

## Auckland Heritage/Architecture

### Twelve Historic Places of Worship

Auckland is New Zealand's capital of commerce, and notorious in the rest of the country as a city where Mammon takes precedence over God. But Auckland's historic churches are among the country's finest, and it was in early Auckland that "the Selwyn Style", New Zealand's first home-grown European architectural style, was developed. The style was not of Bishop Selwyn's own creation, but rather the achievement of the architect-priest Frederick Thatcher and other architects who worked under Selwyn's direction. These architects, accepting the limitations of the colonial situation, designed buildings in wood, following Gothic precedents, which had a great influence on church building throughout colonial New Zealand.

After Selwyn and Thatcher, several different architects, some important names in the history of New Zealand architecture, designed churches in Auckland in a variety of styles and using different materials. The historic churches of Auckland provide an overview of nineteenth and early twentieth century New Zealand church architecture.

Nine of the twelve historic places of worship on this "itinerary" are in central Auckland or the inner suburb of Parnell. It would be possible to visit all nine of these churches on foot in the one day, though it would be a strenuous walk. These nine churches appear in the itinerary in the order in which they would come up on the most sensible walking route.

The very energetic may want to extend the walk, between viewing the Pitt Street Methodist Church and the Baptist Tabernacle, by carrying on to Khyber Pass Road to see the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The other two churches on the itinerary can only be reached by car or public transport, but the more distant of these two churches, the St John's College Chapel, is one of the most important church buildings in New Zealand.

The itinerary does not cover all the interesting churches in even central Auckland and Parnell. You will see other churches of interest close to the walking route that links the chosen churches.

### St Patrick's Cathedral

The present St Patrick's was begun in the mid 1880s and completed in 1907. In the years between the original stone church (designed by Walter Robertson in 1845) was retained as part of the half-completed new building. Today's St Patrick's has been described as "rather homely neo-Gothic" but inside has "unexpected warmth and richness of colour". A pedestrian precinct gives it an appealing setting

*Location: St Patrick's Square, on Wyndham Street between Albert and Hobson Streets*

### St Matthew in the City

By the early twentieth century, New Zealand architects had long been designing excellent buildings, but when the parishioners of St Matthew's decided to rebuild they looked (like Anglicans elsewhere in the country) back to England for an architect. St Matthew's was designed by the English architect F.L. Pearson, but its construction was supervised by a local architect, Edward Bartley. The Oamaru stone building, consecrated in 1905, has been described as "one of the best examples of English Gothic in New Zealand" and has fine stone vaulting (which is rare in New Zealand) and stained glass. The planned spire was never built.

*Location: On Wellesley Street, west of Queen Street, near the Hobson Street corner.*

### Pitt Street Methodist Church

In the nineteenth century, the Methodists were divided into several sects and the number of places of worship these different sects built give Methodist churches an important place in the history of New Zealand's church architecture. Designed by local architect Philip Herepath and built in 1864-65, the Pitt Street Methodist Church is typical of many examples throughout the country of Victorian Gothic executed in brick.

*Location: On the corner of Pitt Street and Karangahape Road*

*[This next church is included for those with the time and energy to walk to Khyber Pass Road.]*

### Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Completed in 1884, the wooden Church of the Holy Sepulchre is one of many buildings the prolific father-and-son partnership of Edward and Thomas Mahoney gave to Auckland. Within "the plainest possible shell" the kauri church has a beautifully spacious interior. It is Auckland's best example of the large churches built in late nineteenth century New Zealand using timber where stone might have been expected. Its tall spire is one of its finest features.

*Location: Khyber Pass Road, on the corner of Burleigh Street.*

### Baptist Tabernacle

The "non-conformist" or "dissenting" denominations (although the terms cannot strictly be applied in New Zealand where there has never been an Established Church) differed from the Anglicans in sometimes using classical styles for their church buildings. The Anglicans never deviated from Gothic, but the Baptists and Presbyterians (among others) occasionally built in classical styles to assert their difference. Auckland's Baptist Tabernacle, designed by Edmund Bell in the mid 1880s, has a very fine portico, which is a commanding presence on its street.

*Location: Upper Queen Street, just below Karangahape Road*

### St Paul's

The original St Paul's was Auckland's first church, but it was long ago demolished when its site on Point Britomart was levelled. In 1894-94 a new St Paul's was erected in a decorated English style to a design by W.H. Skinner. Rangitoto blue stone and Oamaru stone were used to good effect. The church acquired a new chancel in 1936 but, like St Matthew's, the spire originally planned for the building was never built.

*Location: Symonds Street, at the corner of Wellesley Street East*

### The Former Synagogue

In the mid 1880s, Edward Bartley designed an idiosyncratic but impressive building for Auckland's thriving Jewish community in a "quasi-Eastern" style which combined Romanesque and Byzantine elements. Concrete was used. Some time after a new Synagogue had been built in 1968 the building was sensitively converted to become a branch of the National Bank.

*Location: Princes Street, where Waterloo Quadrant, Bowen Avenue and Kitchener Street all intersect.*

### St Andrew's

Part of this impressive building is Auckland's oldest surviving church building. In 1847-50, the young city's Presbyterians built a plain, practical, rectangular (and to some eyes "dour") church designed by Walter Robertson. In 1882, a fine Doric portico and tower with the three Classical orders superimposed, designed by Matthew Henderson, was added to the front of the original blue stone building to create one of New Zealand's finest churches. Like the Baptist Tabernacle it illustrates the readiness of non-Anglican congregations to use Classical styles for their churches

*Location: At the intersection of Anzac Avenue, Waterloo Quadrant, Symonds Street and Alten Road.*

### St Mary's, Parnell

Benjamin Mountfort, New Zealand's most accomplished Gothic architect, was from Christchurch, where most of his surviving buildings can be seen. But in the late 1880s, Mountfort gave Auckland "one of the finest wooden churches in the English-speaking world". The church came into use in 1888 and was completed in 1898. Its board-and-batten exterior has a continuous string course. Small gables grace the side walls and break the roof-line of the apse. Its lofty interior, a masterpiece of Gothic forms executed in wood, has some superb stained glass and interesting memorial brasses.

*Location: Parnell Road*

### St Stephen's, Judges Bay

In 1856, Frederick Thatcher, chief developer of the "Selwyn style", designed a tiny chapel in the form of a Greek cross, with a belfry over the crossing, to replace a previous stone church of 1844 which had collapsed less than a year after construction. With vertical board cladding, a steep-pitched roof and exposed structure the chapel has many features of the mature "Selwyn style". The building has historic interest as the scene of the 1857 signing of the Constitution of the Anglican Church in New Zealand. The churchyard, with historic graves, give the charming building a restful setting.

*Location: Judges Bay, at the foot of St Stephens Avenue*

This is the end of a manageable walking tour of Auckland's churches. The two final buildings on this itinerary are too far away to reach on foot but are well worth visiting.

### St Michael's, Remuera

In the twentieth century, church architecture in New Zealand became much more diverse and innovative. In the early 1930s, two local architects, G.E. Tole and H.L. Massey, designed a simple basilica with a loggia-topped tower, inspired primarily by Italian Romanesque buildings, for the Roman Catholic parish of St Michael's, Remuera. Brick and tile were the materials used for the striking design, one of only a handful of buildings in the country in this particular style.

*Location: Remuera Road*

### St John's College Chapel

Bishop Selwyn brought to New Zealand the belief that Gothic was the appropriate style for churches. In 1847, Frederick Thatcher designed for Selwyn's St John's College a chapel with an exposed structural frame, a steeply pitched roof and an unusual apsidal end. Though designed to be temporary, the church remains, one of the great achievements of early New Zealand architecture. The nave has been lengthened, but this and other minor changes have not harmed the spirit of Thatcher's original building.

*Location: St John's Road, Meadowbank*