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TOWN PLANNING IN NEW ZEALAND 1900 – 1933 : THE EMERGENT YEARS.

**CONCEPTS, THE ROLE OF THE STATE, AND THE
EMERGENCE OF A PROFESSION**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of**

Doctor of Philosophy in Planning

at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

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2000

ABSTRACT

Town planning in New Zealand 1900 – 1933 : The Emergent Years, is a study of the forces that shaped the development of town planning in New Zealand. The subtitle, concepts, the role of the state, and the emergence of a profession, highlight three themes or foci that are important in the emergence of town planning as a separate and identifiable activity. The existing paucity of planning history scholarship in New Zealand to date means that this period has generally been regarded as one of little achievement, merely a waiting period before 'real' planning began under the *Town and Country Planning Act 1953*. This thesis, which draws heavily on primary archival resources, instead reveals a period when the worth of town planning was recognised and a hardy band of enthusiasts fought to have the concept established through legislation. Legislation was not achieved until 1926 with the *Town-planning Act*, due to a number of factors in particular the decline of the Liberals and the on-set of World War One. When the legislation was achieved, progress was slow due to the apathy of local government, the Depression, and the lack of trained town planners. Nevertheless under the energetic leadership of John Mawson, Director of Town Planning, significant progress was made in laying the foundations for the planning systems that would follow.

During this period town planning as a concept developed from one which was focused on ameliorating slums and urban ills, to a future orientated concept intended to guide the efficient functioning of the urban system. This saw the interventionist powers of the state used to limit the private use of land resources in the interest of achieving 'good' for the community as a whole. Such intervention was however in keeping with other such state interventions of the time. As the concept of town planning found favour it was taken up first by self-trained enthusiasts, such as Samuel Hurst Seager, often drawn from existing city beautifying groups. When legislation established it as a separate activity there was the slow development of a small band of town planning professionals.

Thus the period of this thesis is one of quiet but gradual achievement that created acceptance of town planning as an appropriate intervention of the state and created the foundations of the planning profession.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing of a thesis, by accident or design, intrudes into the lives of many beyond the author. Thus there are many people to thank, all the more in this case because this was a part time effort completed in all those 'spare moments', of which we all have few. My greatest thanks must go to my husband Michael and my son Phillip. They have both manfully borne the trials of this thesis, giving encouragement at the right time, and above all believing that I could get it completed. Also to my parents Margaret and David Miller who imbued in me recognition of the value of education and who supported, in every way, my early endeavours. Also very special thanks to John Giffin and Jules Neville, wonderful friends who never let me give up.

Basil Poff, my supervisor, coped well, at a late stage, with a sometimes overly focused student, determined to prove that planning history was different to history. All thanks must go to him for being willing to take me on at such a late stage. Grateful thanks is also extended to Sue Edwards who did an excellent job on the typing and who rescued me several times from the intricacies of the computer, and Elaine Bristol who lent a sympathetic ear in times of stress and who had an acute eye for errors of grammar.

I can also not overlook the significant contribution of my various medical advisors, who all coped magnificently with a single-minded patient who refused to give up this work. In particular, Dr Andrew Backhouse, my GP, Dr Peter Martin, my respiratory specialist, and Dr Penny Fitzharris, my immunologist — thank you for keeping my lungs going. I should also not forget Janet Martin and the wonderful staff of Ward 10 at Wellington Hospital.

There is also all of the people who have assisted me with research material. This thesis would not have been possible without the help of staff at National Archives in Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch. With regard to the latter I would have been all the less knowledgeable about the Christchurch material but for the help of Geraldine who went above and beyond the call of duty. Similar helpful assistance came from staff at the National Library, the Alexander Turnbull Library and the Hocken Library. Council archivists were also very helpful in a number of places, as were the staff of the Auckland Heritage Centre, Auckland City Library. I would like to particularly acknowledge the help and interest of Mrs Officer of the New Plymouth District Council Archive, and Ian Matheson and Barbara Olsen of the Palmerston North City Council Archives. Ian and Barbara could always produce the most obscure material and provided a wonderful research facility. There are also a large number of people both in New Zealand and overseas who answered questions and gave encouragement. Prominent in this group is Chris Garnaut of Adelaide who provided on-going encouragement, and John Adams of Auckland who generously shared with me much useful material. Also Mrs A Kemble Welch of Nelson who shared so much of her father with me.

I would also like to recognise the financial support extended to me from the Massey University Research Fund in 1996 and 1997. Also the New Zealand Planning Institute that awarded me the Mobil New Zealand- NZPI Study Award which allowed me to undertake a wide range of research. In this respect the generosity of Mobil New Zealand in funding this award, should also be acknowledged.

Finally thanks to my colleagues in the School of Resource and Environmental Planning. While most of you could never quite understand my fascination with planning history, you never stopped me when I enthusiastically 'rabbited on', about my latest discovery. Thank you for listening

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