

1873.

NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT OF COLONIAL ARCHITECT

FOR YEAR ENDING 30TH JUNE, 1873.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by command of His Excellency.

DURING the year the office duties have been exceedingly arduous, and often the labour has been very severe, consequent upon the short time at my disposal in which to prepare large contracts, especially so as regards the Houses of Parliament and the several Immigration Barracks throughout the Colony.

Last Session the House voted £8,000 for alterations and the enlargement of the two Houses of the Legislature, the vote being based upon the Colonial Architect's approximate estimate for alterations and additions to the old Houses.

At subsequent meetings of the Committees appointed for the purpose, and with the concurrence of the Speakers and the Government, it was decided to build an entirely new Chamber and Committee Rooms for the Legislative Council, as well as a new Smoking Room for Members generally, on the vacant ground west of the Library.

No time was lost in preparing the plans and specifications; and after approval by the Government, tenders were invited throughout the Colony, the lowest being from Wellington contractors, amounting to £5,990 for the Upper, and £4,440 for the Lower House.

This excess over the vote, although attributable in a great measure to the alteration of the plans, is not altogether so, but in some degree to the increase in the price of timber and the rise in wages; for when it became known that these contracts were coming out, all descriptions of timber advanced in price, while wages increased in like proportion; and notwithstanding that (although anticipating such a result by tendering at higher rates), the contractors were unwilling to be bound in penalties unless modifications were made in the specifications to meet such contingencies as scarcity of labour, bad weather, &c., and which, so far as was considered probable and reasonable, were acceded to. It is however due to the contractors to say, that they are deserving of much credit for the rapidity with which they have proceeded with the works, and the substantial manner in which they have executed them.

At my suggestion the timber was obtained by the Government, and stacked for seasoning on the ground during the time preparations were making for receiving tenders, the contractors taking it over at cost price.

Several alterations have been made in the appropriation of rooms—notably, the substitution of the Library for the Smoking Room; and it is only fair to myself to record here that I strongly protested against taking into the new Library the ends of the Legislative Council corridors, because of taking away the chief means of lighting them. But it was represented that the exigencies of the case were such as left no alternative; the corridors are in consequence very dark, while the new Library is bad in design, and less convenient than it would have been if the apartment had been designed for the purpose.*

In addition to the Houses of Parliament, drawings and specifications have been prepared for Immigration Barracks at Stewart's Island, Dunedin, and Wellington, besides Quarantine Barracks at Port Chalmers, Somes Island, and Auckland.

Contracts for most of these have been entered upon and completed.

The barracks at Lyttelton, Hawke's Bay, Stewart's Island, and Auckland have not been carried out under my charge, in consequence of the pressure of work at the time.

I have been further occupied during the year on numerous other Government buildings throughout the Colony, including Post and Telegraph Offices, Supreme Court Houses, Resident Magistrates' Courts, Custom Houses, Public Departmental Offices, Native Schools, &c., &c.

* Although the alterations have been made, it was found the walls of the new Library were too damp to admit of the books being placed against them, and the first arrangement continues, with the alterations referred to.

In carrying out country works and works in distant towns, it is my practice to employ local builders (or architects when obtainable) as inspectors, to see that the specifications and plans are faithfully carried out. And I desire to direct especial attention to this fact, because complaint has been made in a local newspaper that the Post Office and Telegraph Station at Arrowtown, in the Province of Otago, had suffered through not employing local professional men; whereas, the only architect known to me in the district was applied to, accepted the appointment of inspector, and all moneys were paid on his certificate.

To give some idea of the amount of work that has passed through my hands during the year, I may state that if the work had been performed by a private architect, the commissions would have amounted to £4,574 11s. 6d.; besides which, considerable sums have been earned by other architects for works that would have passed through the Department but for the pressure before referred to.

On referring back, I find that the first year I entered the Government service, the commissions on the work done, if paid for to private architects, would have amounted to £1,686 11s.; the second year to £2,249 3s. 6d.; the third year to £1,267 ls.; and the last or fourth year, as before stated, to £4,574 11s. 6d.

In addition to my professional duties, for the last eighteen months I have performed those of the Overseer of Domains, in consequence of that officer being dispensed with.

The knowledge that finishing the buildings to time rested as it were upon my shoulders, and that the failure of doing so would prevent the meeting of Parliament at the proper time, besides subjecting the contractors to heavy penalties, caused me considerable anxiety; and it was only by real hard work that I was able to supply the necessary drawings and information to the contractors, which has resulted in the completion of a large amount of work in a comparatively short time.

I have endeavoured in this Report to show that my services have been year by year a large saving of money to the Colony.

Wellington, New Zealand, July, 1873.

W. H. CLAYTON,
Colonial Architect.

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