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# *The Design Philosophy of Gummer and Ford*

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*Gummer & Ford was among New Zealand's most prominent architectural practices during the 1920s and 1930s. The practice started operations in 1923 and closed their doors in 1961 when both founding partners retired. They were responsible for a number of important buildings in the New Zealand architectural landscape. The writings of C. Reginald Ford have some received critical attention, and indeed his business and organisational acumen has been suggested by Peter Wood as the lasting legacy of the practice of Gummer and Ford. This paper attempts to extend Wood's argument to include the writing of William Gummer, the firm's principal designer, to shed light on its design philosophy. In 1914 Gummer expresses his design philosophy in "The Study of Architecture, an Address to Students." Under the heading *The Art of Reason*, he gives us his design philosophy in a nutshell: "allow the nature of the site and its position with regard to the compass, the character of the materials, the habits of the users together with the personal temperament of the designer shown in his use of mass, line, proportion, light and shade, scale et cetra [sic] to express themselves fully." He goes on to say, "it is not a matter of 'I wonder what style I shall do this in.' The above set of circumstances determines the style." This is a philosophy no doubt formed by Gummer's time in the Royal Academy of the Arts, and in the offices of Edwin Lutyens and Daniel Burnham. It is an intersection of a modern outlook and the language of a classical tradition. This paper will consider the historical significance and legacy of Gummer and Ford in light of Gummer's philosophy and in light of the broader problem of reconciling the classical tradition with the modern world.*



## The Formulation of Gummer and Ford's Design Philosophy

The Auckland-based firm Gummer and Ford was one of New Zealand's most prominent architectural offices of the 1920s and 1930s. The firm started operations in 1923 when William H. Gummer and C. Reginald Ford came together under the benevolent eye of future Auckland Mayor James Gunston.<sup>1</sup> Gunston was an admirer of Gummer's work, Gummer having designed a number of commissions for his extended family. Gunston and Ford came to know each other through the competition for the Auckland War Memorial Museum (around 1922) and had built up a great respect and friendship for one another.<sup>2</sup> Ford and Gummer already knew each other through their respective association with the New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA) and the two men, by all accounts, held each other in high esteem.<sup>3</sup> They were already at a mature stage in life, Gummer aged 38 and Ford aged 43, and both were married, or about to be so. It therefore stands to reason that their respective design philosophies were already fairly well formed at this point. Gummer and Ford operated during the depression—a very challenging time for architecture, both in New Zealand and globally. In the 1930s, the influx of modernist ideas from Europe, and later America, shook the foundations of the architectural establishment, with Gummer and Ford very much atop of that establishment. What sets this firm apart from other established practices in this period was their ability to continue to win commissions right through until their retirements in the 1960s, by which time the modern movement had long established itself as the continuing dominant architectural idiom.

The design philosophy of both partners will be discussed here, but as the main design architect of the firm, this paper is mainly concerned with the design philosophy of William Gummer and the ways in which his architectural education and international networks and experience influenced his approach to architecture.

## An Architectural Education Par Excellence

Born in Auckland on December 7, 1885 as one of eight children, William Gummer was raised in a religious household with both his mother and father “enthusiastic” members of the Congregational Church.<sup>4</sup> Gummer served articles under William

1. Suggested by Prior Hoadley in Bruce Petry, “The Public Architecture of Gummer and Ford,” MArch thesis, University of Auckland, 1992, 26.

2. Petry, “Gummer and Ford,” 26.

3. As seen by Gummer's response to Reginald Ford, “Presidential Address,” *NZIA Journal* (February 1923), 151: “Mr Ford has a faculty, which all cannot attain to, of getting beneath things .... He is a deep reader and does not lose the faculty of seeing with the eye and seeing with the mind.”

4. On the Congressional Union of New Zealand see “Our History,” online at [www.congregational.org.nz/our-history](http://www.congregational.org.nz/our-history) (accessed January 26, 2013). The Church was founded on the idea that Christ alone was the Head of the Church, and that it was independent of any external authority. This stance of independence, cultivated at a very early age, might have been instrumental in Gummer's prolonged unease with some of the original tenets of the modernist movement.

5. Holman was a well-respected architect in his own right becoming President of the NZIA in 1912. As a partner in the firm Holman, Moses and Watkins, they are perhaps best known for the Vulcan Buildings on the corner of Queen St and Vulcan Lane, Auckland. See Martin Jones, "Vulcan Buildings," *New Zealand Historic Places Trust* online at <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=668> (accessed January 27, 2013).

6. As was acclaimed Arts and Crafts Architect James Chapman-Taylor. Waite, *In the Beaux Arts Tradition: William Gummer Architect* (Napier: Hawkes Bay Cultural Trust 2005), 6.

7. Petry, "Gummer and Ford," 69.

8. He worked on commissions for the Lingfield Old Town Stores and the extension to Emmanuel College, Cambridge.—Waite, *Beaux Arts Tradition*, 6.

9. Petry, "Gummer and Ford," 70.

10. Even though he retired from the Academy in 1907 (two years before Gummer was a pupil there), Gummer was a regular visitor to Spiers for what appeared to be formal tutoring sessions.—Petry, "Gummer and Ford," 75.

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

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

13. William Gummer, "The Three-fold Application of Architectural Education," *NZIA Proceedings* (March 1920), 42.

14. Whilst in the office, Gummer worked primarily on Castle Drogo in Devon, and also spent time on St Jude's Church Hampstead, Knebworth Church, the Theosophical Building (now the British Medical Association in Tavistock Square, London) and on a private house, Salutation at Sandwich. Waite, *Beaux Arts Tradition*, 7.

Alfred Holman in Auckland from 1900 to 1907, aged 16 to 23.<sup>5</sup> His passion and work ethic can be seen at this early age by his attendance in evening classes at Auckland Technical College, and the International Correspondence School of America.<sup>6</sup>

In March 1908, at the age of 24, Gummer travelled to London where, true to form, he immediately began attending lectures and evening classes.<sup>7</sup> His first appointment came that September with Sir Leonard Stokes, with whom he worked until the end of the year,<sup>8</sup> before commencing studies for the entrance exams for the Royal Academy of Arts. In a whirlwind six weeks he had left Stokes' office, sat the exams and had found out he had been accepted on January 27 to begin four days later on the 1 February 1909.<sup>9</sup>

Gummer soon became familiar with the general teachings of the Academy, and in particular, those of Sir Reginald Blomfield, and those of Blomfield's predecessor Richard Phene Spiers.<sup>10</sup> The Royal Academy, as modelled on the French Ecole des Beaux Arts, emphasised the importance of the plan as a manifestation of a functional program. 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.<sup>11</sup> Architectural history was taught by typological studies that rendered "classical forms unhistorical and established them as modular proportions."<sup>12</sup> Taken together this suggests that the Beaux Arts model educated students in an architectural *technique*, not in a collection of styles, and that the architectural philosophy of the Royal Academy diametrically opposed the teachings of "style" that was prevalent in architectural education and publishing elsewhere. This break from the articulated system and revivalist tendencies made a deep impression on Gummer: "I venture the opinion that we are the product of a dark age in architectural education, a period of one hundred years from which France and France alone emerges with credit. England is now emerging fast and America has left her chrysalis stage."<sup>13</sup>

In 1911, while still at the Royal Academy, Gummer was fortunate enough to spend seven and a half months in the office of Edwin Lutyens.<sup>14</sup> Lutyens had a strong connection with the Royal Academy, eventually becoming the president in 1938-1944. Working in Lutyens' office sharpened Gummer's design and



drafting abilities, exposing the young mind of Gummer to the importance of a national or regional quality to architecture, something Gummer later discussed with students and colleagues once back in New Zealand.<sup>15</sup> Before returning to New Zealand, Gummer also spent three months in the United States, working as a junior architect in Daniel Burnham's office in Chicago, which, at the time, was the largest architectural office in the world.<sup>16</sup> Like Lutyens, Burnham also held strong ties to the Ecole des Beaux Arts model, clearly expressed in his work for the World's Columbian Exhibition of 1892.

15. W. H. Gummer, "The Study of Architecture: An address to students," *Building Progress* (May 1915): 293-9.

16. Gummer worked on the Washington Post Office and the 2nd National Bank in Toledo. Waite, *Beaux Arts Tradition*, 7.

### Closet Modernist?

To properly understand Gummer's design philosophy, one must go to his *writing*. For an architect of his standing and ability he did not write very much at all, certainly not compared to his partner Reginald Ford.<sup>17</sup> He primarily wrote about things such as materiality, spatial and formal composition, harmony and contrast—that is, the design of buildings. This reinforces the suggestion that formal design was a topic close to his heart. In 1914, after Gummer had been back in New Zealand for just over a year (and as partner in the Wellington based architectural firm Hoggard and Prouse), he became a founding member of the Auckland Architectural Students Association. He was invited to give an address where he laid bare his architectural philosophy in a single passage:

17. Peter Wood, "C. Reginald Ford: an account of his practice and influence, 1919-1931," paper presented to "Good Architecture should not be a plaything": *New Zealand Architecture in the 1920s, A One Day Symposium*, Centre for Building Performance Research, Faculty of Architecture and Design, Victoria University of Wellington, December 2, 2011, 102.

the plan should instantly show the relative importance and use of the various apartments, access to these should be of the easiest, and true architectonic feeling obtained by the whole by allowing the nature of the site and its position with regard to the compass, the character of the materials used in the building, and the habits of the people to use it, together with the personal temperament of the designer shown in this use of mass, line, proportion, light and shade etc, to express themselves fully. When these matters are attended to, how seldom, practically never, does it happen that one plan will suit two clients and two sites, and how the question of style settles itself. It is not a matter of "I wonder what style I shall do this in." The above set of circumstances determines the style.<sup>18</sup>

18. Gummer, "The Study of Architecture," 294. The influence of Reginald Blomfield is clear, and particularly of Blomfield's *The Mistress Art* (London: Edward Arnold 1908).

In this address, written in 1914 by an acclaimed neo-classicist, here we have most major tenets of modernist architectural design, from “honest expression of materials,” form follows function,” “the plan as the generator;” “style is dead,” and the role of “architect as artist.” Later on in the address, Gummer hit upon another modernist principle, “expression of time and place,” in which he tables the establishment of a national New Zealand architecture: “We in New Zealand want to build as a result of the particular conditions of the country, climate, materials, and the people that we are or hope to be. Personally, I think some of us are open to grave criticism in reproducing English forms unduly into our domestic work.”<sup>19</sup> This positions Gummer and Ford in a long line of architects attempting to develop a native New Zealand architectural style from the 1850s to the present. Bruce Petry suggests that Gummer’s Beaux Arts architectural training<sup>20</sup> held him in very good stead to establish his own “classical tradition” within the New Zealand architectural scene that could perhaps be used to “concretise public aspirations of nationhood,” as James Gunston had envisaged.<sup>21</sup> Employing the lessons from his beaux-arts education allowed Gummer to attempt a New Zealand style by neatly side-stepping questions of appropriateness that would surely have been asked if he was merely a revivalist trained in the art of aping a variety of styles from different periods and countries.

19. Gummer, “The Study of Architecture,” 299

20. That is, working with a prescribed technique that relied on compositional logic, clear planning, the distinction between structural principle and decoration, the use of forms that are rationally induced from their material and construction method, knowledgeable detailing, consideration of the site, with an emphasis on drawing.

21. Petry “Gummer and Ford,” 84.

Two of Gummer’s Hawkes Bay houses, Tauroa (1914) and Craggy Range (1918) neatly express this rather modern design philosophy. In Tauroa, perhaps his most celebrated house, historian Paul Waite suggests that although elements of the English Arts and Crafts movement are apparent and the influence of Lutyens is clear: “the exterior of the design of the house is unlike anything seen in New Zealand or outside.” Waite’s suggestion is that Gummer’s work echoes the early European modernists Adolf Loos, Otto Wagner and Charles Macintosh through his use of parapets, a flat roof and whitewashed walls.<sup>22</sup> Craggy Range, designed four years later, also with Arts and Crafts elements, features the same modernistic tendencies as Tauroa (less the whitewash), but sustains a severe geometry and metal-framed windows. The work of Irving Gill, the pioneering Californian modernist, is particularly apparent in this latter project.<sup>23</sup> Clearly William Gummer was not afraid to add new elements or techniques to his architecture. He looked at a wide range of architectural precedents, regardless of style.

22. Waite, *Beaux Arts Tradition*, 29.

23. Waite, *Beaux Arts Tradition*, 33.



## Not Quite a Modernist

Contrary to more extreme champions of modernist ideology, William Gummer felt there was no deep chasm between the past and the present-day. For him, there always had been historical continuity:

We do not read our histories or travel to reproduce the structures of other peoples in other lands. We do these things to in order to be able to design in our own land. We do these things because architecture is intensely human, because people of all ages—and this includes the present age—whether consciously or unconsciously, expressed themselves in the structure of their times . . . They have shown us how they have hewn the rock from the mountain side and cut timber from the forest, and how best to use these things in buildings.<sup>24</sup>

24. Gummer, "The Study of Architecture," 295.

What Gummer is interested in here is learning about how humans have expressed themselves, and understanding what that expression is, and how best to express our humanity in our own country and age by learning about human expression in architecture. He then goes on to tell us exactly how this happens:

So [when] we measure a building and lovingly measure each stone, for the time being, we live in the age and interpret the mind of the designer . . . We follow his thoughts, we benefit by his mistakes as well as by his successes. While we have been working, almost unconsciously, the full import of the terms, proportion, breadth of design, scale, character, use and placing of enrichments, comes to us, and so our perception and sense of fitness is developed. By such means we get a knowledge of design . . . we learn how to meet our own difficulties; we increase in resource.<sup>25</sup>

25. Gummer, "The Study of Architecture," 296

Gummer believed that all buildings can be studied and learned from, both as a design tool in their own right, and as a way to understand how humanity has expressed itself in the past and what clues the designer can derive from this in order to express his or her own place and time. He felt he didn't need to constantly negotiate between the past and present-day, that any architectural expression in the building's design was an expression of humanity—not function, technology or a particular epoch.

So here we have the design philosophy William Gummer brought to Gummer and Ford in 1923. Clear and logical, and in the final

assessment, a modern one: emphasis on the importance of a clear, simple plan, a thorough site analysis, and an honesty in the use of materials and techniques of construction. How compatible were Gummer's views with those of his slightly older, energetic, articulate, business-oriented, partner Reginald Ford? First we must know a little of the man himself.

### **Adventurer, Hero, Land Agent, Engineer, and Architect**

Charles Reginald Ford was born in Notting Hill, London on February 4, 1880. He joined the Royal Navy aged 14 and travelled the world for the next five years. In 1901, aged 21, Ford volunteered to travel with Robert Falcon Scott and Ernest Shackleton on the Royal Navy's Discovery Expedition to the Antarctic. The voyage lasted three years (two of those spent iced-in on the ship), with Ford becoming Ship's Steward and later Captain Scott's private secretary.<sup>26</sup> On the eventual return to England there was considerable public enthusiasm for the expedition. This led Scott, accompanied by Ford, on a speaking tour of the UK. Ford lived in Ottawa, Canada for seven months recalling his own adventures, then embarked on a solo lecture tour through Australia for the theatre and production company J. C. Williamson Ltd being billed as a "Hero of Polar Exploration."<sup>27</sup> As Peter Wood points out, Ford was a bonafide celebrity and his decision to move to New Zealand was treated as national news.<sup>28</sup> This notoriety afforded him a certain amount of social standing that followed him from Christchurch to Whanganui to Auckland. In 1906 he settled in Christchurch as a farmer, later becoming a partner in a land agent office, while studying architecture and structural engineering.<sup>29</sup> In 1908 he married Edith Badger, and together they had two daughters and a son. Apart from his natural drawing ability,<sup>30</sup> little is known about Ford's early architectural education, but by December 1913, aged 33, he started his own architectural practice in Wanganui and became a member of the NZIA the next year. He was a pragmatic if not spectacular designer<sup>31</sup> when he entered a partnership with the well-respected Robert Talboys in November 1919.<sup>32</sup> Due to his writing and presentation skills,<sup>33</sup> Ford was installed as the President of the NZIA in 1921 at the institute's AGM in Whanganui.<sup>34</sup> He dissolved the partnership the next year and, after a short international tour, he set up office in Auckland where he was approached by James Gunston to form a partnership with William Gummer.

26. Waite, *In the Beaux Arts Tradition*, 12

27. Peter Shaw, *History of New Zealand Architecture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Auckland: Hodder Moe Beckett, 1997), 112.

28. Wood, "C. Reginald Ford," 102.

29. Petry, "Gummer and Ford," 51.

30. Waite, *Beaux Arts Tradition*, 12.

31. His first known house, illustrated in *Modern Homes of New Zealand* (1917), is an accomplished wooden bungalow. He also won a model kitchen competition and won a silver medal for a design for a worker's home illustrated in *Building Progress* in (1919). Waite, *Beaux Arts Tradition*, 3

32. The old Fire Station building in Wanganui is perhaps their most accomplished commission. Helen McCracken, "Haslemere," *New Zealand Historic Places Trust* online at <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=7513> (accessed January 23, 2013).

33. Those papers and their subsequent conference readings that, according to Peter Wood, helped propel him to the presidency of the NZIA included "A Note Upon Architectural Competitions," "Advertising in Relation to the Profession of Architecture in New Zealand," and "Garden Suburb."—Wood, "C. Reginald Ford," 104.

34. Wood, "C. Reginald Ford," 104.





According to Bruce Petry, Ford's experience in selling real estate as an auctioneer and land agent, and his study of structural engineering, probably lead Ford to see architecture in a more pragmatic light than Gummer.<sup>35</sup> And without the benefit of Gummer's extensive overseas education and office experience, Ford had to rely far more heavily on popular architectural books of the day to form his own views on the nature of architecture and the architect. In his essay "Architect and Client" Ford cites C. Matlock Price's *The Practical Book of Architecture* (1916) and F. Inigio Thomas' *Keystones of Building* (1912) as the main building blocks in his architectural development. He also mentions the work of William Lethaby (of the Royal Academy) and it is probable that Lethaby's *Architecture: An introduction to the History and Theory of the Art of Building* (1912) was of influence. Peter Wood suggests that, taken together, these books were instrumental in Ford's "reinvention"<sup>36</sup> as an architect from when he started practising in Whanganui around 1913 until his partnership with Robert Talboys in 1919. These books are all fairly conservative, large-scale surveys of western architecture, denoting the history of various styles, ways of building and some (conservative) modern approaches to architecture including interacting with clients and various construction techniques to employ. All of which are perfectly consistent with Gummer's view. This is shown from Ford's own hand as well. In one instance he proclaims, "The History of Architecture is an absolutely essential subject. In any profession the practitioner without knowledge of what has gone on before in his own field is severely handicapped, and this is especially true of the practice of architecture" when decrying the poor results of students' exam results for architectural history.<sup>37</sup> In a piece for the Wellington *Dominion* responding to the "architectural style" of the proposed National War Memorial, Ford wrote:

The form-elements of the great historical styles of architecture form the alphabet in which the architect must compose his works . . . The truest and best originality proceeds, and has always proceeded, from a thorough knowledge of past achievements and the sane and modest adaptation of their principles to contemporary rather than from a deliberate attempt to compass a result wholly without antecedents . . .<sup>38</sup>

Peter Wood proposes that Ford's architectural practice can not be separated from his Christian values. He cites Arthur Clutton-Brock's *The Ultimate Belief* (1916) as having a major influence on

35. Petry, "Gummer and Ford," 51.

36. "Reinvention" into an architect from sailor to explorer to farmer to land agent to architect.—Wood, "C. Reginald Ford," 106.

37. C. Reginald Ford, "Remarks by examiners, 1925," *NZIA Journal* (March 1926), 24.

38. C. Reginald Ford, "Architectural Style," *Dominion*, October 18, 1920.

Ford, albeit not a strictly architectural one.<sup>39</sup> Within *The Ultimate Belief* Clutton-Brock links aesthetics with spirituality in this rather loose philosophical guide, offering Ford a framework for the combination of his Christian beliefs with his architectural work. In "Architect and Client," Ford writes that

the craving for beauty is a spiritual activity cannot be denied. That beauty in building can evoke the spiritual emotions and minister to the spiritual side of life . . . To-day schools, libraries, hospitals, post offices, factories, and other utilitarian or altruistic buildings are taking their place in common life. . . all buildings touch the common life at every point—surely they should be made to minister to their spiritual and not alone satisfy their physical needs?

For Ford, the architect has a responsibility to administer spiritual guidance to the population by designing beautiful buildings. In *Architect and Client* Ford takes William Lethaby's definition of architecture as building 'touched by emotion' and conflates emotion with "spirit" by way of "beauty." One the face of it, this makes a compelling argument as beauty being one of his major design drivers until one realises the definition Ford gives to beauty is "something which gives pleasure to our higher senses"<sup>40</sup> that can in fact mean almost anything. Nonetheless, Ford's architectural views are compatible with those of Gummer. Ford had lived an extremely varied and interesting life, and had been exposed to a multitude of experiences. Into the Gummer and Ford partnership, Ford brought his outstanding business acumen and organisational skills, his ability with clients and perspective clients, and his status as a registered engineer. Suffice to say that Ford, even though he was extremely interested in the question of design, was never as personally invested in it as William Gummer. His knowledge and opinions on design theory came via books presumably read alone, while Gummer had lived and breathed only architecture and design theory from when he was sixteen, and had been enculturated by the Royal Academy of the Arts, Lutyens and Burnham.

40. C. Reginald Ford, "Address by the Retiring President," *NZIA Journal* (1923), 143.

## Practice

The newly established partnership got off to a very good start winning the Auckland Civic Centre Competition in 1924, with an entry that the Auckland Star proclaimed as "show[ing] a



very dignified treatment of the area, and if ratepayers approve the scheme, Auckland will have one of the finest civic centres in Australasia.”<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately ratepayers did not approve the scheme, but the reputation of the new Gummer and Ford office was greatly enhanced. By 1926, having completed the Grey Lynn Library and with the Remuera Library and the Dilworth Trust Building on the drawing boards, Gummer and Ford had secured for itself the profile of a substantial architectural firm in Auckland. The beaux-arts influences of these buildings and other major commissions soon to come, like the Auckland Railway Station and the Domain Winter Gardens, indicate that the design decisions and thus the design philosophy of Gummer and Ford was Gummer’s responsibility. NZIA Gold Medals were awarded to the firm for their work on the Remuera Library 1928 and the Auckland Railway Station 1931. Commissions flowed fast in the late 20s and early 30s, with the Dominion Museum and Art Gallery in Wellington as perhaps the largest.

41. Unfortunately ratepayers didn’t approve the scheme, but the reputation of the new Gummer and Ford office was greatly enhanced.—“The Civic Square,” *Auckland Star*, November 5, 1924.

Gummer was elected president of the NZIA in 1933, aged 47. In his presidential addresses we can see an expansion of his design philosophy into discussions on coordination and harmonising and the practicality of architecture. It is interesting to note that these addresses weave threads from Reginald Ford’s retiring president’s address in 1923.<sup>42</sup> Gummer also discusses his thoughts on the rising clamour of the proponents of modernism, advocating an “evolutionary” path to design as opposed to the “revolutionary” stance he ascribes to the modernists, but this is perhaps a subject for another paper. It is of note that there is never a contradiction to his earlier writings, merely an expansion. In 1935 Gummer embarked on an extensive tour of the UK and Europe, attending the Third International Reunion of Architects in Prague. According to postcards he sent home, he tended to gravitate toward work that he could see bridging the gap between traditional and modernist architecture. Perhaps for Gummer, the key to bridging that gap was a humanist expression underlying the formal attributes of a building. The closest he ever came to accepting modernism as a legitimate design option was to say that there had not been enough transition for man’s mentality to fully be able to absorb and digest it.<sup>43</sup>

42. Ford, “Address,” 143.

43. William Gummer, diary entry, November 1, 1936.

## Conclusion

From houses to offices to monuments and vast public edifices, the range of buildings designed by Gummer and Ford is certainly impressive, as is the enormous influence the firm has had on the architectural field in New Zealand. The humanist design philosophy of the firm was obviously a key factor in keeping pace with the changing architectural landscape from the 1920s to the 1960s, guiding them from their neo-classical beginnings to a “moderate modernism”<sup>44</sup> by the firm’s end. In the early days, from 1923 to the 1940s, William Gummer’s beaux-arts technique, along with the organisational and public relations skills of Reginald Ford served the firm well in what John Stacpoole and Peter Beaven have described as the “transitional period in New Zealand architecture.”<sup>45</sup> After the Second World War it was Gummer and Ford’s vast experience, excellent reputation and existing clientele that contributed to the firm’s continuing success. Importantly, their humanist design philosophy was flexible enough to give them the ability to cope with the vastly different set of circumstances they found themselves subject to following the Second World War.

44. “Moderate modernism” in relation to Gummer and Ford coined by Petry in “Gummer and Ford.”

45. Peter Beaven and John Stacpoole, *Architecture 1820-1970* (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1972), 73.

