org.nz/visit/auckland-domain-wintergardens>

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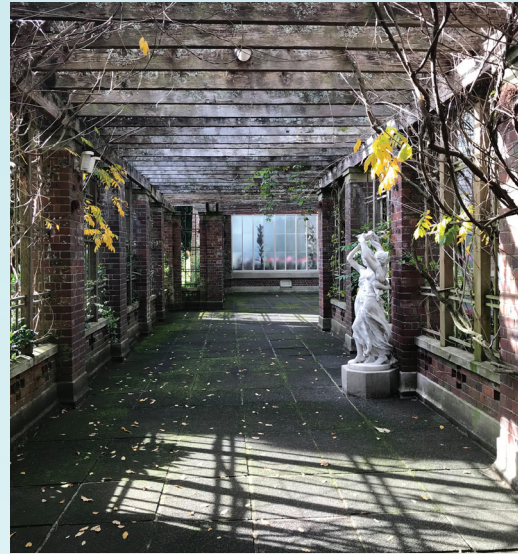


Domain Road

Figure 6. Plan of the Winter Gardens Complex. Image by the author.



Figure 7. (A) View from inside the Pergola.



(B) View of the Fernery. Photos: Cameron Moore.

in Lutyens' office for eight and a half months in 1911 as a student at the Royal Academy of Arts. According to Gummer's diaries, he worked primarily on the early sketch designs for Castle Drogo (it wasn't completed for another twenty years, bearing little resemblance to the first sketch designs³⁰) and the private residence, *Salutation*, at Sandwich.³¹ Gummer enjoyed working in Lutyens' office, writing in his diary, "a pleasure to work there, they are such decent chaps."³²

Lutyens' influence on the Winter Gardens can be found in Allan Greenberg's analysis of Lutyens' architecture in his article "Lutyens' Architecture Restudied." From an analysis of five of Lutyens' house designs (from 1903 to 1911, which overlaps Gummer's time in his office), Greenberg discovered four characteristics that apply to "almost all of Lutyens' houses"³³ and can be seen in the design of the Winter Gardens:

1. A square or H plan that emphasises symmetry in the massing, windows and other elements.
2. Crossing the principal axes is impossible – they are blocked with solid walls or voids.
3. The circulation systems in the houses are displaced off the principal axes.
4. The intricacy of the plan is not expressed in the houses' façades.

Greenberg posits that these four characteristics make up a basic design structure that sheds light on Lutyens's architectural thinking, which can be summed up in "movement, accommodation, and paradox,"³⁵ which can be found in Gummer's Winter Gardens.

Movement

Edwin Lutyens was interested in movement through a sequence of separate and distinct spaces, where the variation compels the visitor to move through the building. The compulsion to move through the complex is heightened by a sense of exploration that derives from providing a choice of movements through spaces that have a wide variation in geometric form with changes in the volume, shape, light intensity and, in the Winter Gardens case, a noticeable difference in the temperature between the spaces. At the top of the stairs before the entry, the long, narrow open space is framed by the tree line on one side, and the Pergola on the other. The path transitions into another long, narrow, darker enclosed space formed by the Pergola. This then transitions into an ample sunny central open space visually anchored by the symmetrical glasshouses on either side. Visitors who follow the cross-axis into the buildings find themselves in the barrel-vaulted interior space with exposed steel trusses under a glass roof. Suppose the visitor re-oriens back to the primary axis of the complex. In that case, the entry to

32 Peter Inskip, *Edwin Lutyens*, ed. David Dunster, 2nd ed. (London: Academy Editions / St. Martin's Press, 1980), 88.

33 William Gummer, "Diary Book 8," December 22, 1910.

34 Ibid.

35 Allan Greenberg, "Lutyens' Architecture Restudied," *Perspecta* 12 (1969): 129–152, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1566962>

36 Ibid, 130.

37 Ibid.

the fernery is found on the axis, denoted by the semi-circular Pergola, directly opposite the freestanding pillar marking the centre point for the Pergola's curve. The Fernery differs vastly from the main space. Its character is determined by the naturalness of the substantial slope and the shade formed by the Pergola overhead, in direct contrast with the strict symmetry of the rest of the complex. There are also various choices in circulation, with the upper paths enclosed, getting more exposed as the visitor descends. Lutyens also emphasised the thresholds between the spaces and the joints in the circulation. In the Winter Gardens, these thresholds are always highlighted by a single semi-circular step and, in the case of the glass-houses, double doors as well.

Accommodation

As defined by Allan Greenberg, accommodation is "the expanding of an idea or principle to relate to something outside its own nature without completely compromising its integrity."³⁶ In the Winter Gardens, this is found in the ubiquitous brick piers. These are the primary compositional elements in the Winter Gardens, determining the proportional relationship and visual coherence for the entire complex.

The first impression is that these piers are simple brick structures designed to enclose the outdoor

space and provide a pleasant environment to enjoy the gardens cost effectively. On further analysis, these piers were carefully designed along the strict proportions of Palladio's Ionic order. The plaster base of the pier is directly proportional to the base of the column, and the plaster facing at the top of the pier is directly proportional to the column's capital (Figure 4). One can also see abstracted square volutes on Gummer's piers, echoing the Ionic order. The beams and rafters of the Pergola are directly proportional to the entablature of the Ionic order without the cornice. The thickness of the Ionic pedestal directly determines the thickness of the piers. Furthermore, the piers are placed exactly four intercolumniations apart – as far apart as intercolumniations should go, according to Vitruvius,³⁷ and a proportion Gummer had used before on the Guardian Trust Building and later in the Mayfair Flats in Auckland. Gummer reproduced canonical Ionic colonnades for a fraction of the cost with brick piers and a timber entablature, and arguably designed a space that, because of the roughness and naturalness of timber and brick (compared to finely chiselled stone), led to a more successful combination with the garden's planting. He also made the most of the more flexible shape (the square, as opposed to the rounded column with entasis) to produce several variations to suit the many junctions and to emphasise the many thresholds.

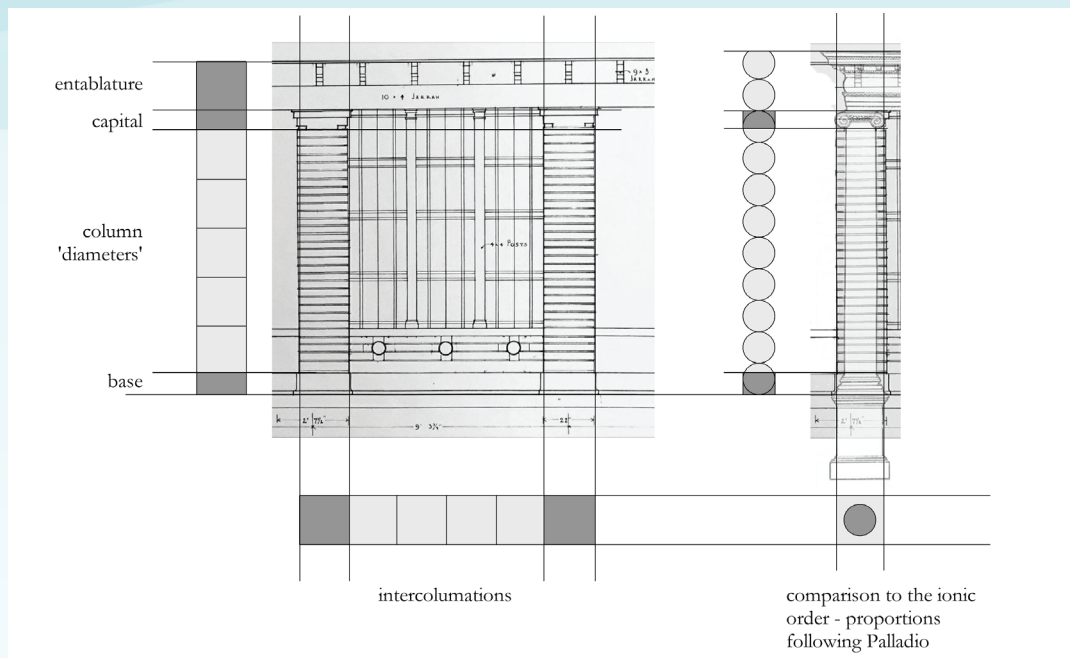


Figure 8. Proportional relationship of the brick piers and the Ionic order. Analysis by the author.

38 Ibid, 132.

39 Colen Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus, or, The British Architect: Containing the Plans, Elevations, and Sections of the Regular Buildings, Both Publick and Private, in Great Britain, with Variety of New Designs ...* (London: Printed and sold by the author ..., Andrew Bell ..., W. Taylor ..., Henry Clements ..., and Jos. Smith ..., 1715), http://archive.org/details/gri_33125008447589

The brick piers also determine the composition of the glasshouses. There are five bays; the entrance is in the central bay (as is traditional), framed by two piers superimposed on each side. The corners also have wider piers to suggest structural stability. Gummer plays Lutyens’s ‘high game’ where the wall meets the roof. Unconventionally, the piers are topped with an abstracted single plaster Ionic volute turned 90 degrees to resemble an upside-down corbel. The entablature hides the concrete beam that supports the steel trusses and, in a very original move, runs behind the capital.

Paradox

As in Lutyens’s architecture, paradox can be found in the movement through the complex that becomes dislocated from the principal axes. In the Winter Gardens, one is immediately forced off the central axis on the main entry stair and re-enters the complex on the primary axis. The semi-circular Pergola and the free-standing pillar emphasise this axis. Still, the line of movement is dislocated by the lily pond, compelling a visitor to move around these elements.

Contributing to this is the compulsion to walk down the Pergola on each side of the mini cross-axis upon entry, not to walk down the central axis at all. When the visitor re-orientates to the main cross-axis to view the glasshouses from the front, the occupation of the cross-axis inside the glasshouse is again blocked, this time by the ponds inside the glasshouses.

Elements

The architecture is complemented by a selection of stone statues donated mainly by George Elliot in the 1940s. Along with the outdoor pots, they are carefully arranged to accentuate the architectural elements – for example, at the corners of the pond area – and terminate the sub-axes created by the Pergola thresholds. The cat atop the central pillar has received some attention regarding its origins. Perhaps the most compelling reason for the cat comes from Kieran Shanahan, who guessed that Gummer put it there there “to lighten up the atmosphere of the gardens – to encourage children to paddle in the pond and enjoy the space ... It was, after all, a place designed to be enjoyed by the people of Auckland.”³⁸



Figure 9. The many variations of the brick pier module in the Winter Gardens. Photos: Cameron Moore.

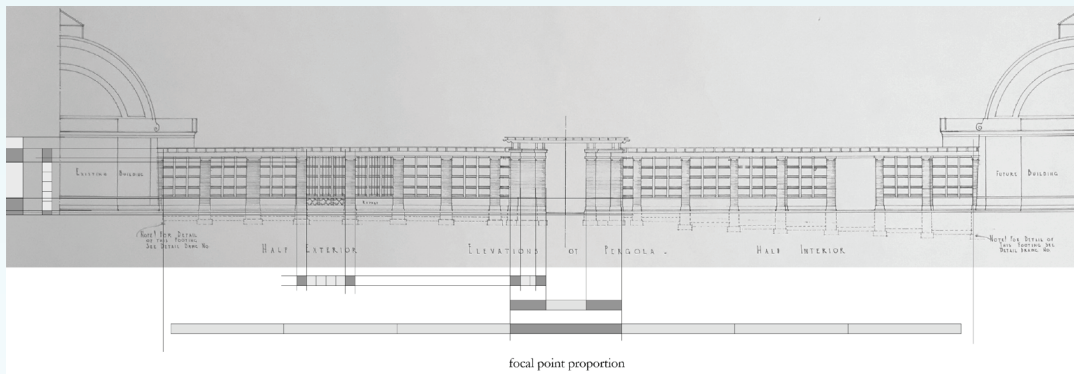


Figure 10. Diagram showing the proportions of the Pergola. Diagram by author, drawings from the Gummer & Ford Collection, GF33, Architecture Archive, Libraries and Learning Services, The University of Auckland.

40 Kieran Shanahan, “The Work of William H. Gummer, Architect” (Bachelor’s thesis, The University of Auckland, 1983), 270.

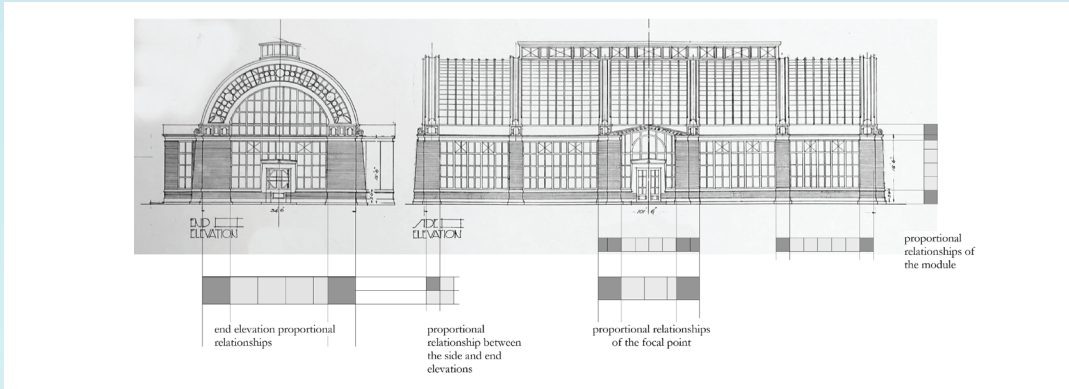


Figure 11. Diagram showing the proportional relationships in the façades of the glasshouses. Diagram by author, drawings from the Gummer & Ford Collection, GF33, Architecture Archive, Libraries and Learning Services, The University of Auckland.



Figure 12: Glasshouse façade. Photo: Cameron Moore.



Figure 13. View along the central axis from the entry. Photo: Cameron Moore.



Figure 14. Some architectural elements of the Winter Gardens. Photos: Cameron Moore.

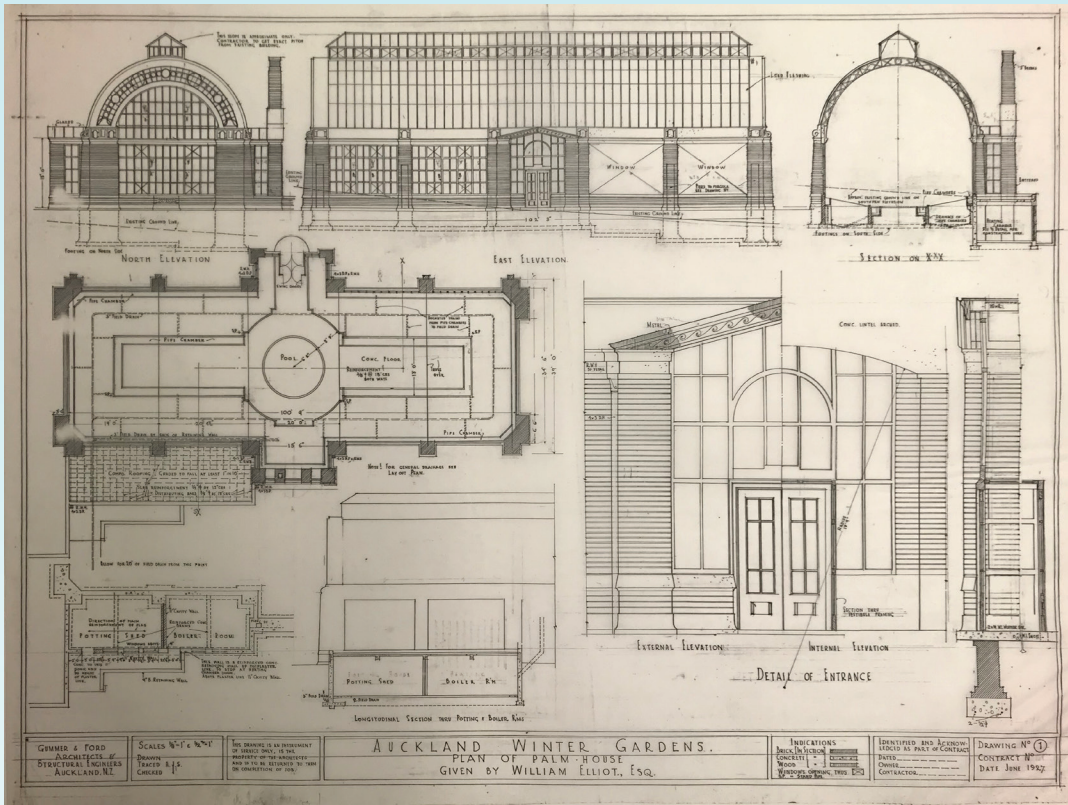


Figure 15. Auckland Winter Gardens, Plan of Palm House 1927. Drawings from the Gummer & Ford Collection, GF33, Architecture Archive, Libraries and Learning Services, The University of Auckland.

Technical Appreciation

In *Home*, architectural historian Linda Tyler calls the consistent temperature of the Tropical House ‘miraculous’, as Gummer was able to balance the heat from the sun, the underfloor heating, and the humidity caused by the watering system and plants with the ventilation encouraged by having opening

windows in the lantern.³⁹ The use of steel for the barrel vault structure was innovative (for New Zealand) and perhaps served as a precursor for the Guardian Trust Building, also designed by William Gummer on Auckland’s Queen Street, completed in 1917.⁴⁰

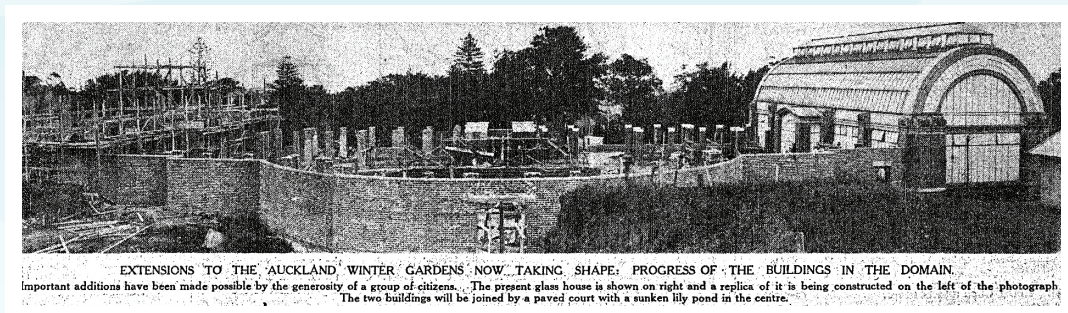


Figure 16. “Extensions to the Auckland Winter Gardens Now Taking Shape. Progress of the Building in the Domain,” *New Zealand Herald* LXIV, no. 19791, November 11, 1927, 8.

41 Linda Tyler, “Why Auckland’s Wintergardens Are an Example of Innovative Architecture,” *Home*, September 24, 2019, <https://homemagazine.nz/aucklands-wintergardens-are-an-example-of-innovative-architecture/>
 42 Milica Madanović, Cameron Moore, and Renata Jadresin Milic, “The Role of Architectural History Research: Auckland’s NZI Building as William Gummer’s Attempt at Humanity,” in *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand: 38. ULTRA: Positions and Polarities Beyond Crisis*, Adelaide, Australia, 2021, 533–543, <https://doi.org/10.55939/a4007piywz>

Construction

The Winter Gardens were completed in two parts. Initially, the surplus funds from the Auckland Exhibition meant that only the Temperate House was built and opened to the public, on 12 October 1921.⁴¹ The Tropical House, Pergola, and Lily Pond were completed in 1928, after George Elliot led a fundraising effort to gift the remainder of the complex to the people of Auckland.⁴² In the spirit of the development, Fletcher completed the construction for the cost of the materials only – the labour was donated,⁴³ and Gummer and Ford charged only £100 to cover the drafting and overhead charges instead of the usual fee of about £2,500.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the construction of the Tropical House, Lily Pond, and Pergolas in 1927–28 displaced thirteen tuberculosis shelters constructed in 1920.⁴⁵ The inhabitants were relocated to a more sheltered site elsewhere in the Domain.⁴⁶

Conclusion

The Winter Gardens project began as merely a way for Auckland City Council to spend the surplus funds from the Auckland Industrial, Agricultural and Mining Exhibition of 1913–14. William Gummer took the opportunity to design a memorial to the exhibition (without compensation) that he knew would far exceed the budget. Still, the quality of his design, an imaginative reinterpretation of an Ionic colonnade linking barrel-vaulted glasshouses, inspired Auckland's business community to raise enough money to complete the project. The contractor, Fletcher, also contributed significantly to it. Altruism was the primary motivating factor for everyone involved in the fundraising for, designing and building of the Winter Gardens. The goal was to leave a lasting memorial of the Auckland Exhibition to benefit the people of Auckland, and what resulted was a well-patronised civic space, even though the Auckland Exhibition has long been forgotten. This altruism shown in its inception and construction is still felt today, where anyone can come and enjoy the Winter Gardens without commercial expectation.

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