

APPENDIX E.

ANNUAL REPORT ON PUBLIC BUILDINGS, AND OTHER WORKS, BY THE COLONIAL ARCHITECT.

The COLONIAL ARCHITECT to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

SIR,—

Colonial Architect's Office, Wellington, 26th July, 1875.

I have the honor to report for your information relative to the buildings and other works which have been designed, commenced, or finished, during the financial year 1874-75, in connection with the Colonial Architect's branch of the Public Works Department.

Of the numerous buildings decided upon, the new departmental offices were the most important.

It will be remembered that in the year 1873-74 the sum of £15,000 was voted for the purpose; but for various reasons, explained in my last report, the amount proved to be insufficient, and the erection of the buildings was postponed; but the site was reclaimed, and other preliminary matters arranged, which reduced the vote to £10,210 14s. 8d. in 1874-75, when a further vote of £21,500 was taken.

The original contract, plans, and specifications needed so many alterations, necessitated by fresh requirements, that, rather than make alterations in the plans and specifications for so important a contract, I thought it better to commence *de novo*.

It was decided to erect the buildings in wood, notwithstanding my recommendation to build them in brick or concrete.

The new drawings and specifications were prepared, consisting of no less than twenty sheets.

All labour and materials in connection with the building trade had been steadily rising during the preparation of the plans, and timber had reached such a price here that, after much anxious consideration, I recommended you to procure a large portion of the timber from Tasmania, by which a considerable saving was made. Great delays have, however, taken place in the delivery, and corresponding delay in the completion of the work must necessarily follow.

It was not possible to invite tenders for the labour until the material was arranged for, because, in order to make the labour contractor responsible, I considered it necessary to hand the materials over on certain conditions, one being that the timber specified should be supplied to him at cost price. Any deficiency was to be made good by the contractor, while any surplus would be his.

Five tenders were received for the labour, including certain specified materials. That of Messrs. Scoular and Archibald, being the lowest, at £24,685, was accepted.

All these contractors are bound to time under heavy penalties and deposits, but in consequence of the non-delivery of the Tasmanian hardwood the building is scarcely likely to be finished for three months after contract time.

Many additions to last year's design were necessary, and this, with the high price of labour and materials, will cause an increase to the estimated cost. About £5,000 will be required during the present financial year.

Throughout the year very heavy work has devolved on myself and staff. Numerous additions have been made to public buildings in various parts of the colony, and thirty-eight buildings have been completed, twenty-seven commenced and are in course of completion, while thirty-two additional have been estimated for. Many are imposing structures, and amongst them are the new public offices at Lyttelton and Auckland (the latter having been erected by a private architect at a cost of £19,495 15s. 9d.), Court-houses, Immigration Depôts, Quarantine Stations, Telegraph Stations, Native Schools, &c., &c. A very complete set of fifteen drawings for the proposed new Telegraph Office at Dunedin was prepared, and tenders invited. The lowest tender was under £10,000, which included fittings and a spacious basement, the foundation walls being utilised because the nature of the sites necessitated great depth. These plans are now being altered to reduce the cost.

Since my last report I have, by your direction, visited and reported on the Government buildings and sites in Nelson, Auckland, Tauranga, Napier, Gisborne, and inland between Napier and Wellington. I have found the local knowledge thus gained of great advantage in carrying out my work, and would suggest that in the future some portion of the colony should be visited by the Colonial Architect during each recess, and the Government buildings inspected. In addition to other advantages, the local knowledge attained would more than counterbalance the cost of the inspection, if not result in a saving of money.

My department continues to derive great benefit from the supervision of works by the district engineers or members of their staff.

As mentioned in my report of last year, it became absolutely necessary to increase the professional staff by an assistant draftsman, and now the chief and assistant draftsmen, with one cadet, perform all the office duties, by working long hours when required.

The accountant's branch was getting into arrear, notwithstanding the long hours that officer devoted to his duties; but, with the assistance of a cadet, the work is now kept under.

The work in connection with the domains has greatly increased, chiefly in consequence of the addition of two ministerial residences. Hitherto, however, by systematically moving the small staff (head gardener, two assistants, and one labourer) from place to place, the domains have been kept in fair order.

The employment of plumbers and carpenters on the staff has proved, as I expected it would do, a