

## Edmund Anscombe (1874-1948): early competition work

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**ABSTRACT:** Edmund Anscombe is reputed to have begun his architectural career in Dunedin with the success of the University of Otago School of Mines competition, after spending five years in America (1902-1906) studying architecture. His early career is characterised by consistent success in architectural competitions over a short period of time. He won competitions for the University of Otago School of Mines (1908), the Young Men's Christian Association Building (1909), the Hanover Street Baptist Church (1910), and the Dunedin Girls' High School (1909) - where he won first and second place. This competition work chronologically culminates in an unsuccessful entry in the 1911 competition for a new New Zealand Parliament, which was won by John Campbell and Claude Paton.

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### Introduction

In 1910 Edmund Anscombe's advertisement in the *Stone's Otago & Southland Directory* reads:

5 years American Experience: Winner of the following competitions:- School of Mines Buildings, Otago University, 1908, Young Men's Christian Association Building, Dunedin, 1909, Otago Girls' High School, Dunedin, Hanover Street Baptist Church.<sup>1</sup>

The list of competition success for major buildings in the city over the short space of two years and at a time when competitions drew entries from across the country seems impressive. But more than this as a builder-architect, who it appears was not formally trained as an architect,<sup>2</sup> Anscombe's competition success validated his position as

an architect. An unsourced, and unsigned verse and caricature pasted into Anscombe's scrapbook illustrates this sentiment:

"In competitive designs,  
It's ability that shines,  
Brains and toil alone producing work that's handsome.

"That's why worthy recognition,  
In every competition,  
Is abundantly bestowed always on Anscombe."

Placed centrally above the verse is a caricature of Anscombe seated on a stool, drawing a plan with his set square and T-square, a set of dividers also on his drawing board. In each corner of the page are four perspectives of buildings he had designed, presumably

(within this context), competition winners: The Mining School, the YMCA, the Central Hall, and Girls' High School. The Hanover Street Baptist Church listed in his 1910 advertisement does not appear here, but another scheme – that of the Methodist Central Hall completes the foursome.

### School of Mines (1908)

The first of these competitions, the University of Otago, School of Mines became linked to Anscombe's appointment as university architect,<sup>3</sup> a position he held while also in private practice and until he left Dunedin in 1928. This university connection assured him future commissions including: a proposed Veterinary School (1909),<sup>4</sup> Archway and

<sup>1</sup> *Stone's Otago & Southland Directory* 1910 opp. 870.

<sup>2</sup> McEwan "An "American Dream"" p 200.

<sup>3</sup> P.A. "Obituary: Mr Edmund Anscombe" p 4; Anon.

"Obituary: Edmund Anscombe" *Home and Building* p 13.

<sup>4</sup> Friday 12 March 1909, Council Minutes: 1906-1910, v. 4, p 242; see also 5 April 1909 (p 245) and 4 June 1909 (p

Marama Hall (1911-13),<sup>5</sup> Home Science Building (1918),<sup>6</sup> Maheno and Marama Hospital Ships Surplus Fund Memorial Hall (1919-23),<sup>7</sup> Oliver Wing (1912),<sup>8</sup> Physics Wing (1920-22),<sup>9</sup> Physiological Building extensions (1913, 1920, 1927).<sup>10</sup>

For years prior to the School of Mines competition, the Mining School building, also known colloquially as "The Tin Shed," had been a subject of some dispute. It had been "built from odds and ends of material left over from the Dunedin and South Seas Exhibition held in 1890,"<sup>11</sup> and "[w]hen the Government propounded a university specialisation scheme a suggestion was made that the Otago School of Mines should be closed in favour of one to be established in Auckland."<sup>12</sup> James Park (Director of the School of Mines) had, in his Director's reports, bemoaned the state of the school's accommodation. In 1904

the class rooms and laboratories ... are in a ruinous

263).

<sup>5</sup> Entwisle "Shaping a University" p 16.

<sup>6</sup> Entwisle "Shaping a University" p 17.

<sup>7</sup> Entwisle "Shaping a University" p 16.

<sup>8</sup> Entwisle "Shaping a University" p 15.

<sup>9</sup> Entwisle "Shaping a University" p 16.

<sup>10</sup> Entwisle "Shaping a University" p 15.

<sup>11</sup> Parry *The Otago School of Mines* p 2; c.f. "in the year

and[sic] dilapidated condition ... The roof of the main building is not weatherproof ... Streams of stormwater pour down the walls in places ... the scrim in the large lecture room has rotten.<sup>13</sup>

A year later, the building was "beyond the patching stage," and in 1906 he reported that the need for a new building "is now so manifest and so frankly acknowledged by Ministers, the University Council, and the public press that nothing more need be urged about it in this report."<sup>14</sup>

The following year Park noted, with heartfelt relief, that "a start has at last been made with the erection of a new building for which a grant of £5000 has been made by the Government," and on Monday 2nd December 1907, the University council "Resolved that competitive designs be called for the new building of the School of Mines and that 50 guineas be awarded for the design chosen by the Mines Committee."<sup>15</sup> On Thursday 5th December

1890 a portion of the exhibition building was secured, and separate accommodation was provided for the Mining School, at a cost to the council of over £1000." Anon. "Otago School of Mines" p 3.

<sup>12</sup> Anon. "Otago School of Mines" p 3.

<sup>13</sup> Otago School of Mines "The Annual Report" (1904), Reports Otago School of Mines 1892-1940

<sup>14</sup> Otago School of Mines "The Annual Report" (1905)

1907, a sub-Committee (the Vice Chancellor and Dr Shand) was formed to

arrange the conditions of competition for designs and specifications of the new School of Mines building and for elevations of the proposed future extension of the University buildings along Union Street.<sup>16</sup>

This sub-Committee was assisted by a Mr Waters (a staff member of the School of Mines), "who very kindly prepared detailed plans of the proposed School of Mines buildings."<sup>17</sup> A week later the competition was announced in the *Otago Daily Times*, requiring that "[i]n addition ... to the design for the Mining School, the competing architects are asked to design an archway for carriages adjoining the school and the elevation to Leith street."<sup>18</sup> The announcement not only stated the 50 guineas prize for the winning architect, but also elaborated that: "should he be entrusted with the carrying out of the work he will be paid a commission of 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> per cent. on the value of the

and (1906), Reports Otago School of Mines 1892-1940

<sup>15</sup> Otago University School of Mines "Report for 1907," Reports Otago School of Mines 1892-1940; 2 December 1907, Council Minutes: 1906-1910, v 4, p 127.

<sup>16</sup> 9 March 1908, Council Minutes: 1906-1910, v 4, p 138.

<sup>17</sup> Anon. "Otago University" (12 December 1907) p 2; 9 March 1908, Council Minutes: 1906-1910, v 4, p 138.

<sup>18</sup> Anon. "Otago University" (12 December 1907) p 2.

work executed."<sup>19</sup> The entries consisting of "[d]esigns, plans, and specification" were to be submitted "not later than Monday, January 13, 1908," giving exactly one month over the Christmas break, a time renown as one unattractive for working.<sup>20</sup> This is perhaps reflected in the fact that when the Committee met to consider the designs on the 14th and 15th January only four designs had been submitted.<sup>21</sup>

The four entries consisted of plans, specifications, estimates, elevation and were submitted under the pseudonyms of "Boaz," "Esperanto," "Flux," and "Miner." "Boaz" had the highest estimated costing at £5389, and "Flux" the lowest at £3850. "Esperanto" (Edmund Anscombe) was costed at £3885, and was announced the winner. "Boaz" (Basil B Hooper), being "highly commended," was awarded second place.<sup>22</sup> The architects of "Flux" and "Miner" remain unknown.

<sup>19</sup> Anon. "Otago University" (12 December 1907) p 2.

<sup>20</sup> Anon. "Otago University" (12 December 1907) p 2; Contemporary documentation concerning the Methodist Central Hall noted the difficulty of conducting business over the December/January period: "Owing to the holidays & from other causes the negotiations had been protracted." 16 February 1911, Central Mission [Bldg] Trust Minutes.

<sup>21</sup> 9 March 1908, Council Minutes: 1906-1910, v 4, p 138;

Without locating the drawings, which do not appear to exist in the University of Otago archives, it is difficult to know the level of the competition, or what the judging committee privileged. The timing of the competition, the highly directive brief, and the apparent conservatism of the judging committee appears to have been favourable conditions for an informally-trained builder-architect establishing himself as in the architectural profession.

Anscombe ("Esperanto") was publicly announced the winner in the *Otago Daily Times* on Saturday 18 January, where the conservatism of the external design was noted: "The new building ... will in general outside appearance be in conformity with the architecture of the main block of University buildings."<sup>23</sup> The archway was described as "handsome ... [and] flanked by two octagonal towers," and the requested extension to Leith

It was intended that the council meeting on Tuesday 14th January would consider the designs but there was insufficient time so an additional meeting was held on the next day. Anon. "University Council" p 7; "[A]t the latter meeting all the members of [the University] Council were [also] invited to be present." Report of the School of Mines Building Committee, 9th March 1908, Council Minutes: 1906-1910, v 4, p 138.

<sup>22</sup> Report of the School of Mines Building Committee, 9th

Street was noted as "of course, a facsimile of the front elevation of the School of Mines."<sup>24</sup> Symmetry and continuity of the aesthetic established by Max Bury's original university buildings, and a strong correlation with the brief (which explicitly stated the building was "to be of stone, in conformity with the existing University buildings"<sup>25</sup>), determined Anscombe's aesthetic response. While the competition went according to its tight timeframe, the building process was not so straightforward.

During the process of construction a "matter of a difference ... [arose] between the Contractor and Architect"<sup>26</sup> in June 1908. In September 1908, Anscombe wrote a letter of complaint noting that "the Contractor [Gabriel Hodges] is not carrying out his work according to specification."<sup>27</sup> A meeting between the agrieved parties (and the School of Mines Building Committee) was held on the 6th

March 1908, Council Minutes: 1906-1910, v 4, p 138.

<sup>23</sup> Anon. "Otago University" (18 January 1908) p 6.

<sup>24</sup> Anon. "Otago University" (18 January 1908) p 6.

<sup>25</sup> Anon. "Otago University" (12 December 1907) p 2.

<sup>26</sup> School of Mines Report, 6 July 1908, Council Minutes: 1906-1910, v 4, p 180.

<sup>27</sup> 5th October 1908, Council Minutes: 1906-1910, v 4, p 205.

October 1908,<sup>28</sup> after several informal meetings had already been held. This "matter of difference" become a "dispute between the University and Mr Gabriel Hodges, Contractor" which was adjudicated over by FW Petre, who decided against the university and Anscombe, awarding costs of £21-5- for the university to pay.<sup>29</sup>

Further correspondence occurred on Tuesday 25th May 1909 and concluded with the Committee resolving "that the matter be left in the hands of the Architect: and that the Contractor be pressed to complete the contract and that the Architect be authorised to consult with Mr McDonald."<sup>30</sup> This appearance of McDonald is perhaps of note, not only because of Michael Findlay's work on McDonald specifically in relation to William Dunning, but also because McDonald becomes a shadow figure in almost all of Anscombe's early competition projects, and because the projects themselves demonstrate a certain, often

antagonistic, relationship between Anscombe and builders. The role McDonald played is not elaborated further, but the statement authorising consultation seems to suggest that he is in a supportive role to Anscombe. In later university council minutes, the University's support for Anscombe is noted: "The Architect's action with regard to the Contractor was approved."<sup>31</sup>

When the building opened on Thursday 19 August 1909<sup>32</sup> innovation, rather than conservatism, was stressed. The building was reputedly the first use in Dunedin of an "accordian door partition ... a very ingenious arrangement, which can be thrown open in an instant," and a new "method of roof construction" to allow occupation of the attic space had been demonstrated.<sup>33</sup> The building was deemed to have "an artistic appearance though there is no elaborate decoration or detail, which accounts for its low cost – namely, £5000,"<sup>34</sup> though Morrell notes, possibly

reflecting the level of Anscombe's architectural experience at this stage that: "The building ... [is] less successful perhaps as an essay in the Gothic style than its predecessors."<sup>35</sup>

### **Young Men's Christian Association (1909)**

While Anscombe was still working on the Mining School commission he entered and won the competition for the YMCA building, the winner being announced in the *Otago Daily Times* on the 27th March 1909.<sup>36</sup> The Dunedin YMCA building was part of a national phenomenon with YMCA buildings, and their associated funding raising campaigns, also occurring in Wellington,<sup>37</sup> and Christchurch,<sup>38</sup> at this time. In August 1907, the Dunedin YMCA launched its New Building Fund Campaign with a lantern slide talk of images of other YMCA buildings from "various parts of the world,"<sup>39</sup> and the San Francisco fund raising campaign, following the 1906 earthquake, presented as an exemplar.<sup>40</sup> This highlighting of the YMCA's work in

<sup>28</sup> 10 November 1908, Council Minutes: 1906-1910, v 4, p 210.

<sup>29</sup> 5 April 1909, Council Minutes: 1906-1910, v 4, p 245.

<sup>30</sup> 4 June 1909, Council Minutes: 1906-1910, v 4, p 258.

<sup>31</sup> 5th July 1909 Council Minutes: 1906-1910, v 4, p 266

<sup>32</sup> Anon. "The Otago School of Mines" p 4.

<sup>33</sup> Anon. "The Building" p 3.

<sup>34</sup> Anon. "The Building" p 3; c.f. "built at an estimated

cost of £5,389" Parsonson *A brief history* unpaginated

<sup>35</sup> Morrell *The University of Otago* p 95.

<sup>36</sup> Anon. "Y.M.C.A.: The New Building" p 3.

<sup>37</sup> Anon. "Young Men's Christian Association: The Building Campaign" p 3.

<sup>38</sup> Anon. "Young Men's Christian Association: New Building Campaign" p 3.

<sup>39</sup> Anon. "Young Men's Christian Association: The

Building Campaign" p 3.

<sup>40</sup> "The £100,000 building in San Francisco had been destroyed by the fire that succeeded the earthquake, but within three months another £100,000 had been raised to rebuild it." Holmes paraphrased, Anon. "Young Men's Christian Association: The Building Campaign" p 3.

America was recalled when Anscombe was announced as the winner. His association with America was stressed, his study of American methods of building construction and planning were said "stand him in good stead in this important work."<sup>41</sup> His design was discussed in detail, though largely from a programmatic standpoint. There was to be a gymnasium (64ftx45ft) "absolutely free from columns," "the use of an accordion door partition," and "an electric passenger elevator to all floors."<sup>42</sup>

Despite the public engagement with the building and its fund raising there is little information about the competition. The entries were publicly displayed, possibly because of the public investment in the project, but there is no archival information regarding the entrants, number of entries or the judging process. The building opened on 12 November 1912.<sup>43</sup>

### Dunedin Girls' High School (1909)

<sup>41</sup> Anon. "Y.M.C.A.: The New Building" p 3.

<sup>42</sup> Anon. "Y.M.C.A.: The New Building" p 3.

<sup>43</sup> Anon. "Y.M.C.A.: The New Building" p 3; Anon. "The Y.M.C.A." p 6.

<sup>44</sup> Thursday 2nd June 1904 [Minute Book] p 18.

Parallel with the School of Mines, the Dunedin Girls' High School was mapping a similar trajectory of inadequate accommodation for teaching, and attempts to lobby the Government for funding, before the resolution to hold an architectural competition. The 1904 Burnside & Simpson report on the Girls' High School Buildings suggested that work was needed on the buildings.<sup>44</sup> In September the Board of Governors began lobbying the Minister of Education for a new Girls' School, and on 5th December 1904 "the Board reluctantly resolve[d] ... to close the Boarding Establishment, and to convert rooms now used by the boarders into class rooms."<sup>45</sup> Following an article regarding the state of the Girls' High School Buildings in the *Otago Daily Times* (17th July 1907), Mason & Wales wrote a confidential report which prompted the Board to "request the Government to allow the Chief Health Officer to report on the Sanitary conditions of the Buildings."<sup>46</sup> In November 1907 the school was visited by two Inspectors of Technical Education who remarked "on the unsuitable nature of the lighting & ventilation."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Thursday 1st September 1904 [Minute Book] p 29; 5th December 1904 [Minute Book] p 46.

<sup>46</sup> Monday 15 August 1907 [Minute Book] p 174.

<sup>47</sup> Thursday 28th November 1907 [Minute Book] p 185.

<sup>48</sup> Thursday 26th November 1908 [Minute Book] p 238.

Initial discussion about running an architectural competition occurred in late November 1908, almost a year following the announcement of the School of Mines competition in December 1907. Suggested amounts of £150 and £75 for prize money were linked with the provision that "If the gainer of the premium is intrusted [sic] with the work the premium is to be taken as part of his Commission."<sup>48</sup> Permission to run the competition was granted by the Minister of Education, and prize money was finally agreed at £100, £75, and £50.<sup>49</sup> It appears that the competition was announced in late 1908, and by late January the Board had received requests for time extensions from the Wellington Architectural Association, and three architects (EH Bliss (Auckland), JL Salmond and JA Burnside (Dunedin)).<sup>50</sup> It was agreed to extend the competition deadline until the 1st March 1909.<sup>51</sup>

On Thursday 4th March 1909, a committee was formed to consider the designs, and in an explicit decision to ensure architectural

<sup>49</sup> Thursday 17 December 1908 [Minute Book] p 241.

<sup>50</sup> Thursday 21st January 1909 [Minute Book] pp 245-246.

<sup>51</sup> Thursday 21st January 1909 [Minute Book] p 246.

expertise on the judging committee it was decided that "the Government to be asked to allow Mr Campbell the Government Architect to assist" in judging.<sup>52</sup> Rather than Campbell's involvement, Mr Rodger, the Education Board's Architect, gave his "services in connection with the selection of competitive designs."<sup>53</sup>

Twenty-three entries were received from architectural firms across the country, including Auckland, Wellington, Timaru, Christchurch, Hastings, Dunedin, which contrasts with the four entries the School of Mines competition attracted. In comparison 33 entries were submitted to the 1911 Parliamentary Buildings competition<sup>54</sup> which was unsuccessfully boycotted by the NZIA.<sup>55</sup> Seventeen firms had entered with four firms submitting two entries, and one (Walden & Barton, Dunedin) submitting three entries. These firms included W Gray Young (Wellington), Mason & Wales (Dunedin), CT

Natusch (Wellington), Crighton & McKay (Wellington), Black & Dunning (Timaru), and LD Coombs (Christchurch).<sup>56</sup> Pseudonyms ranged from the exotic ("Excelsior"), the educative and sage ("Knowledge is power" and "Work, Wait, and Gather"), and the architectural ("Tudor" and "Red Brick") to the more pragmatic and mundane ("Experience A" and "Experience B" and "O.G.H.S.").<sup>57</sup> Four Māori names were used: "Rimu," "Rata," "Maori," and "Moa."<sup>58</sup>

Deliberation over the entries on Thursday 15 April 1909 was delayed due to "the absence of some of its members,"<sup>59</sup> and on Friday 23 April 1909 the recommendations of the sub-Committee that "No. 15 ("Magister") as the most suitable with – No. 7 ("Moderne") and No 5 ("Light and Air") Second, and Third" was accepted. It was agreed "to forward the first named design to the Education Department for the consideration and approval of the Minister,"<sup>60</sup> though it was not until the 20th

May, following conditional approval of the plan for Girls High School from the Inspector General, that the envelope containing the motto "Magister" was opened, "the designer proving to be Mr Edmund Anscombe of Dunedin."<sup>61</sup> As winner, Anscombe was required to prepare specifications taking into account suggestions made by the Board and the Education Department, and outlining the portion of the proposal able to be built for £9,500 (both with hot-water heating, and without).<sup>62</sup> On Tuesday 6th July 1909, when the second and third place getters were established, it was found that Anscombe had also won the second premium of £75, and the third prize (£50) for "Light & Air" went to Crighton & McKay.<sup>63</sup>

By 17 August 1909 tenders had been called for but, before the end of the month, the Dunedin Builders and Contractors Industrial Union of Employers had written to the Board of Governors "complaining that Material

previous correspondence, also making certain suggestions regarding internal arrangements and accommodation." (p 263); Thursday 20th May 1909 [Minute Book] p 264.

<sup>62</sup> Thursday 20th May 1909 [Minute Book] pp 263-264.

<sup>63</sup> Tuesday 6th July 1909 [Minute Book] pp 270-271.

<sup>52</sup> Thursday 4th March 1909 [Minute Book] pp 254-255.

<sup>53</sup> Friday 23rd April 1909 [Minute Book] p 261.

<sup>54</sup> Richardson "Building the Dominion" v 1, pp 324-325.

<sup>55</sup> Richardson "An Architecture of Empire" pp 244-246.

<sup>56</sup> "List of Competitors for Dunedin Girls High School" p 1.

<sup>57</sup> Thursday 4th March 1909 [Minute Book] pp 254-255.

<sup>58</sup> Thursday 4th March 1909 [Minute Book] pp 254-255.

<sup>59</sup> Thursday 15th April 1909 [Minute Book] pp 257-258.

<sup>60</sup> Friday 23rd April 1909 [Minute Book] p 260.

<sup>61</sup> Thursday 20th May 1909 [Minute Book] p 263. The approval was conditional in that it was deemed that "the total liability of the Government is not to exceed the total grants already promised, subject to conditions stated in

alterations have been made to the Arbitration Clause in the Conditions of Contract for the proposed Girls High School."<sup>64</sup> A deputation from the Union (Messrs McKinnon, President, Clark and Wilkinson):

urged that the conditions regarding Arbitration drawn up by the New Zealand Institute of Architects and agreed to in conference by the N. Z. Federated Builders Association be allowed to remain intact. It was resolved that the Board after full consideration decides to adhere to the specifications as altered by the Architect.<sup>65</sup>

Letters were exchanged. F Wilkinson, the secretary of the union, in a further attempt to force changes to the contract, confronted the Board of Governors with the statement that:

It is unfortunate that your Architect had two arbitration cases decided by Architects against him, and that the fault should be attributed to the Conditions of Contract and that they should not be adopted on the Girls High School Contract.<sup>66</sup>

Anscombe's reply was comprehensive, condemning the builders, and clearly stating a

professional allegiance with his clients:

The present Conditions of Contract are drawn up wholly in favour of the Builder & I have found from past experience that it is a dangerous thing for any owner to enter into a contract under these conditions, as an unscrupulous contractor has the power to practically do as he may choose. The proposed Conditions of Contract are the same as those now mutually agreed to by the Royal Institute of British Architects, The Institute of Builders, London, & the National Federation of Building Trade Employers of Great Britain & Ireland, & are generally in use. I claim that an Architect should always be the recognised head of any building operation, but under the present conditions the builder holds that place.<sup>67</sup>

He continued:

There is another matter which is under consideration by the Builders' Association at the present time, & one that is of vital importance to your Board, namely, that the Builders intend to enforce on your building, a rule of theirs that already exists, and if this is accomplished, the Heating, Ventilating & Electric Lighting contractors will be prevented from beginning their work until the building contractor has finished his: if such a thing is done, it will hold up the completion of the building at least four months & the expense of cutting & repairing

will be enormous ... The stand I am taking is solely in the interests of & for the protection of building owners, and although it is necessary to hold this power of protection against the possibility of meeting an unscrupulous contractor, it is not likely it would be used unreasonably, especially with a contractor who is willing to carry out his obligations.<sup>68</sup>

The tender process continued with the conditions of contract unchanged. Orr Campbell's tender price of £7,290 was accepted,<sup>69</sup> and by mid 1910 the building had been opened.

Winning the Dunedin Girls' High School competition opened up additional opportunities and Anscombe gained several commissions, including the Janitor's residence (1911), completing Girls' High School (west wing) (1911-12), the Science Building/Laboratory, Boys' High School (1912-13), the Rector's Residence, (1913), and the Margaret Gordon Burn Hall (1913-1914).<sup>70</sup> Anscombe's association with the High Schools ended after problems with the ventilation in the Boys' High School Science Block.<sup>71</sup> The commission to

<sup>64</sup> Tuesday 17th August 1909 [Minute Book] p 276;

Saturday 28th August 1909 [Minute Book] p 278

<sup>65</sup> Saturday 28th August 1909 [Minute Book] p 279.

<sup>66</sup> Wilkinson letter to E. Macandrew Esq. p 2.

<sup>67</sup> Anscombe letter to Macandrew p 1.

<sup>68</sup> Anscombe letter to Macandrew pp 3-4.

<sup>69</sup> Monday 6 September 1909 [Minute Book] pp 279-280

<sup>70</sup> Otago Boys and Girls High Schools 1911-1915 [Minute Book] pp 14 (Thursday 20th April 1911), 20-21

(Thursday 18th May 1911), 30 (Thursday 20th July 1911)

50-51ff (Tuesday 10th October 1911), 98-99 (Thursday 21st March 1912), 110 (Thursday 16th May 1912), 176-177 (Tuesday 27th May 1913).

<sup>71</sup> Otago Boys and Girls High Schools 1911-1915 [Minute Book] pp 231 (Thursday 21 May 1914), 294 (Monday

complete the second stage was given to H Mandeno in February 1915, despite Anscombe's protestations.<sup>72</sup> The School board reassured him that the appointment of Mandeno was no reflection of their opinion of Anscombe as an architect, and, that they had no legal obligation to continue employing him.<sup>73</sup>

### **Hanover Street Baptist Church (1910)**

The circumstances surrounding the Hanover Street Baptist Church competition are perhaps the most elaborate of these competitions. Initially, the church had decided to renovate the existing 1864 church which had been designed by Lawson. A maximum expenditure £300 was set (March 1908) but by April 1909 there was discussion of a new church scheme.<sup>74</sup> In August 1909 the New Church Building Committee resolved to invite competitive designs and requested that £50 be authorised "if it were found necessary to incur that expense in procuring Designs from several

competent Architects."<sup>75</sup> The next day the amount was revised to £75.<sup>76</sup>

A sub-Committee (Messrs Love, Adam, Stewart and Pearson) was formed to "prepare the Conditions on which Competitive Designs for the new Church were to be invited," and in the process of preparing for the competition, the Chairman of the Building Committee found that JL Salmond thought that he had an informal agreement to do the work, and that neither Salmond nor Anscombe "were willing to enter into a general competition."<sup>77</sup> Initial discussion with selected architects demonstrated there was limited, if any, enthusiasm for competitive design. The fact that Anscombe was approached at this early stage suggests that his public profile as a respected architect was well established. By August and September 1909 (when the church was investigating running an architectural competition), Anscombe had had a year of great promotion. The University School of

Mines had very recently opened (19 August 1909). He had been awarded first and second place in the Otago Girls' High School competition (July 1909), and he had won the YMCA building contract (27 March 1909).

Possibly as a result of the lukewarm reception to their competition, the Committee asked Salmond, Anscombe, and Basil Hooper "to furnish rough pencil designs of the Building, the two whose designs were declined to receive a fee of 15 guineas each."<sup>78</sup> Meeting minutes do not note the reward for first prize, despite the previously discussed £75, and the prize may have been the commission.

The process of the competition did not go smoothly. The architects were asked to have designs completed within four weeks from the end of September 1909, but it was not until early December that the church received the sketch plans.<sup>79</sup> At the first meeting to discuss the plans Design "No. 3" was eliminated and

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10th May 1915).

<sup>72</sup> Otago Boys and Girls High Schools 1911-1915 [Minute Book] pp 276 (Thursday 18th February 1915), 285-286 (Friday 26th March 1915).

<sup>73</sup> Friday 26th March 1915, Otago Boys and Girls High Schools 1911-1915 [Minute Book] pp 285-286.

<sup>74</sup> 27 April 1909, Deacons Minutes 1901-1909 p 118.

<sup>75</sup> Tuesday 11 August 1909, Minutes of Hanover Street New Church Building Committee 1909, np.

<sup>76</sup> 12 August 1909, Deacons Minutes 1901-1909 p 112.

<sup>77</sup> Tuesday 11 August 1909 and 14 September 1909, Minutes of Hanover Street New Church Building Committee 1909, np.

<sup>78</sup> 14 September 1909, Minutes of Hanover Street New

Church Building Committee 1909, np.

<sup>79</sup> 21 September 1909 and 2 November 1909, Minutes of Hanover Street New Church Building Committee 1909, np; see also 7 December 1909, Minutes of Hanover Street New Church Building Committee 1909, np.



the committee was divided over Designs "No. 1" and "No. 2" so the meeting was adjourned.<sup>80</sup> During this process the committee was assisted by an Assessor, a Mr. C Fleming McDonald. The Assessor advised the committee and wrote a report.<sup>81</sup> "Design No. 2" (Gothic) was preferred by a 7:4 vote over the Romanesque design, but further debate and another meeting resolved in mid December that "all three Designs be rejected & that fresh steps be taken to secure new designs from two of the Architects."<sup>82</sup> Salmond and Anscombe (Basil Hooper being the architect of Design No. 3) were asked to "furnish new designs."<sup>83</sup> Anscombe:

expressed his unwillingness to furnish new designs because he had heard that the selection of an Architect was already practically made. It was agreed that the Chairman assure Mr Anscombe that the report was untrue & that the Designs would be judged purely upon their merits & without prejudice in favour of either Architect.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>80</sup> 7 December 1909, Minutes of Hanover Street New Church Building Committee 1909, np.

<sup>81</sup> Monday 13 December 1909, Minutes of Hanover Street New Church Building Committee 1909, np.

<sup>82</sup> Monday 13 December 1909 and Tuesday 14 December 1909, Minutes of Hanover Street New Church Building Committee 1909, np.

<sup>83</sup> Tuesday 14 December 1909, Minutes of Hanover Street New Church Building Committee 1909, np.

The new designs were requested for the end of March 1910 and C Fleming McDonald was again appointed as Assessor, but this time the committee had resolved for the "Decision to rest with the Assessor."<sup>85</sup> Another delay occurred and the new Designs were finally submitted on the 18th April 1910,<sup>86</sup> over six months after the initial submission date. At a meeting of 11 May 1910, the Assessor's recommendation that the "design marked 2 be selected was adopted by the Committee for presentation to the Officers," and after opening the envelopes revealing the identity of the architects, Anscombe was appointed Architect for the new building.<sup>87</sup>

Salmond disputed the decision "demanding an explanation of the fact that the Design accepted involved an outlay so far in advance of the amount stipulated when competitive designs were asked for."<sup>88</sup> One of the committee members, Mr AS Adams was asked to "draft a

<sup>84</sup> 12 January 1910, Minutes of Hanover Street New Church Building Committee 1909, np; see also 7

February 1910, Minutes of Hanover Street New Church Building Committee 1909, np.

<sup>85</sup> 21 February 1910, Minutes of Hanover Street New Church Building Committee 1909, np.

<sup>86</sup> 18 April 1910, Minutes of Hanover Street New Church Building Committee 1909, np.

<sup>87</sup> 11 May 1910, Minutes of Hanover Street New Church

reply to the disappointed Architects,"<sup>89</sup> and no more is heard from Salmond.

It is at this point that things get a little slippery. In the process of judging a question regarding the advantages of calling for Tenders was raised. The minutes note that:

Mr Macdonald kindly offered to take out estimates as soon as the Architect's specifications were ready & report the probable cost, his services not to compromise the Committee in any way if they felt it desirable after all to call for Tenders. It was resolved by the Committee as strictly private & not divulged to any beyond their own number. It was agreed that the Designs be entrusted to Mr Macdonald for the preparation of his official Report.<sup>90</sup>

The developed design stage progressed with Anscombe established as architect and McDonald (having used his position as Assessor to bypass the Tender process), as builder. The Church's desire to reduce costs prompted the Committee to refer the plans and

Building Committee 1909, np; also Committee Meeting: May 11th 1910, Deacons Minutes [Committee Minutes] p 6.

<sup>88</sup> Committee Meeting: August 1910, Deacons Minutes [Committee Minutes] p 18.

<sup>89</sup> Committee Meeting: August 1910, Deacons Minutes [Committee Minutes] p 18.

<sup>90</sup> 10 May 1910, Minutes of Hanover Street New Church Building Committee 1909, np.

specifications "back to Mr Anscombe with instructions that the estimated cost must be brought down to the amount authorised by the Church."<sup>91</sup> In a possibly controversial move McDonald reported to the Committee that Anscombe had been unable to reduce the costs to the degree requested and:

He suggested *with reluctance* that the Committee should endeavour to secure the plans as prepared by Mr Anscombe & permit him [McDonald] and his Architect to alter them as to structural design & character of material until the estimated cost was reduced to the specified amount. ... Nothing would be sacrificed as to architectural appearance or excellence of material & workmanship. He would guarantee that if such an arrangement could be made the work would be definitely commenced in three weeks & pushed on without delay.<sup>92</sup>

While Michael Findlay's research has detailed McDonald's commercially-strategic partnership with Dunning, these minutes both confirm this and suggest McDonald's ability to be opportunistic and unscrupulous in order to secure commissions. Cash-strapped, the Church committee were drawn to his design and build proposal. Two members of the committee met with Anscombe with the

intention "of marking such an arrangement with him as would leave us free to use his plans and dispense with his supervision of the Building."<sup>93</sup> Unsurprisingly Anscombe "was not willing to hand over his plans & specifications & retire from the supervision of the building as suggested," and he "recommended that tenders be invited."<sup>94</sup> Seemingly generously Anscombe noted that

If the Committee should decide to retain Mr MacDonald as Builder on Commission he [Anscombe] would be quite willing to work amicably with him; and would confer with Mr Macdonald if desired regarding the difference in their respective estimates.<sup>95</sup>

McDonald conceded, suggesting (one suspects strongly) that "Tenders should be invited privately by the Architect from a limited number of reputable Builders & stated that if this were done he would abide by the result."<sup>96</sup> Tenders were sought and the contract was given to Messrs Ward & McCormick.<sup>97</sup> Work progressed without any significant delays and the church was opened on Sunday 27 October 1912.<sup>98</sup>

### **Methodist Central Church Hall (1910)**

The last project in this group of Anscombe's early competition work is difficult to sustain as a competition commission and this is no doubt why Anscombe does not include the Methodist Central Church Hall in his 1910 advertisement. It is however one of the four buildings illustrated to accompany the unsigned verse and caricature suggesting that Anscombe's association with competition commissions contaminated public perception about how he gained other of his large commissions. It is also an example of Anscombe working amicably with C Fleming McDonald (exactly at the time when McDonald attempted to take the Hanover Street Baptist Church job) and an example of Anscombe's opportunism and negotiating skills.

As early as February 1908 Anscombe positioned himself to be appointed as architect to the Methodist Central Church Hall project. The intention to build the Methodist Hall was announced Monday 3 February via the publication of Rev. Slade's "plans for raising funds ... [for] the building scheme."<sup>99</sup> Ten days

<sup>91</sup> 1st July 1911, Minutes (96-116-17/02) np.

<sup>92</sup> 27th July 1911, Minutes (96-116-17/02) np, emphasis added.

<sup>93</sup> 27th July 1911, Minutes (96-116-17/02) np.

<sup>94</sup> 31st July 1911, Minutes (96-116-17/02) np.

<sup>95</sup> 31st July 1911, Minutes (96-116-17/02) np.

<sup>96</sup> 1st August 1911, Minutes (96-116-17/02) np.

<sup>97</sup> 8th September 1911, Minutes (96-116-17/02) np.

McDonald's name as builder can be seen to have been removed from the foundation stone.

<sup>98</sup> Anon. "Hanover Street Baptist Church" p 3.

<sup>99</sup> Anon. "Methodist Central Mission" p 2.

later Anscombe had supplied rough plans and sketches to the Central Mission Building Trust and received instruction to

finish a sketch of Front elevation sufficiently to allow a block [for the purpose of printing and circulating leaflets] to be made for which the Trustees are prepared to remunerate him and at the same time to inform him that they reserve the right to call for competitive designs.<sup>100</sup>

After more than two years of fund raising and negotiating a lease agreement for Hayward Ltd to use the Mission Hall as a Picture Theatre, the Methodist Mission appointed Anscombe as their Architect in September 1910.<sup>101</sup> On this project Anscombe worked with McDonald on both the original Moray Place site, and on the later Octagon site.<sup>102</sup> The minutes suggest the building was uneventful. Of note though is the role Anscombe played in negotiating a change in site part-way through the construction process. The move from Moray Place to the Octagon was argued in terms of a better public profile and corresponding use for both the work of the Mission, and the commercial interests of Hayward Pictures. No doubt Anscombe would have appreciated the opportunity to build on a more prominent site.

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<sup>100</sup> Thursday 13 February 1908, Central Mission [Bldg] Trust Minutes 13th February 1908 to 13th June 1923, Methodist Church of Otago/Southland: Records AG-640-

The Mission Hall opened on Sunday 8 December 1912, the Haywood Picture Theatre a week later on Saturday 14 December 1912.

### Conclusion

The anonymity of architectural competitions gave Anscombe opportunities that, as an unknown architect, he could never otherwise have accessed. The low number of entries for the School of Mines competition increased Anscombe's chances of winning, and provided a platform for developing his architectural practice. Parallel with this, Anscombe's uncompromising character in his business practices both caused disputes with builders, but also meant respect for other's opportunism in business practice. Anscombe's frequent impatience with the conservatism of the NZIA is contrasted with his seeming acceptance of McDonald and his "progressive" business tactics.

Evidence of Anscombe's competition entries still exist in built form. While the YMCA Building was demolished in the 1970s for a car-park building, and the Methodist Central Mission has undergone a series of

045-007/002, Hocken Library, Dunedin

<sup>101</sup> 9 September 1910, Central Mission [Bldg] Trust Minutes

transformations as to make it unrecognisable, and possibly without any original remaining building fabric, the School of Mines, Otago Girls' High School and Hanover Street Baptist Church, still occupy their original sites with little alteration.

<sup>102</sup> Thursday 22 September 1910, Thursday 29 April 1911 and Wednesday 30th August 1911, Central Mission [Bldg] Trust Minutes

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