

The Design of the Dilworth Building

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Abstract

The Dilworth Building was architecture firm Gummer and Ford's first significant building. It was completed in 1927 and sits on one of the most prominent locations in Aotearoa New Zealand, the corner of Queen Street and Customs Street East in downtown Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. The Dilworth Building has been referred to as one of this country's finest examples of classical architecture by critics such as Miles Warren, Bruce Petry, Peter Shaw, John Stacpoole and Peter Beaven, among others. It holds a Category 1 rating from the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. Paradoxically, this building remains under-researched in current architectural discourse – the most written about it has been in newspaper articles from the 1920s. This paper aims to bring the building's design and construction methods to light, investigating the brief, the client's motivations, the limitations of the site, budget and typology, and the application of William Gummer's design principles to maximise sunlight and air circulation, and with efficient circulation and structure. The building's materiality, design of the façades, and spatial sequences will also be analysed to discover their contribution to the building's overall composition and character. It is hoped that today's architecture students can benefit from formal and practical analysis and use a similar approach in their own architecture and writing.

Keywords: Gummer and Ford, the Dilworth Building, heritage architecture, classical architecture.



Figure 1. The Dilworth Building. Photo: Cameron Moore

Introduction

The Dilworth Building sits on one of the most prominent locations in Aotearoa New Zealand, the corner of Queen Street and Customs Street East in downtown Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. It has been referred to as one of this country's finest examples of classical architecture by critics such as Miles Warren, Bruce Petry, Peter Shaw, John Stacpoole and Peter Beaven, among others. It holds a Category 1 rating from the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. This article discusses the design of the building, what motivated the client, how the architect, William Gummer, approached architectural design, both in theory and in practice, and how these design principles and influences are evident in the building.

Client

James Dilworth, an Irish-born Auckland businessman, died in 1894, bequeathing £100,000 (approximately \$20million in today's terms), mainly in the form of a property portfolio. This endowment was used to establish a school for boys of sound mental and physical health, either “orphans or sons of people of good character ... in straitened circumstances,” to be “instructed in areas of learning to become good useful members of society.”¹ The Dilworth Ulster Institute was the organisation that was set up to administer the estate. James Dilworth had an affinity with architecture: according to historian Martin Jones, Dilworth had stated his intention of erecting buildings of a worthy character.²

Brief

For over fifty years, the buildings sitting on the corners of Queen Street and Customs Street East, and Queen Street and Customs Street West, the Thames Hotel in the Tyrone Building, and the Waitemata Hotel, had

been the symbol of James Dilworth's legacy. By the early 1920s, the two biggest income earners in the portfolio needed an upgrade. The two distinct possibilities were either to replace both buildings with matching structures on each side of Queen Street or to renovate each building. The former would be the costliest, and would increase the portfolio's value the most, and was followed through seriously enough to have a note in the *Auckland Star*.³ The latter option was the least costly, but without as much of an increase in the portfolio's value.



Figure 2. Urbis Porta (City Gates). Architect William Gummer's solution to the first upgrade option. Image: Gummer and Ford Collection, GF33, Architecture Archive, Libraries and Learning Services, University of Auckland.

A middle ground was reached in which the Tyrone Building, on the Corner of Queen Street and Customs Street East, was to be demolished and replaced with an eight-storey office block, while the Waitemata Building opposite was to be kept and renovated. The

construction cost came to £113,717, an amount just short of the cost of all permitted work per month in Auckland in 1925.⁴ Nearly all the £100,000 was borrowed.⁵

The limits and opportunities presented by the brief were two-fold. It was a retail and office building whose core contribution to the Dilworth Ulster Institute was to increase the value of its endowment. Thus, efficient use of the site's area to maximise the number of rent-producing offices and shops was crucial. A limit was imposed on the over-commercialisation of the architecture by the board, which “felt it was their duty to erect a building to be a credit to Auckland.”⁶ And “the building was to be a memorial to the founder [James Dilworth].”⁷ There was a substantial budget to achieve both outcomes. Thus, the architect's responsibility lay in finding the balance between the two. After the construction of the Dilworth Building was complete, the board still hoped to be able to erect a similar building across Queen Street, as seen in Gummer's famous *Urbis Porta* watercolour (Figure 2).⁸

Site

The site of the Tyrone Building, also known as the Thames Hotel, was on the corner of Queen Street and Customs Street East. It was approximately 935 square metres in a slight parallelogram, roughly 41m × 23.5m. The corner boundary of the site was set back about 1.5 metres and sold back to Auckland City Council “so as to give a fine curve of a pathway from Queen Street into Customs Street.”⁹ Architectural historian Milica Mađanović notes that the site's proximity to John Campbell's new Auckland Post Office building also made the site more attractive to retailers and businesses looking for office space.¹⁰ The site had been reclaimed

1 Murray Wilton, *The Dilworth Legacy: The First One Hundred Years of Dilworth School 1905–2006* (Auckland: The Dilworth Trust Board, 2007), 20.

2 Martin Jones, “Search the List | Dilworth Building | Heritage New Zealand,” accessed September 17, 2021, <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/4600>

3 “Proposed New Structures,” *Auckland Star*, September 25, 1925, sec. Real Estate.

4 “Dilworth Trust Structure,” *New Zealand Herald*, September 14, 1925, sec. Building in the City.

5 “Luncheon for Workers,” *New Zealand Herald*, March 25, 1927.

6 “New Building Finished,” *Auckland Star*, September 28, 1927.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 “Queen Street Entrance,” *New Zealand Herald*, April 2, 1925, sec. Auckland's Gateway.

10 Milica Mađanović, “Architectural Historicism Revisited: The Case of Twentieth-Century Traditionalist Architecture in Queen Street, Auckland” (PhD thesis, The University of Auckland, 2020). Research Space Auckland <https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/52752>

from the sea only sixty years before, as neatly summed up in a *New Zealand Herald* article: “the place where an iron shed stood above the mud sixty years ago, must be handed over to the modern builders as a site for a noble structure.”¹¹ Constructing one of the tallest buildings in Auckland on land that had been in the sea comparatively recently presented issues for the design and construction of the foundation, but didn’t appear to restrict the height of the building itself.



Figure 3. The site for the Dilworth Building, the Tyrone Building to the left, and the Waitemata Hotel to the right. Corner of Queen and Customs Streets, Thames Hotel and Waitemata Hotel. Vaughn Collett Cooper, 1880–1966, photographer, Auckland Museum Archive PH-NEG-B1995.

Architects

The Dilworth Building was the first significant built structure designed by Gummer and Ford. The firm was established in 1923 by William Gummer and Reginald Ford. Gummer, the lead designer for the Dilworth Building, was educated at the Royal Academy of the Arts in London, where he also spent eighteen months in Edwin Lutyens’ office. He returned to New Zealand in 1912, where, as a partner in the Wellington architectural firm Hoggard, Prouse and Gummer, he designed



Figure 4. An obvious precursor to the Dilworth Building. State Fire Insurance Building, Wellington. Gordon Onslow Hilbury Burt, 1893–1968: Negatives. Ref: 1/1-015440-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/22668283.

the Guardian Trust Building in Auckland’s Queen Street (1913–17), the Wintergardens in the Auckland Domain (1916–29), and the now-demolished State Fire Insurance Building in Wellington (1917–19). The latter was an obvious precursor to the design of the Dilworth Building. The firm went on to be responsible for the Auckland Railway Station, the Remuera Library, Auckland’s Mayfair Apartments and the Carillon in Wellington (1930–32), and the National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum in Wellington (1936). Their last major architectural work was the addition to their State Fire Insurance Building in Wellington (1938–40). Both William Gummer and Reginald Ford contributed significantly to the architectural discourse in New Zealand in the 1920s and 1930s. Gummer wrote primarily about architectural design, whereas Ford’s interests were far more eclectic – from prefabrication to earthquake design to professional practice. The firm

¹¹ “Early History Recalled,” *New Zealand Herald*, August 10, 1925, sec. The New Auckland.



Figure 5. Trustees and officials at the opening of the Dilworth Building, 1927. Note William Gummer top left and Reginald Ford top second from left. Next to them is the contractor, W.J. Fletcher. In the centre bottom row is Archdeacon George MacMurray. Source: Murray Wilton, *The Dilworth Legacy: The First One Hundred Years of Dilworth School 1905–2006* (Auckland: Dilworth Trust Board, 2007), 184.

continued into the 1960s and is commonly regarded as one of this country's most influential architecture firms.¹²

Design Influences for the Dilworth Building

Born in 1885, William Gummer was articled¹³ to Auckland architect W. A. Holman for seven years, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three. He travelled to London in 1908, at twenty-four, where he would spend the next three years. Gummer first attended design, architectural history and structural mechanics classes organised by the London County Council, attended lectures at the Architectural Association, and was accepted into the Royal Academy of Arts in early 1909.

The Royal Academy was a prestigious institute where architectural instruction was modelled on the French *École des Beaux-Arts*. There, an emphasis was placed on the importance of the plan as a manifestation of a functional programme. When analysing the site, social and urban functions were considered, while adhering to formal expression in materials and construction methods. The design was presented by the student with quick concept sketches and highly finished presentation drawings.¹⁴ Architectural history was taught by typological studies that rendered “classical forms unhistorical and established them as modular proportions.”¹⁵

At the Royal Academy Gummer studied under Reginald Blomfield and was inspired by the writings of William Lethaby, was mentored by Richard Phené Spiers, and worked for Edwin Lutyens.¹⁶ He returned to New Zealand in 1912 after a three-month stint in Daniel Burnham's office in Chicago.

His Royal Academy education and Lutyens' influence gave Gummer an appreciation of a traditional method of design best summarised in his 1914 address to first-year students called “The Study of Architecture.”¹⁷ The first lesson he imparts he calls “The Art of Reason,” in which he implores the students to consider the function of the building, to understand the possibilities and limitations of the materials used in its construction – “a stone should not be subject to tensional strain ... know how a bridge spans by trussing timbers ... where to use piles or a raft formation in its foundation” – and have the architectural design respond to the site – “a true architectonic feeling obtained by allowing the nature of the site and its position with regard to the compass.” He asks the students to become familiar with the habits of

the people using the building, and to express themselves fully “using mass, line, proportion, light and shade, scale, etc.”¹⁸ This casual use of ‘etcetera’ obscures the more advanced design training he got at the Royal Academy and under Edwin Lutyens on axial composition, a modular approach to design informed by the Greek and Roman orders; a knowledge of architectural elements, and how to incorporate them in a larger composition; an obligation to consider the visual effect of structural elements; and an understanding of proportion in order to imbue a building with a humane, cheerful character.¹⁹ Gummer's attitude to ornamentation was that it ought only to be used to emphasise the already pleasing proportions of the structure of the façade.²⁰ Gummer's most specific influences can be found in the design books he recommends to students, employees and fellow practitioners: Nathaniel Curtis's *Architectural Composition* and John V. Van Pelt's *The Essentials of Composition as Applied to Art*.²¹

Reginald Ford eloquently summarises Gummer's design philosophy thus:

He has been a keen student of classical architecture and of the later neo-classic forms. He loved classical architecture, but he was a master and not a slave of its forms, which, when he used them, he used with restraint, judgment, and taste. He never let those forms or elements dominate his design or interfere with the functional requirements of the building.²²

Analysis of Plans and Sections of the Dilworth Building

The ground floor comprised thirteen retail stores, five on Queen Street, one on the corner, and six on Customs Street East (one through an entrance). The only store without street access was located at the end of the

12 Milica Madanović, Cameron Moore, and Renata Jadresin-Milic, “An Untraditional Perspective of Tradition: The Lessons of Gummer and Ford in Architectural Education and Designing for New Zealand. A Unitec Research Project,” *Asylum* 1 (2021): 206–213. <https://www.unitec.ac.nz/eypress/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/An-Untraditional.pdf>

13 To be articled was similar to having an apprenticeship.

14 Arthur Drexler, *The Architecture of the Ecole Des Beaux-Arts* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977).

15 Werner Szambian, “Durand and the Continuity of Tradition,” in *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture*, ed. Robin Middleton (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1982), 19–33.

16 Bruce Petry, “The Public Architecture of Gummer and Ford” (master's thesis, The University of Auckland, 1992), 69–75.

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

18 Gummer, “The Study of Architecture,” 294.

19 Petry, “The Public Architecture of Gummer and Ford,” 74.

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

21 Petry, “The Public Architecture of Gummer and Ford,” 97.

entry vestibule. This shop, with natural top lighting, was intended to be a flower shop. "It is an admirable site for such a purpose and will provide a garden-like effect to the shopping display in the corridor."²³

Level 1 was a mix of offices and retail, and Levels 2–7 were office space. Each floor had fifteen offices totalling about 750 square metres, with two bathroom blocks on each floor. Of these fifteen offices, twelve overlooked the streets outside. The caretaker's apartment (a position that attracted 567 applicants²⁴), another office and plant rooms were found on Level 8. The top level contained the boardroom for the Dilworth Ulster Institute, the administrator of the Dilworth Trust.

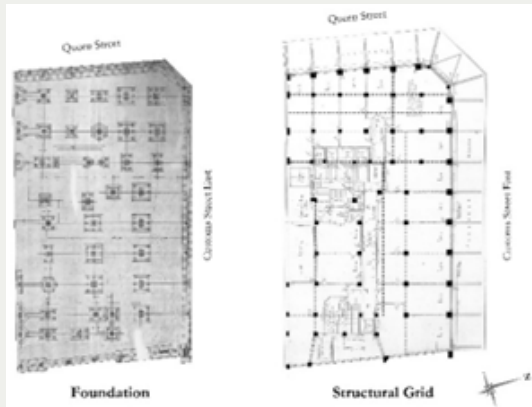


Figure 7. Foundation and Structural Grid of the Dilworth Building, Gummer & Ford Collection, GF33, Architecture Archive, Libraries and Learning Services, the University of Auckland.

The internal composition of the building was primarily organised to maximise the number of offices and shops with access or views from Queen Street and Customs Street East. The structure was ferro-cement posts and beams laid on an irregular grid of approximately 6m x 4.5m with 150mm concrete floors. The floors were layered on top of each other without variation, and the structure was fireproof throughout.²⁵

²³ "Queen Street Entrance."

²⁴ Wilton, *The Dilworth Legacy*, 183.

²⁵ "Queen Street Entrance."

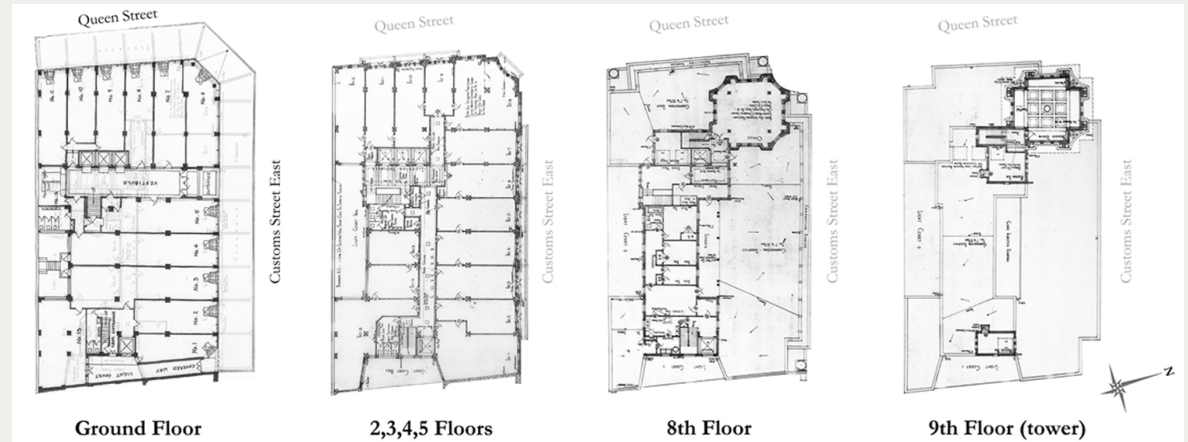


Figure 6. Selected floor plans of the Dilworth Building, Gummer & Ford Collection, GF33, Architecture Archive, Libraries and Learning Services, the University of Auckland.

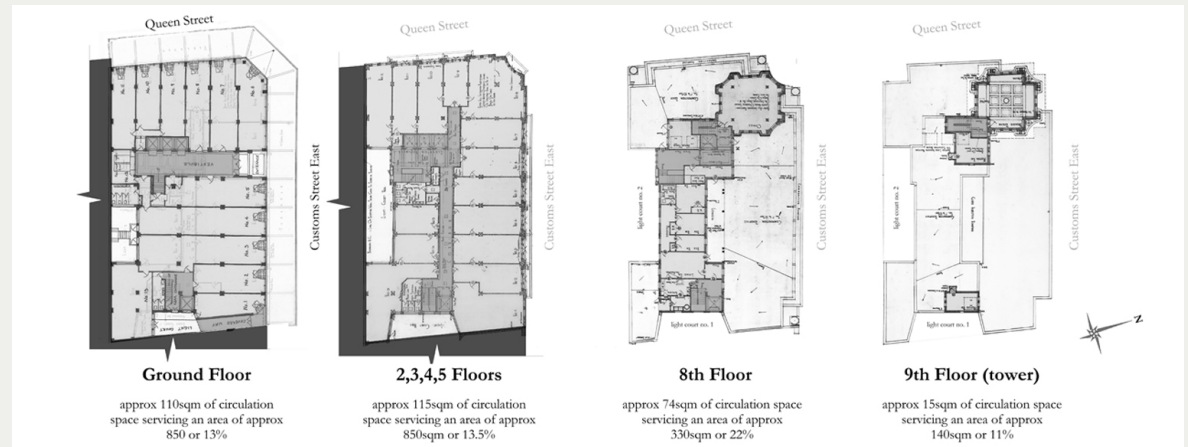


Figure 8. Selected floor plans illustrating circulation, ventilation and sunlight access of the Dilworth Building, Gummer & Ford Collection, GF33, Architecture Archive, Libraries and Learning Services, University of Auckland.

The irregular grid meant the Beaux-Arts conventions of axial composition and well-defined, symmetrical room shapes were not perfectly resolved in the plan. Despite the constraints, there was a subtle but pleasing sequence of spaces in the central circulation of the building. One entered the entrance vestibule – 3.5m wide with a 4m-high barrel-vaulted ceiling and marble walls – and there were large shop-front windows on either side,²⁶ and a flower shop straight ahead.²⁷ At the flower shop, there were three elevators on the right and a generous, sweeping marble-clad staircase on the left. The design of the staircase allowed a vertical visual connection from Level 1 to Level 7.²⁸ At Level 1, the stairs landed on the elevator vestibule with a 3.6m coffered ceiling. The 2.1m-wide main corridor was found by turning around 180 degrees. At the end of this corridor was another elevator on the axis and the secondary staircase overlooking a light court.

At Level 2, the coffered ceiling dropped to 3.3m, and the stair design became simpler. The stairs and corridors continued in this fashion until Level 7. As the spaces became humbler further into the building, so did the internal treatment. The marble of the entrance vestibule gave way to white plaster with cement dados and picture rails in the public spaces, and finally, brick partition walls separated the private offices.

Light and ventilation were primarily achieved through the two façades of the building. On the ground floor, the shading effect of the verandah is mitigated by a high 4.5m ceiling to allow clerestory windows above the canopy. In the upper levels, the 3.3m ceiling heights allow for large windows for each office space (approximately 3.5m x 3m), even though, as Errol Haarhoff points out, “in the Dilworth surfaces predominate, incised by openings in a manner more reminiscent of Lutyens than the Chicago School.”²⁹ Additionally, two light courts to the interior provide light and ventilation to the rear offices, the secondary stair and the two bathroom blocks.

²⁶ The ceilings and finishes have all since been demolished.

²⁷ “Queen Street Entrance.”

²⁸ The stair was removed in the 1980s in what Peter Shaw calls “an act of conspicuous vandalism.” Peter Shaw, *A History of New Zealand Architecture* (Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 2003), 114.

²⁹ Errol J. Haarhoff, *Guide to the Architecture of Central Auckland* (Auckland: Balasoglou Books, 2003), 25.

³⁰ Nathaniel Cortlandt Curtis, *Architectural Composition* (Cleveland, OH: J. H. Jansen, 1935), 117.

³¹ Miles Warren, “The First Fifty Years,” in *Exquisite Apart: 100 Years of Architecture in New Zealand*, ed. Charles Walker (Auckland: Balasoglou Books, 2005), 27.

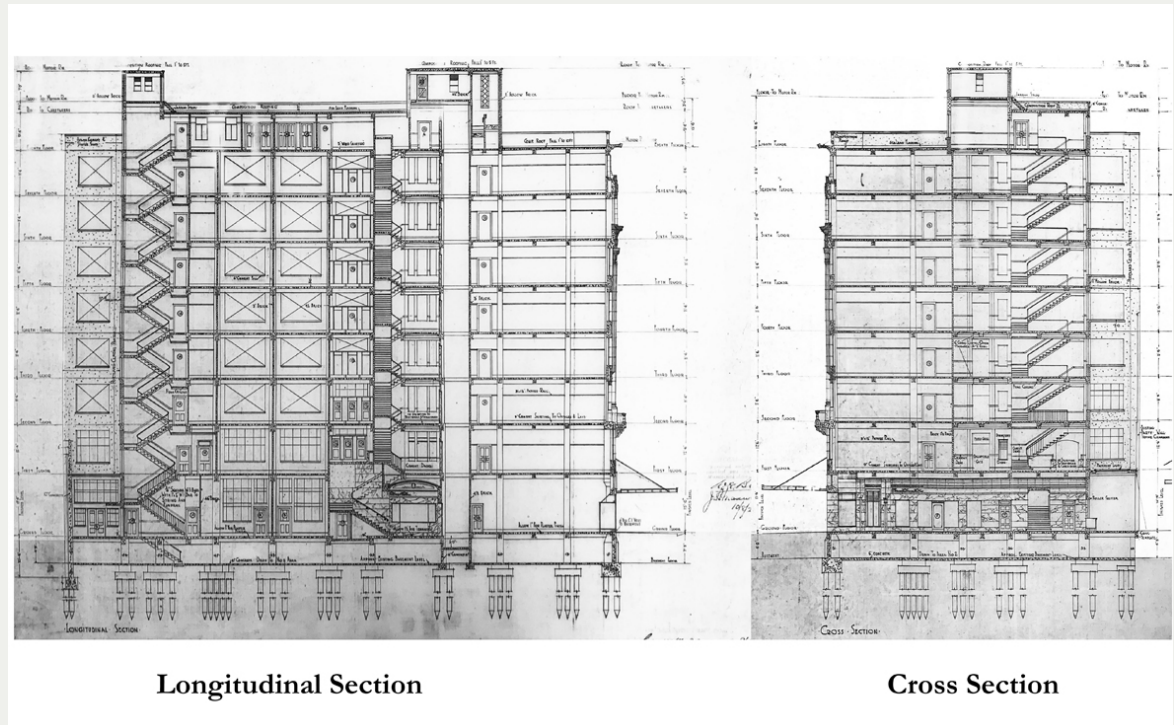


Figure 9. Selected sectional drawings of the Dilworth Building, Gummer & Ford Collection, GF33, Architecture Archive, Libraries and Learning Services, the University of Auckland.

Analysis of the Façade

Renowned architectural educator Nathaniel Curtis claimed that a building’s façade resulted from its plan and structural system, but this still allowed “ample latitude for the expression of character.”³⁰ In the Dilworth building, the celebration of the corner is the building’s most noticeable character trait. Miles Warren, perhaps New Zealand’s most celebrated architect, wrote of it, “In turning and celebrating the corner, Gummer shows

a mastery of form. The corner starts with recessed and curved planes, sets back further and runs up into a delightful pyramid roofed pavilion, all modelled with a sure hand.”³¹ The mastery Warren is referring to is Gummer’s ability to make the corner the focal point of the building without it either dominating or being dominated by the façades. It both stands out and is incorporated into the overall composition.

There are five general design principles that Gummer follows³² that shed light on how he achieved this.



Figure 10. Customs Street East, Auckland Central, 1989, by Paul McCredie, Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 273-MCC098.

The first principle is the tripartite grouping of elements.³³ In this case, the massing is organised vertically by the two façades and the corner. Gummer separates the corner from the façades by positioning the tower on the corner, setting it back from the façades, then concaving the wall from Level 2 up to Level 6, where it is set back even further. This series of setbacks lets the façades on either side have their own separate compositional logic while also informing the corner's own logic. There is also a horizontal tripartite grouping



Figure 11. Analysis of the Dilworth Building's façades. Image: Cameron Moore

of elements where, as Peter Shaw notes, “it is also clear that the architect has followed Louis Sullivan’s three-part ordering of high buildings.”³⁴

The second principle is that of overlapping compositional elements.³⁵ In the Dilworth Building, the corner tower is incorporated vertically into the building’s overall composition by continuing the façade’s horizontal features – the verandah, the balustrades, the moulding at the Level 7 roof line, and the subtle difference in colour in the stone course at the floor plates on both façades and the corner.

The third principle is to achieve balance through symmetry. In the Dilworth Building, the primary axis is on the centre of the corner, with the façades reflecting each other (albeit the Customs Street East façade has an extra three bays). Each façade also has a central line of

symmetry, as do nearly all other elements in the façades (the pilastered colonnades, windows, balconies, etc.).

The fourth principle is establishing a dominant focal point in the composition.³⁶ The corner tower is the clear focal point, rising two storeys above the façades. In turn, each façade has its own focal point – the Corinthian colonnade that starts with the balustrade on Level 2 and finishes with just the architrave at the top of Level 6. The Corinthian colonnade is the only significant element in the façade informed by classical historical canon. The pilasters are 10 diameters high and 2.5 diameters apart – the same on both façades. This ratio sets the proportion for the rest of the composition.

The fifth principle is the expression of the *apparent* vertical and lateral loads inherent in the building on the façade.³⁷ In the Dilworth Building, the ferro-

32 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,” *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand. ULTRA: Positions and Polarities Beyond Crisis* 38 (2021): 533–543, <https://doi.org/10.55939/a4007piywz>

33 John Vredenburg Van Pelt, *The Essentials of Composition as Applied to Art* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913), 78, <http://archive.org/details/essentialscmpoo00goog>; Curtis, *Architectural Composition*, 123.

34 Shaw, *A History of New Zealand Architecture*, 113.

35 Curtis, *Architectural Composition*, 124.

36 Van Pelt, *The Essentials of Composition as Applied to Art*, 70.

37 Steven W. Semes, *The Future of the Past: A Conservation Ethic for Architecture, Urbanism, and Historic Preservation*, illustrated edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009), 51.

cement structural system is represented on the façade by the pilasters. The façade is clad in Portland stone,³⁸ imported from the United Kingdom “at considerable extra expenditure,”³⁹ and the detailing is cast plaster with Portland stone dust to match the stonework.⁴⁰ Between the pilasters are windows with bronze spandrels between them hiding the concrete floor behind. Gummer gives the impression that the glass and bronze are protected by apparent lateral loads by the solidity of the bays on either side of the colonnade. These bays also give the impression that they are protecting the corner tower and holding it upright.

However, significant elements of the Dilworth Building defy a traditional, classical reading. Stacpoole and Beaven describe the building as “pure Lutyens and splendid.”⁴¹ Edwin Lutyens delighted in reinterpreting traditional classical forms in what he called the “high game,” allowing him to freely use architectural elements in entirely new ways while still firmly embedded in the traditional architectural canon. This approach is evident in Gummer’s treatment of the large windows and verandah on the ground floor. Both are essential elements to improve the experience of pedestrians but don’t fit easily into the established classical canon – Gummer uses the shadow formed by the verandah to provide a visual base for the building that the large windows would otherwise compromise. Another example is framing the colonnades by running the architrave to the base on either side of the colonnade, and reinterpreting Level 6 as the frieze as it, in turn, frames the colonnade. Then Level 7 becomes the cornice of the entablature – this works because the setback foreshortens its height, and the roof provides the cymatium and casts a shadow on the rest of the Level 7 cornice.

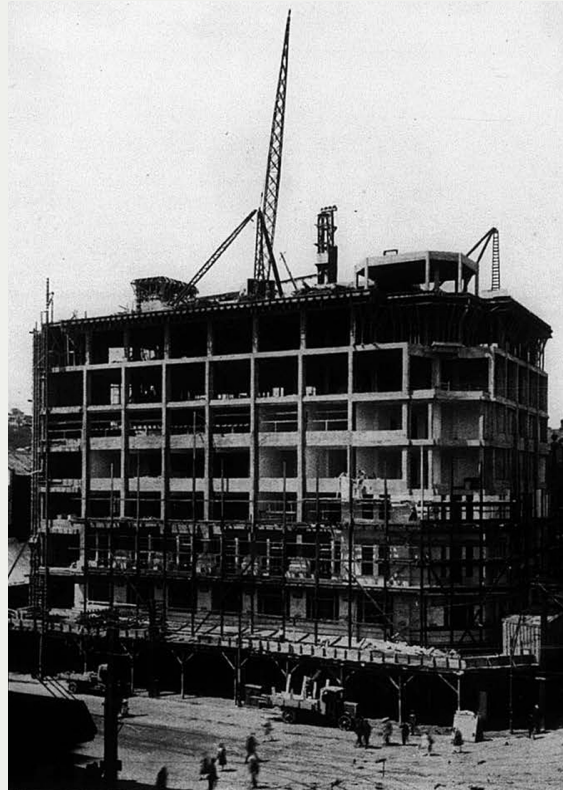


Figure 12. The Dilworth Building, N.Z. *Architectural & Building Review*, January 31, 1927. The structure can be seen behind the stone façade.

Construction

The Fletcher Construction Company was responsible

for the Dilworth Building’s construction. It took the company six months to complete the foundations and get the build out of the ground. The foundation consists of 24 concrete piers and 306 reinforced concrete piles.⁴² The foundations were required to reach good ground under the original seafloor, the deepest nearly 13 metres. The *New Zealand Herald* described the construction of the piers at the time: “[they] are rather like inverted mushrooms. They are made by sinking a shaft 15ft to 25ft deep, then widening it to 9ft at the bottom, inserting steel reinforcement, and filling the whole cavity up with liquid concrete.”⁴³ The piles were driven into the ground with a heavy iron weight called a monkey. To get to the required depth, the average pile required over 400 blows from the monkey; in one instance, 656 blows were needed. The blows were heard outside the high construction fence “in a regular cadence”⁴⁴ over the six-month time frame.

The other notable event during construction was the roof shout, in which a feast marked the completion of the roof for the 120 men working on the project. The board chairman, Archdeacon MacMurray, thanked the workers for their co-operation and labour, and reflected on James Dilworth and his arrival in New Zealand: “whose foresight after 50 years’ toil had made possible the erection of the great building in which they were seated.”⁴⁵ Reginald Ford also gave a speech on the history of ‘raising the roof’⁴⁶ and that “the final success of the Dilworth Building would be dependent upon the mutual assistance of every man connected with the work.” He expressed his thanks for the “hearty co-operation displayed in the completion of a strenuous task so far.”⁴⁷

38 Portland stone is a limestone that is both durable like granite and easy to carve like sandstone.

39 “Queen Street Entrance.”

40 Shaw, *A History of New Zealand Architecture*, 114.

41 John Stacpoole and Peter Beaven, *New Zealand Art: Architecture 1820–1970* (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1972), 74.

42 “Dilworth Trust Structure.”

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 “Luncheon for Workers.”

46 According to Ford, ‘raising the roof’ is custom from the thirteenth century.

47 “Luncheon for Workers.”

Conclusion

A formal, practical analysis of the building – from the client’s motivations and values that inform the design brief, to considering the architect’s limitations and opportunities of site, budget and function, and contractor’s issues with building the structure – allows for a clear-eyed evaluation of the building.

The purpose of the Dilworth Building was to make money for an endowment to support the education of underprivileged and orphaned boys. What stopped the building from being a cold profit-maximising endeavour was both the wishes of the board of The Dilworth Ulster Trust that the building was to be “a credit to Auckland,” a proper memorial to the Trust’s founder James Dilworth; and William Gummer’s knowledge of classical architectural canon and his imagination and skill in delivering innovative solutions to modern issues while still firmly embedded in the classical tradition. The building that resulted was a very profitable and civic-minded structure that celebrates one of the most prominent corners in Aotearoa New Zealand. Gummer’s attentiveness to the humanity of the workers, shoppers and pedestrians is still felt today, ninety-five years later.

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