

particularly the role of the official photographer in recording and promoting the work of the state, and the intellectual challenges for an historian working within the constraints of such a collection. A brief note on the growing accessibility of the under-utilized Archives New Zealand images would also have provided further encouragement for other researchers to search these sources. Such is the overall impact and achievement of this work, though (and the very successful photographic exhibition that accompanied its launch) that one can only hope Archives New Zealand will be encouraged to commission more publications of a similar kind.

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Common Ground? Heritage and Public Places in New Zealand. Edited by Alexander Trapeznik. University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 2000. 169 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-877133-91-4.

LIKE RELIGION AND POLITICS, architecture can excite heated debate between followers of divergent persuasions. Temperatures are rarely higher than when buildings are poised between salvation through the efforts of historic preservationists and demolition for new development. Common interests can be hard to find. The question mark in the title to this collection carries a lot of freight. While editor Alexander Trapeznik and the contributors to the volume are generally 'upbeat' about the future of historic places and the existence of a public consensus on the virtues of preserving our 'cultural heritage', their text reveals myriad competing interests, a shifting political environment and a shallow public pocket in the management of what can be seen as priceless 'national treasures'.

The purpose of *Common Ground?* is not so much to make the case for historic preservation, heritage or public history (the nomenclature is itself the subject of much reflection throughout the book) but rather to bring together a range of perspectives from those working in the area. The book seeks to act as a guide to those working with New Zealand heritage issues, as well as to provide a wider readership with some knowledge and reflection on the development of heritage practice and policy. The main focus is on buildings and sites: historic places and structures.

A central dilemma running through the book is one of history as process and history as exotic object or destination. Practitioner Jeremy Salmond notes that a building 'is inconveniently sedentary'. Unlike the object in a museum collection it cannot be taken to a purpose-designed place for special care, interpretation and display. The architect working on a historic site or building must work in the real world. Carrying responsibility for preserving, maintaining and possibly also restoring the physical remnants of a structure, the architect's concern is immediate and measurable. The historian making a case for preservation or involved in debate over its future interpretation is more likely to have a wider interest in narratives surrounding the site or structure. Between such standpoints there can be a gulf. Is the purpose of the building as a historic place intended to be a place to visit one point in the past (often the original structure and purpose), or to show a changing galaxy of purpose, use and context?

Different conflicts exist around the functional use made of New Zealand's historic places, as Gavin McLean's chapter 'From Shrine to Shop' demonstrates. While an earlier heritage tradition was inclined to treat historic places as reverent showcases (notably the house museum), McLean charts a growing pluralism, commercialism and popularization.

In its more garish manifestations, the trends can be seen in Valentino's restaurant inhabiting Dunedin's gracious railway station, and Burger King in full neon radiance beaming out of stately bank chambers in Wellington's Manners Street. But it is probably fair to say that contributors to this volume see such uses as jarring but the price to be paid for preservation and certainly a more tolerable vulgarity than the re-making of historic sites in 'unauthentic' ways (in which the 1940s restoration of 'Pompallier House' is the example most decried by current heritage orthodoxy).

Looking at the cultural landscape in a broader sweep, Ian Barber sets out archaeological investigation for a wider audience and also takes a critical look at the selective outcomes of much recent preservation practice. He has a good swipe at Wellington's waterfront ('a masonry freak show'), and tries to make the case for Oamaru's Sumpter Wharf (1884) alongside the town's historic success stories in its handsome white-stone edifices. In both cases the problem is identified as one of over-selection where preservation of a whole cultural landscape, complete with ordinary buildings and everyday surfaces, would have been preferable. The historian in most of us sees the point, but the desperate struggle needed to save *and maintain* historic buildings, sites and places should not be underestimated.

The legislative and administrative context of New Zealand's historic management is traced in several chapters, notably in McLean's brief history of the heritage movement and in Greg Vossler's charting of legislation. Knowing where the issues and battles have been before is useful to set alongside what remains a highly volatile area. The 1950s emerge again as anything but the dull grey conformity some would have us believe. The cultural nexus out of which the first Historic Places Trust was established (through the Historic Places Act of 1954) was one of liveliness and initiative. And for all of the late modernity of the 1960s and 1970s, it was in this era that the Trust acquired much of its historic register (a key role being played by Ruth Ross), and its visitor properties (the scale of which became something of a problem in the 1980s).

There is a tasting quality to *Common Ground?* but they are bar snacks rather than the main repast. The chapters are rather short, important issues and questions are raised and often left in an undeveloped state — including the significance of the title, the meanings of heritage versus history. Inaccuracies in titles of reference works and names of people are unfortunate errors in a book that seeks to establish its professional credentials. Nonetheless, with other recent publications including Bronwyn Dalley and Jock Phillips, eds, *Going Public* (2001), Janelle Warren-Findley's major report on historical conservation from her 2000 tenure as Axford Fellow (available from Fulbright New Zealand) and David Hamer's posthumous *The Making of Urban New Zealand* (forthcoming, Victoria University Press), *Common Ground?* is a useful addition to New Zealand's lively discussion of public history.

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Politics in the Playground: The World of Early Childhood in Postwar New Zealand. By Helen May. Bridget Williams Books with the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Wellington, 2001. 320 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-877242-18-7.

I WAS ONE of the disadvantaged children of the 1960s; instead of attending kindergarten, playcentre or some other early childhood facility, I stayed at home, looked after by my