

FROM TOP RIGHT:

Villa (1909) at Broad Bay, Otago Peninsula. This was the first structure built by James Fletcher, founder of New Zealand's largest construction firm. The gable of its modest flattened bay was ornamented with an unusual pressed metal design and its return verandah decorated with Art Nouveau-derived balustrading.

FLETCHER CHALLENGE ARCHIVES.

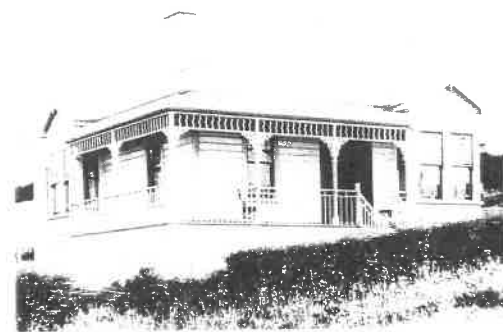
A corner-bay villa (c. 1910) at Thames, with return verandah, turned balusters and fan-shaped bracketing joining wall to roof.

A single-bay villa (1904) in Manukau Road, Auckland, built on a brick base then clad with stucco pointed to resemble brick. Its timber ornament is characteristic of the Eastlake spindle style imported from the U.S.A.

the styles was an irrelevance to house builders, who simply chose elements from both. No one worried that fretwork designs deriving from Gothic tracery might be incompatible with a roof supported on Classical modillions, or that Italianate arched windows and Gothic pointed ones ought not to be found on the same house.

Other ornamental influences were enthusiastically taken up: the profusion of turned knobs and knockers to be found on eaves brackets or at the tops of verandah posts had its origin in the Eastlake style, which was imported from the U.S.A.; after 1900 plain stick patterning was sometimes combined with turned balusters to create a kind of antipodean chinoiserie.

The builders of New Zealand's villas repudiated historical ornament in favour of something much more exotic. Inside, the same decorative profusion was also evident. Textured and highly patterned wallpapers were regarded as suitable backgrounds for pictures of all kinds; mantelpieces groaned under the weight of pendulous ornaments, photographs and arrangements of feathers and flowers; ceilings, often the only visible surface, were plastered or, after 1900, made of pressed-metal sheeting no less highly patterned.



This single-bay villa (c. 1900) at Heme Bay, Auckland has typical sash windows, an arched pediment with a finial, fretwork bracketing and a diamond-paned stained-glass window at the end of its verandah. The bay is faceted rather than flat. The square side bay incorporates a dining room.

A double-bay villa (c. 1900) at Somme Parade, Wanganui. The enlarged central porch incorporating the bay is a regional characteristic.



Cottages, Villas
and Country Houses

The design of the Bayly House (1906), Wanganui, a corner-bay villa, is unusual in bringing the gable forward to treat it as part of the verandah. Timber fretwork decoration for this house was imported from France.



The Sarjeant House (1909), next door to the Bayly House in Bell Street, Wanganui, is Italianate in design and is said to have been based on a sketch done by Mrs Sarjeant during a visit to Italy. This two-storeyed villa has a low-pitched roof, wide projecting cornice and quoins of timber to resemble stone. The arcaded verandah with balustraded balcony above has views of Mt Ruapehu in the distance.



This house in Northcote, Auckland, has a conventional villa plan. Although its sash windows remain, the hipped roof now has exposed rafters instead of rows of modillions, and the simplified verandah decoration is characteristic of the bungalow.



In Wellington tall 'up-and-down' town houses were the natural response to the city's hilly topography. These houses on Tinakori Road were designed by Robert Roy Macgregor and built in 1902.

By 1910 the impact of the Californian bungalow was being felt and many architects, while continuing to design houses according to the traditional villa plan, began to incorporate bungalow features into house facades. Roof angles were flattened, fretted and turned verandah decorations were simplified, and double-hung sash windows were replaced with casement-and-fanlights. The transition between villa and bungalow lasted some ten years; Jeremy Salmond has noted that 'after 1918 no speculative builder with any commercial sense would have bothered to advertise a new house in the villa style'.³

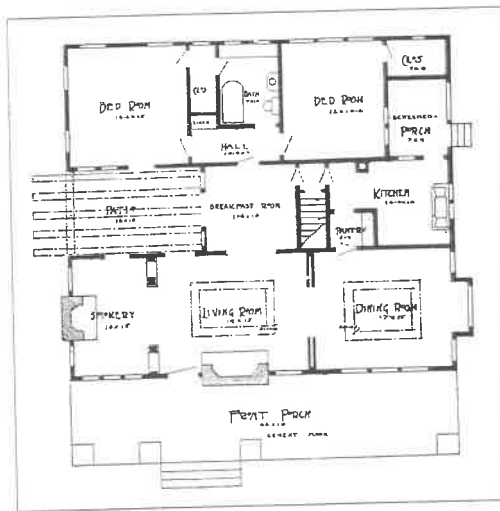


Interior of Los Angeles, c. 1913. The ceiling of the bungalow was generally lower than the villa's. Exposed rafters and a plate rail with panelling below emphasise horizontality and a pair of sliding doors allow sitting and dining rooms to be closed off.

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'Kosy Konka Home' built by Bassett & Co. at Ingestre Street, Wanganui.

In Auckland in 1913, the architect R. Atkinson Abbott (1883-1954) was commissioned to extend a gardener's cottage at Wharua Road, Remuera, and he provided the new structure with a low roof with exposed rafter tails and overhanging eaves, as well as a bay window and verandah with shingled skirts. Familiarity with the Californian bungalow style had increased from 1910 onwards, when a column in *Progress* ('from Our Californian correspondent') illustrated large numbers of plans and elevations of bungalows, to the chagrin of most of the country's English-trained architects. Builders all over New Zealand took to them with such enthusiasm that excellent examples of the style can still be found in most



Plan of a Californian bungalow from the 'Just a Little Different' catalogue. The relatively open relationship of rooms differs considerably from the more closed villa plan (see page 45).

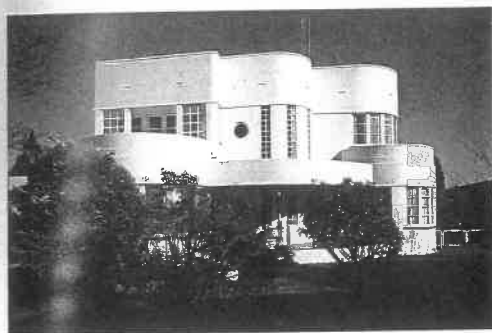
towns. In Wanganui, for instance, the builders Bassett & Co. made a speciality of the bungalow, building hundreds of 'Kosy Konka Homes' from over a thousand house patterns designed to encourage buyers to use the company's new concrete-sheet construction process.

Many architects realised that the bungalow was becoming increasingly popular with clients glad to be liberated from the omnipresent villa, and incorporated its features into their repertoire of styles. Some, like F. C. Daniell in Hamilton, produced two-storeyed houses. The house Daniell designed for the Murray family in Radnor Street in 1919 shares many features with the even larger Clunes, at Onewhero in Raglan County, which



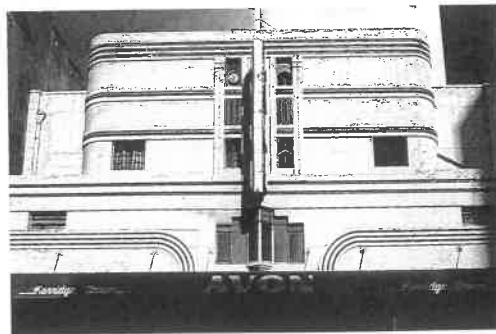
An all-wood bungalow at Queen Street, Thames.

Wood & McCormack. Its corners, instead of being curved, are chamfered and give the house a geometric rigour further emphasised by clear and textured glass arranged in sharply angled decorative patterns. In the spacious stairwell a stained and painted window depicts a ruined Scottish castle. By contrast, the Blackie House (1947) at Victoria Street, Hamilton, is so curvaceous that it has become known as a 'waterfall' house. The enduring popularity of such large Art Deco-styled residences is evident from the fact that the house was built as late as 1947.



All over New Zealand smaller, single-storeyed Deco houses sprang up, relatively few of them the work of architects. Most were constructed by local builders quick to grasp the essentials of a style closely resembling that of 'modern' state houses. Many such smaller houses exhibited the proportions of the Deco box but were given a Spanish dress with the addition of angled Cordova tiles on parapets, obscuring their flat roofs.

Elsewhere in New Zealand, businesses which did not feel the economic pinch employed architects to design cinemas, transport centres, swimming pools and insurance companies in the modern Art Deco style. The so-called 'streamlined' Deco with its futuristic obsession



Modern, Moderne and Deco

Avon Cinema (1934), Christchurch, by L. E. Williams. The hallmarks of the 'streamlined' Deco style are apparent.



with movement made little impact here, although two cinemas, the State (1935) in Nelson by H. Francis Willis and the Avon (1937) in Christchurch by L. E. Williams exhibit the swooping linearity which characterised the style. Dunedin's Road Services Passenger Station (1936) by Miller & White owes its impressive appearance in part to an unusual site, which is a triangle nearly 125 metres on its longest side. Despite this, the architects designed a long, low building which actually curves smoothly around the site and is given definition by symmetrically placed, cobalt-blue metal sash windows, incised panels of vertical decoration and a superb entrance that was originally given even stronger vertical emphasis by a contrasting colour scheme of cream, brown and orange. Inside, three types of marble in black, pink and green, relieved by polished metal bands, created a stylish effect; on the second floor above it a social hall was provided with stage, dressing rooms and a jarrah floor for dancing. This was indeed a building

RIGHT: Road Services Passenger Station (1936), Dunedin, by Miller & White. This is one of a number of fine Art Deco buildings in a city which is surprisingly rich in examples of the style.

TOP LEFT: Curtis House (1936), Forbury, Dunedin, by Wood & McCormack.

BOTTOM LEFT: Blackie House (1947), Hamilton. The exploitation of the smoothly curving stucco surface of houses such as this has led to the adoption of the descriptive term 'waterfall'.

NEW ZEALAND
ARCHITECTURE

State House Design No. 211 B (1938) by Swan & Lavalle. The house had a conventional cottage exterior but a more open attitude to planning probably added to its desirability.

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which reflected the preoccupations of the Jazz Age rather than those of the Depression.

When the first Labour Government was elected to power in 1935, the exigencies of the time immediately commanded its attention. A housing survey revealed some shocking statistics about overcrowding in substandard buildings; there was an estimated shortage of 20,000 houses and still more were needed to cope with population growth. The Government's response was to establish the Department of Housing Construction in September 1936, under the dynamic leadership of John A. Lee, as Under-Secretary in charge of Housing.

John A. Lee abhorred English barrack-type terraced workers' housing; he insisted that the majority of houses should be individual units, each on its own plot of ground, and that no two houses in a particular area should be of the same design. The choice of areas to be developed for state rental housing was governed by their proximity to an existing urban area and the availability of cheap land. Lee insisted on a high standard of construction in New Zealand materials and, convinced that people's lives are influenced by the quality of their environment, was concerned that houses should be built in attractive locations rather than unobtrusively tucked away out of the view of wealthier property owners. The spectacular views available from the two early Auckland state housing subdivisions of Orakei and Mt Roskill are testimony to this enlightened socialist thinking.

First State House (1937), Miramar, Wellington, designed in the Department of Housing Construction. It was opened by the Prime Minister, Michael Joseph Savage, who helped to carry the first inhabitants' furniture into the house.

Architects were invited by the D.H.C. through a competition to prepare designs and working drawings to the Department's standard requirements. It specified the need for four-roomed houses, three types of five-roomed houses, and six-roomed houses. Every group of ten houses was to have a different plan; every one was to be varied in elevational treatment and in materials used. Each architect was encouraged to impress his individuality on the basic design. Specifications, tendering, grouping, site placement and supervision were all to be handled by the Department's own architects.

Not surprisingly, given the depressed state of the profession, over 400 designs were received from architects in private practice. Among the designs accepted by the Department were those by S. S. Alleman and Horace Massey in Auckland; K. Cook, Bernard Johns and Swan & Lavalle in Wellington; P. H. Graham in Gisborne; England Brothers in Christchurch; and Stone & Sturmer in Dunedin.

They are mostly in the English Cottage style,



- PERSPECTIVE SKETCH -



- PLAN -

Area: 945 sq. ft.



although some, like the First State House in Fife Lane, Miramar, Wellington, had a Georgian aspect while others made oblique reference to Modernism. The Californian bungalow did not feature at all, having run its course in the previous two decades and been supplanted by buildings reflecting English rather than American origins. The Department's guidelines favoured an English rural cottage model because it was compact and economical to build, which goes

almost invariably wealthier than the Group's in Auckland, the clients of both practices understood that it made economic sense to employ an architect who knew how to use perhaps unconventional materials efficiently. The shocked resident of Mt Albert who observed to Mr Mann that his year-old Ivan Juriss house (see page 159) would be nice when it was finished was expressing the kind of architectural conservatism which had allowed the 1930s state house to hold the New Zealand suburban landscape in a kind of tyranny. In the public mind, concrete block was regarded as a material unsuited for domestic building but so, ironically, was timber.

The worst that the conservative observer could say about any modern house was that it looked like a farm building. Group Architects and other vernacularists may have delighted in the barn- or shed-like qualities of their indigenous houses, but it was this that made them unacceptable to the public. The State Advances Corporation, which granted loans for house building, agreed; it was extremely difficult to get a loan for anything other than a standard, conventionally planned brick-and-tile house. Wood was regarded as flimsy and unreliable, but bricks looked strong; the timber-framed house must be brick clad. The much-consulted *Carpentry in New Zealand*, first put out by the Department of Education Technical Correspondence School in 1958, illustrated exactly how the brick veneer wall should be attached to a timber frame on a

concrete foundation, using a 1½-inch (4-centimetre) cavity between the brick work and the timber framing in order to prevent dampness.

In 1950 the returned serviceman who was the client for the Group Construction Company's first house managed to obtain a State Advances Loan only because the architects stood their ground and argued for construction in wood. Ivan Juriss recalled:

They weren't implacably opposed to timber, but they put all sorts of restriction on its use. Exterior vertical board and batten construction for instance was forbidden because it was regarded as likely to let in water, however, the first Group House was clad with vertical ship-lapped boards . . . it all depended on the individual building inspector.

There was also official disapproval of plans which had kitchens opening out on to living areas. Sometimes it was necessary to produce two sets of drawings, one for the client showing an open-plan concept, the other showing a separate kitchen in order to satisfy a council official. To guarantee a good resale value the home owner was well advised to avoid exposed rafters, weatherboards and anything other than a concrete base. Body carpet covered fine matai floors, gibraltar board lined the walls, and ceilings were plastered over at considerable expense. In kitchens wood was banished in favour of formica, sometimes with an imprint that mimicked a timber or tiled surface. The patio, as opposed to

Architecture as Individualism

BOTTOM LEFT: A typical brick-and-tile house built at Avondale, Auckland, during the early 1960s. There is no wood visible, and the wrought-iron patio railing is a characteristic feature. The Venetian blinds would invariably have remained closed all day to prevent fading of the carpet.



Figure from *Carpentry in New Zealand*, showing how brick walls should be attached to timber frames.

