

# The Whare in the Bush

## *Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition*

Robin Skinner



Figure 1: A. P. Godber, Hans Peter Knutzen sitting on the verandah of his home, Piha, ca 1915-1916. Dry plate glass negative, APG-0349-1/2-G. Part of A. P. Godber Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

Postwar discussion on architecture in New Zealand repeatedly cites a photograph (Fig 1) taken in or about 1916 taken – one of many – by the photographer and railway worker Albert Percy Godber. It shows Hans Peter Knutzen<sup>1</sup>, the Danish manager of the Piha State Sawmill, sitting on the verandah of his hut. He is reading on the un-balconied deck of a small abode, surrounded by flax and scrub. This image has acquired a unique status in New Zealand architectural culture. It has been serially reproduced and reinterpreted by exhibition curators and writers for over fifty years. Significantly, over the last ten years it has frequently been taken as a focal point for rumination on New Zealand’s postwar architectural culture.

### ***The Elegant Shed, 1984***

The image gained national prominence in 1984 when architect and educator David Mitchell discussed it in the final episode of a six-part television series on post-war architecture in New Zealand entitled “The Elegant Shed”.<sup>2</sup> In this series he celebrated how local architects, in their search for the ‘elusive’ or ‘mythical’ goal of the ‘elegant shed’, had elevated the pragmatism of the country’s past and made of it an art.<sup>3</sup> As Peter Wood has identified, Mitchell’s project was important for it offered ‘a form of cultural foundation upon which other local mythologies could be properly built.’<sup>4</sup> Coming twenty-six years after the New Zealand visit of Nikolaus Pevsner, where the chronicler of the origin of the modern movement (and shed denouncer) had bemoaned the state of New Zealand architecture, Mitchell’s text demonstrated that the architecture of New Zealand had its own proper tradition and that it could be theorised, albeit from a personal standpoint.<sup>5</sup>

In the final programme, after introducing a recent scheme by Peter Bossley for a beach house designed for a couple on an offshore island, Mitchell presented the photograph of the man on the deck as a sign of pioneer beginnings. He linked Bossley’s project to the “bach” – a New Zealand holiday or weekend cottage, stating:

The architects whose buildings we've been looking at are working on old myths and fabricating new ones. This picture's been displayed for years in the Auckland School of Architecture library. It might have been the springboard of the typical Auckland architect's house of the 1940s. There's the man alone of New Zealand literature. You could even see this as Adam's house in Paradise. Man alone though is not so popular today and in the Bossley plan he's got company and he's given up fighting. There are now fewer huts in the wild and the beach house has just about replaced the bach. But the myth of the bach or crib still lives in the architectural imagination. It's still a testing ground for ideas that later find their way into the house.<sup>6</sup>

In the eponymous book, which Mitchell and Gillian Chaplin prepared while the television series was screened, Mitchell captioned the image thus: "Man alone" could never be better represented than in this anonymous photograph that is held like a banner for truth in the Auckland University School of Architecture.<sup>7</sup> The "man alone" figure derives from John Mulgan's 1939 novel of the same name and refers to a literary tradition in New Zealand that describes an individual man living in a raw environment, at odds with wider society. In the 1980s, Roger Donaldson's film *Sleeping Dogs* (1977) portrayed an isolated individual railing against society and the state, renewing the trope's pertinence.<sup>8</sup> Following Mitchell's 1984 commentary on the image of the man sitting on the deck of the wooden hut, this tag persisted in architectural discourse; it is now often referred to as the "man alone image".

Unaware of the history of the photograph, its subject, or even its location, Mitchell's printed text restated his earlier reference in the television programme to *On Adam's House in Paradise*, the Auckland architects' modernist houses of the 1940s, and the solitary male who had 'given up fighting'. Citing Bossley's beach house, Mitchell continued: 'But man alone has outstayed his welcome.' There, he speculated, the couple now dwelt unencumbered and sheltered from the weather in 'a bastion against the forces of the everyday world.'<sup>9</sup> His reference to the holiday home recalled earlier discussion in the television series and book. In the introductory programme of the series he stated that the 'kernel' of Auckland's mid-century domestic modernism lay in 'bachy buildings'<sup>10</sup>; while in his published text, he had discussed the "bach" as a holiday house that supposedly maintained the simple pragmatism of the earlier pioneer hut. He stated: 'The early bach was that straightforward cottage that is reinvented everywhere in the world where a simple house is needed. It is rectangular in plan, with a gabled roof on rafters that can be extended to take lean-to additions.'<sup>11</sup> These statements were significant in a growing discussion of the status of the bach as an origin for New Zealand architecture.<sup>12</sup>

The term "bach", as denoting a small holiday home, appears to date from the 1910s.<sup>13</sup> It relates to the earlier term "bach" – a small abode in which men live together (the word's prevailing use in the early twentieth century); and to the

expressions 'to bach' and 'to bach with'. These all derive from the nineteenth century expressions 'to bachelorize' and 'to bachelorize with', which respectively refer to living alone as a bachelor and to sharing living quarters with someone of the same sex (usually male, but sometimes female).<sup>14</sup>

There appears to have been no mention of the Knutzen image in New Zealand reviews of Mitchell's television series or book; however, when reviewing the book in the *British Architectural Review*, E. M. Farrelly included the photograph.<sup>15</sup> Having studied at the Auckland school, she was also familiar with the image in the library, and, like Mitchell, she referenced Rykwert's recent title on architectural origin. She captioned the image thus:

Adam's other house in paradise? This huge anonymous photograph is significant not as an example of New Zealand's architecture so much as a formative influence. Held, as Mitchell says, 'like a banner for truth', it has inspired generation after generation of students in what was for many years the country's only school of architecture.<sup>16</sup>

The use of the word "anonymous" by Mitchell and Farrelly partly explains the persistence of the references to the image. Without fixity in time or space, it was both everywhere and nowhere. It appeared to be from an almost primordial beginning, as if it always had been. Both she and Mitchell seemed unaware of the history of the image. Without an origin, they could read the image as they wished, unhindered by the complications that Piha, the mill and Knutzen introduced.

#### **HOMEBUILDING 1814–1954 the new zealand tradition, July 16-30, 1954**

In fact, the photograph's appearance in an architectural forum extended back thirty years earlier when it was presented in the exhibition "HOMEBUILDING 1814–1954 the new zealand tradition" [sic.] at the Auckland City Art Gallery.<sup>17</sup> In this exhibition, which traced the development of domestic architecture from pre-European Maori to the mid-1950s, architecture graduate James Garrett (b.1922) sourced a print from a glass plate negative held at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. In the catalogue to the exhibition, he labelled it as 'Bach in King Country. "Simplicity, honesty, realism."'<sup>18</sup> One could interpret this reference to the King Country (a region in the central North Island of New Zealand) as referring to some unknown, inaccessible and arguably disputed part of the interior. The scene of much fighting during the 1860s wars between Maori and the Pakeha (New Zealand European), the area was named after the Maori King and his followers who violently resisted Pakeha incursion. The area was slow to be developed and traces of its violent past remained in public memory.

Garrett was part of the 1947 intake to the architecture school that included Michael Fowler, Gib Pinfold and Miles Warren, and which immediately followed an earlier student cohort that included some who went on to form



the Architecture Group (“The Group”). They were determined to define and to develop an indigenous vernacular modernism in New Zealand. Others were following a similar path. Garrett recently recalled that his interest in the architecture of New Zealand’s colonial past was stimulated when, as a teenager, he saw a re-created pioneer cottage at the New Zealand Centennial Exhibition of 1940.<sup>19</sup> The 1954 exhibition was further provoked by a reaction against the limited acknowledgement of the local tradition in New Zealand at the architecture school at that time. While it was not the first exhibition to chart the development of architecture in New Zealand, its published catalogue, which included a substantial bibliography and listed academic advisors, was a work of groundbreaking scholarship.<sup>20</sup> Over fifty years later, it stands out as an important event in New Zealand architectural historiography.

The exhibition catalogue described the show in a series of stages beginning with Maori and primitive Pakeha beginnings. It ran through a chronologic sequence from the Maori, and the pioneers of the nineteenth century to those to whom Garrett referred as “The New Pioneers”. The sequence was:

THE MAORI. 1350-1840;

PIONEERING – SIMPLICITY. 1820–1860;

PIONEERING – ELEGANCE. 1820 –1860;

THE VICTORIAN AGE. 1850–1900;

THE ARTS AND CRAFTS PERIOD. 1895–1920;

THE AGE OF ANXIETY. 1918–1954;

THE NEW PIONEERS. 1940-1954.

This progression can be interpreted as generating a calculated argument in favour of a modern architecture that drew from the supposedly best aspects of the country’s architectural past, while rejecting the worst. Primitive was good. Georgian order was good. Victorian fussiness was bad. Nostalgic references were bad. Uniformity and minimum standards were bad. The organisers placed Knutzen’s hut as item no. 45 in a vaguely chronological sequence of sixty-one images, which indicates their awareness that it dated from the early years of the twentieth century. That Garrett annotated its catalogue entry with the words ‘Simplicity, honesty, realism’ is significant. Of all the images exhibited, this is the only one that bears an interpretative motto. It therefore can be read as unique in the show. Operating as a pivotal moment in the show’s narrative, it can be seen to distil the best from the colonial past and to counter the excess of 1930s art deco and the stodginess of Government built state housing (which immediately

followed in the chronology), while providing a visual prologue for the mid-century modernism with which the exhibition ended.

Garrett’s catalogue text indicates the framework he applied to the show. Out of an isolated and lonely tradition, resourceful individuals had made makeshift primitive dwellings using available materials. While the result was unrefined, it was logical, honest and simple. In the mid-twentieth century, informed by developments in timber design overseas, Garrett’s “New Pioneers” designed out of an awareness of local unique influences. Garrett’s argument aligns with a now well-known nationalist rhetoric that is usually associated with The Group. However, he was not a member of this movement. The 1954 exhibition therefore reveals that aspiration for a local tradition was more widespread than some commentators have previously suggested.<sup>21</sup>

The search for a local vernacular was limited to neither that small cluster nor that time. Other writers of the 1940s, including Paul Pascoe, Courtney Archer, Ernst Plischke, C. R. Knight, Cedric Firth and Barbara Parker, also celebrated the simplicity and the honest construction of the early wooden structures of the Pakeha pioneers, stating that they were superior to the structures that replaced them.<sup>22</sup> In the previous century, writers on architecture in New Zealand also made this point. In 1868, the Canterbury politician, James Edward FitzGerald, gave a lecture in Wellington where he lamented the loss of the honesty of the earlier simple colonial structures.<sup>23</sup> Some other colonists, including Edward Ashworth and Frederick de Jersey Clere were clearly familiar with A. W. N. Pugin’s and the Ecclesiologists’ arguments for the honest use of materials, and throughout the nineteenth century architects criticised the ‘sham’.<sup>24</sup> In his 1900 statement of the condition of architecture in New Zealand, Samuel Hurst Seager declared that the early colonial buildings were ‘honest expressions of the wants of the settlers’.<sup>25</sup> Some people knew the importance of “architectural truth”, even if it was manifest in little of the colony’s architecture. We can understand these people as antecedents to the architectural nationalists of the 1940s.

Paralleling architectural and national culture, Peter Wood has astutely identified that the two great periods of bach building in New Zealand (the 1920s and 1950s) coincided with the return of service people from war.<sup>26</sup> Many veterans of the second world war (including Garrett, who had served with the Royal Air Force) had experienced the brutality of conflict, and sought to integrate design with life and to find an alliance with nature.<sup>27</sup> An economy of means remained constant and the result would be simple, sane and harmonious. This is the message communicated by “Bach in King Country”. That the term “bach” had come to describe the suburban’s family simply-structured holiday home further nuanced its contemporary connection. However, unlike the bach at the turn of the century, the simple logical dwelling was no longer the home of the isolated male: it was the site of familial recreation.

Some years later, in 1966, Garrett wrote on the link between the pioneering dwelling and contemporary design. In the *Encyclopedia of New Zealand* he identified ‘Folk Architecture: the Functional Tradition’ developed by ‘uncomplicated artisans’ writing:

This flexible, timber vernacular, modest and restrained, bearing the marks of anonymous craftsmen and with a strong emphasis on simple living, was widely used until the late sixties and runs as a thin thread in isolated buildings until the present day.<sup>28</sup>

This reference to the unknown craftsman again helps explain the appeal of the anonymous “Bach in King Country”. In the decade before Rudofsky’s *Architecture without Architects*, the Auckland audience was presented with an elegantly proportioned structure that evidenced an unknown, untutored, instinctively rational functionalism.<sup>29</sup>

Bearing so many of the hallmarks of contemporary Auckland architecture of the early 1950s, one could also believe it had been built by a holidaying architect. It was a simple, symmetrical, well-proportioned abode with a clearly expressed structure of slender elements of minimum required thickness. The front elevation frame of the deck posts and verandah roof were proportioned at a 2x1 ratio (i.e. two 1x1 squares), which was masked by an optical illusion created by the kickboard. The light tone of the frame contrasted with the darkness of the wall fabric. Diagonal flat bracing timbers crossed at mid-distance beneath the front wall against the darkness of the foundation void. They indicated the depth of the abundant vegetation. With no unnecessary timber skirting, piles were visible. The two windows, each three panes by three panes, were possibly recycled. There was no elaborate balustrade, but instead a low kickboard supported at three points, which extended symmetrically a little beyond the framing, prevented objects falling from the deck. A clothesline straddled the posts; a jacket hung on a hook; and the occupant sat reading on a box posed in the clear square of the framing. The roof appeared to be flat or a shallow inclined skillion.

After the exhibition ended, Garrett hung the photograph in his home.

In 1966, Garrett enlarged the image to approximately 1.2 x 1.0 m as the entrance feature (‘the frontispiece’<sup>30</sup>) for an exhibition entitled “Castles on the Ground” on the development of Auckland houses at the Building Centre in Victoria Street, Auckland.<sup>31</sup> In this position, the photograph effectively introduced the development of the home in New Zealand. It presented contemporary Auckland architecture as timeless and indigenous. After the exhibition, the enlarged image was prominently displayed in Architecture Library at the University of Auckland where for several decades it became a lesson in itself.

### ***Looking for the Local, 2000***

In their 2000 study on debates relating to the development of modernism in New Zealand, entitled *Looking for the Local*, Justine Clark and Paul Walker publicly connected the image in *The Elegant Shed* from 1984 with Garrett’s exhibition item no. 45 of thirty years before.<sup>32</sup> Drawing from Sandra Coney’s 1997 history of Piha in which she identified Knutzen’s hut and detailed the circumstances of his life, Clark and Walker were able to bring further depth to the discussion.<sup>33</sup> Coney noted that Knutzen was the manager of the mill and maintained two abodes – a house in Ponsonby in Auckland (where his wife and two sons lived) and the hut at Piha. Even after his wife had a stroke in 1923, she wrote, he continued to live away from Auckland.<sup>34</sup>

In an album that included many of his Piha images, Clark and Walker noted that Godber had mounted a print of Knutzen on his verandah with the caption ‘WHARE IN THE BUSH’.<sup>35</sup> ‘Whare’ here refers to a hut, and derives from the Maori word for house. In the nineteenth century, Pakeha colonists’ initial makeshift dwellings, farm buildings and workmen’s huts were often called *whares* or *warries* and this usage continued into the early twentieth century.<sup>36</sup> To conflate matters further, in the 1910s seaside “whares” were rented for summer holidays.<sup>37</sup>

Citing the photograph, Godber’s caption and the interpretation by Garrett and Mitchell, Clark and Walker identified how theory, gender and ethnicity feature in the rhetoric of the “new pioneer” architects of the fifties. In a pragmatic culture where theory was supposedly eschewed, they noted that in the nineteenth century many architects in New Zealand had read theoretical texts. In the masculine culture of the pioneer, women were present and became more politically active as the nineteenth century progressed. Clark and Walker observed that many women partook in the modernist architectural project of the 1940s and 50s. Significantly, through the conflation of the terms *whare*, *bach* and *hut*, they observed, ‘[d]ifferences and the complexities of meaning are erased.’<sup>38</sup> Citing Garrett’s discussion of Maori architecture in the 1954 catalogue, Clark and Walker noted how Maori buildings tended to be understood as simple responses to material, climate and society. This Maori tradition, they astutely observed, provided precedents, but these were not progressed.<sup>39</sup> Examination of the 1954 catalogue indicates that Maori housing was included in the show. This was, however, difficult to place in what was largely a progressive lineage of Pakeha housing examples. The initial section of the published catalogue, entitled “The Maoris 1350-1840”, introduced the narrative but this was not taken further. In retrospect it appears that Garrett’s description of Maori architecture includes many of the aspects that relate to the Knutzen image and which he championed in the work of the postwar architects. For example, according to Garrett’s argument: Maori lived in isolation, were close to nature, had a rational association with their physical and spiritual environment, used the materials available, and produced simple



Figure 2: Detail of A. P. Godber's panorama of Piha (Fig 3) showing Knutzen's hut and his outhouse latrine (lower left), ca. 1915-16. The rail track visible in the upper left was used to transport timber between Piha and Karekare. The mill pig pen is visible in the foreground. Dry plate glass negative, APG-0671-1/2-G. Part of A. P. Godber Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

well-built buildings that related to community life.<sup>40</sup> This interpretation of New Zealand's original architecture established a precedent that was rhetorically applied to the architecture of Garrett's "New Pioneers" of the 1950s.

The HOMEBUILDING exhibition presented what postcolonial theorists describe as a "pioneering narrative". In his discussion of the textual formation of New Zealand, Peter Gibbons described these as part of the "Literature of Invasion".<sup>41</sup> Surveying texts that deal with Maori, New Zealand resources and the experiences of the settlers, he interpreted this literature to be 'bound up with the imposition and extension of European power in New Zealand'.<sup>42</sup> As Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson have noted, these pioneering narratives have been integral to the self-definition of the settler.<sup>43</sup> They serve to legitimate the settler/invasader in the new land.

In these terms, it is significant that in the early years of the twentieth century the words *whare* and *bach* were largely interchangeable. In effect, the holiday bach inherited the mantle of the single-sex *bach*, the *warrie*, and the *whare*. The image of "Bach in King Country" was not only pivotal in the show; it represented a point of origin. It was not only a call for the new architecture; it designated the relatively recent Pakeha settlers as new natives in the new land. The exhibition of the image of the bach came to represent an architectural origin in New Zealand.

In addition to the publication of Clark and Walker's book, there have been other discussions of the man alone image. Drawing upon Coney's research, Peter Wood identified that although Knutzen lived at some distance from Auckland, he remained inextricably linked to his home and family there. His hut, Wood proffered, functioned like a shed to the suburban home. He interpreted

that by working away from home after his wife's stroke, the Dane refused his marital responsibility.<sup>44</sup> In 2000 Gill Matthewson wrote on the inclusion of human figures in architectural photography. She reviewed recent architectural interpretations of the man alone photograph, usefully observing that, '[e]ach frame encloses/poses a different story for the image and refocuses our view but at the same time reinvests the image with significance.'<sup>45</sup> She considered what was at stake when a man, rather than a woman, was included in an architectural image. Later, she pointedly prefaced an essay on the professional role of women through the hundred-year history of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, with an image of a woman photographed through lush vegetation standing on a decorated verandah of a tearoom in a tropical garden.<sup>46</sup> In 2001 Walker restated his and Clark's earlier interpretation of the image, making a connection with the work of Roger Walker and Ian Athfield.<sup>47</sup> In 2002, introducing an article on the bach, Nigel Cook showed the photograph, observing that it was admired by The Group.<sup>48</sup> In 2005, Walker and Clark again discussed the image, noted Matthewson's reworking, and offered a photograph of five male members of The Group on a verandah as a further point of departure.<sup>49</sup>

The image had been successively cited to legitimate and to critique current practice, and to foreground various writers' priorities. While the image's provenance had been successively forgotten and recouped, its meaning had been discovered and rediscovered in a succession of crucial interpretative episodes. This becomes complicated when further circumstances of Mr Knutzen's life at Piha are considered.

### Hans Peter Knutzen at Piha

The Piha sawmill was established in 1910 by Dr Frederick Rayner, a successful entrepreneur, to harvest giant Kauri trees. After the more accessible timber was removed, the Rayners sold the milling rights to the New Zealand Railways Stores Branch, which continued to pay lucrative royalties to the Rayners on timber cut. Knutzen immigrated to New Zealand in 1883 at the age of nineteen where he mined in various parts of the country. He gained a mine manager's ticket at the Thames School of Mines, and is remembered as being 'capable of turning his hand to anything'.<sup>50</sup> He often worked away from the larger urban areas and, as noted earlier, while working at Piha, he had two residences: his hut in the bush and a wooden villa at 77 John Street in the Auckland suburb of Ponsonby where his family remained.<sup>51</sup>

While the image of the hut in the manuka scrub may have appeared simple and straightforward, it was sited in a community where its occupant had a most significant role. Knutzen's hut is visible in the triangle of scrub in the centre-right of Godber's panorama of Piha (Figs 2&3). It was sited across the stream from the mill between the baches or single men's huts (on the left) and those of





Figure 3: A. P. Godber, Panorama overlooking the timber settlement at Piha, ca. 1915-16.  
Dry plate glass negative, APG-0673-1/2-G and APG-0671-1/2-G. Part of A. P. Godber Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



Figure 4: A. P. Godber, A wooden hut in the bush with Albert Percy Godber standing outside, Kitenui Knob in the background, Piha, New Zealand, ca. 1915-1916. Dry plate glass negative, APG-0345-1/2-G. Part of A. P. Godber Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



Figure 5: A. P. Godber, Hut interior, ca. 1915-1917. Dry plate glass negative, APG-0819-1/2-G. Part of A. P. Godber Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

the workers' families (on the right). This was a temporary settlement where all houses were owned by the mill. Knutzen's central position indicates his importance within the hierarchy of the settlement's operations. Although the image of the hut shows a simple structure, seen in its wider context it appears to be sited in a somewhat removed, privileged position, from where he could survey every part of the operation and settlement.<sup>52</sup> Coney suggests that as mill manager, he was also responsible for the order and welfare of the community which is also reflected in the hut's position. Knutzen's situation here possibly provided a buffer between single males and families with daughters.<sup>53</sup> Several of Godber's Piha photographs show Knutzen to be well dressed at work in a fresh white shirt. Coney understands that he had a housekeeper who presumably washed and ironed for him. Rather than being *man alone* he was *man attended*.

A second image of Knutzen's hut in the Godber album shows Godber bringing pails of water to the hut (Fig 4). In the album it is titled 'A HOME AWAY FROM HOME'. In this view we can see that the hut did not have a flat skillion roof, but was gabled like the cottages of the married men's families. An examination of both photographs indicates that it had a skillion verandah roof. However, the photographer's low viewing position produced an image with a severely foreshortened roof. Garrett's flat-roofed proto-modernist New Zealand house was a trick of the camera. One cannot help speculate that if the photograph had shown a hipped roof, then it would not have been held in such high regard by the mid-twentieth century modernists.

Sandra Coney and I have both independently identified a Godber photograph to be the interior of Knutzen's hut (Fig 5).<sup>54</sup> Although the building appeared humble from the exterior, it contained two well-filled rooms. Knutzen's bedroom

was wallpapered, while in the larger room with the fireplace could be found rifles, books and scientific instruments. It contained copies of W. H. G. Kingston's *Tales of the Eastern Seas*, Pears' *Shilling Cyclopaedia*, the *NZ Official Year Book*, a book on livestock care and Jerome K. Jerome's *Second Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*. In addition, a telescope, a Philips' planisphere for identifying the stars, and a dismantled movie projector can be identified. It was clearly the home of an intelligent man who was up to date with current scientific and cultural practice.

While the image of Knutzen sitting on his deck indicates a simple and straightforward existence, his life was somewhat more complicated. As Coney has indicated, he was connected to the Rayners' dubious financial dealings, and his home-life was in any case a little unusual.<sup>55</sup> He earned sufficient income that he ran a Ford motor vehicle. He probably earned more at Piha than he could have earned in Auckland, to the extent that he could fund professional care for his wife at home. His bush residence then was not a case of domestic abandonment; rather, it was one of respectable responsibility to his household.

Examining the historical origins of Godber's photograph and uncovering the history of its subject brings forward many aspects that dismantles the arguments that the curators and writers made with respect to the image in the second half of the twentieth century. Identifying that Knutzen was not isolated from society but was a man who operated in a privileged position – with education, a relatively good measure of wealth and supporting his family – challenges the myth that surrounds the image. The photograph's obscure origin allowed varied readings to be made according to sometimes diverse interpretative frameworks, unhindered by the complications that Piha, the mill and Knutzen presented. Uncovering the historical record; revealing the site; looking around the back of the hut and into its interior, draws attention to the rhetorical freedom that a more decontextualised image allows. That it was of no fixed time, or place, or person made the image more malleable for these competing arguments.

Although Knutzen's hut may have appeared to indicate a rejection of the clamour of urban and familial life, the hut at Piha was located at the heart of one of the most profitable capitalist ventures in New Zealand at that time. Moreover, its existence was solely due to the rampant exploitation of natural resources that was then standard in the Dominion of New Zealand. That Knutzen operated a parallel suburban residence only strengthens the argument for his place in the commercial and social nexus. This is a story that does not fit with the modernist narratives of primitive huts, men alone and simple and straightforward outcomes. These old arguments continue to appear in the writing of contemporary mythmakers; however, perhaps it is time to fabricate new narratives to explain New Zealand's contemporary architectural condition. Perhaps it is time to look for other precedents and to consider what alternate readings they offer on New Zealand's several centuries of rural and urban development.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Sandra Coney and James Garrett for their help and advice with this paper.

## NOTES

1. Hans Peter Knutzen (1863-1949), pronounced ker'newtzen. See Sandra Coney, *Piha: A History in Images* (Auckland: Keyhole Press, 1997), 62.
2. This series, which was subtitled "Contemporary New Zealand Architecture: A personal view by David Mitchell," screened in six half-hour episodes as part of the arts programme *Kaleidoscope*, between March 9 and April 13, 1984.
3. He stated: 'But in their projects and sketches and dreams, the best architects are forever honing and retuning their ideas on the essence of architecture's elusive goal: the elegant shed.' – "The Elegant Shed," episode one, Television One, Auckland, first broadcast, March 9, 1984. See also David Mitchell & Gillian Chaplin, *The Elegant Shed: New Zealand Architecture since 1945* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1984), 7-9.
4. Peter Wood, "Watershed: of buildings and stories and elegant sheds," in *Exquisite Apart: 100 Years of Architecture in New Zealand*, ed. Charles Walker (Auckland: Balasoglou Books, 2005), 78.
5. See Nikolaus Pevsner, "Ingratiating Chaos," *Listener* (U.K.), November 20, 1958: 827. I recall his famous aphorism: 'A bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture,' in Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture*, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1945), xvi.
6. "The Elegant Shed," ep. 6, Television One, Auckland, first broadcast, April 13, 1984. See later discussion on the term "bach". In southern New Zealand the term "crib" is more commonly used.
7. Mitchell & Chaplin, *Elegant Shed*, 104.
8. See, for example, Martin Blythe, "Slow steam and sudden eruptions: Roger Donaldson's 'Smash Palace'," *Sites: A Journal for Radical Perspectives on Culture* 9 (Spring 1984): 32-40.
9. Mitchell & Chaplin, *Elegant Shed*, 103-4. He wrote: 'In the Auckland School of Architecture Library one picture is enlarged beyond all others. It shows a man sitting on the verandah of a hut surrounded by flax and scrub – the precursor of the Auckland architect's house of the 1940s. There on the verandah is the "man alone" of New Zealand literature. The simple building might even be Adam's house in Paradise. But man alone has outstayed his welcome. He has accepted company and given up fighting in a few seductive sketches Bossley has made a dream house for a couple ...' (103-4). The reference noted is Joseph Rykwert, *On Adam's House in Paradise: The Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History* (Cambridge & London: MIT Press, 1971).
10. Specifically, David Mitchell described the approach of the architect and educator Vernon Brown, stating: 'He looked for architectural models that were not loaded with the memories of another culture. Within sight of his house in Remuera was Rangitoto Island and on it were buildings that Brown could make an architecture from: baches and boatsheds. Here there are some particularly New Zealand hybrids too ... Modern architecture was not made from the ordinary fare of the New Zealand town.' Rowing past a holiday bach on Rangitoto Island, Mitchell added, 'But in bachy buildings like this lay the kernel of the Auckland style that was begun by Vernon Brown.' From "The Elegant Shed," ep. 1.
11. Mitchell and Chaplin, *Elegant Shed*, 17-18.
12. See also Paul Thompson, *The Bach* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1985). For later discussion on the bach see Christine McCarthy, "The Bach," *Interstices* 4 (1996), 7pp, online at <http://www.architecture.auckland.ac.nz/common/library/1995/11/14/thehtml/papers/mccarthy/front.htm>; and "A Summer Place: Postcolonial Retellings of the New Zealand Bach," *Jouvert: A Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 2, no. 2, (August 1998), online at <http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/Jouvert/v2i2/mccart.htm>; John Milligan, "A Summer Place," *New Zealand Home and Building* (October-November 1996): 138-45; Paul Walker, "The Bach", *UME* 13 (2001): 44-47; Nigel Cook, "Living in the View," *Architecture New Zealand* (March-April 2002): 62-65.
13. Orsman dates this usage as early as 1924. See H. W. Orsman (ed.), *The Dictionary of New Zealand English: A Dictionary of New Zealandisms on Historic Principles [ODNZE]* (Auckland: Oxford, 1997), 22. Searching digitised newspapers indicates that this usage dates at least ten years earlier. For example, 'WANTED, at Lyall Bay, a small Furnished Bach, from the 24th, for three weeks.' – *Evening Post* (Wellington), December 19, 1914, 1. The expression "seaside bach" is earlier. Compare *Evening Post*, December 29, 1913, 1.



14. The *ODNZE* dates the use of these terms in New Zealand thus: bach – a detached or simple habitation (1911); to bach (1890); to bach with (1905); baching (1916); bachelorize (1879). These terms appear to relate to similar terms that have been recorded in the United States of America since at least 1862 and in Australia since at least 1882. – *ODNZE*, 22-23. In Wellington in the late 1890s, it appears that “bach” indicated a living arrangement rather than an abode. For example: ‘WANTED, a respectable young Man, to join a bach.’ – *Evening Post*, October 27, 1896, 1; ‘VACANCY in well-conducted “bach” with housekeeper.’ – *Evening Post*, April 8, 1899, 1; ‘BACHELORISING ESTABLISHMENT (housekeeper kept), 15 minutes from Post Office, has three vacancies.’ – *Evening Post*, June 17, 1897, 1. In the early 1900s the usage shifted to describe an abode. For example: ‘GOOD BACH., centrally situated, has a Vacancy for a couple of gentlemanly young fellows...’ – *Evening Post*, April 18, 1903, 1; ‘TO LET, furnished bach; suit two mates ...’ – *Evening Post*, April 18, 1907: 1. The use of “batch” as a lettable room dates from as early as 1905: ‘WANTED ... or would Let Room as batch.’ – *Evening Post*, November 11, 1905, 1.

15. E. M. Farrelly, “Books: Pioneers Don’t Need Planning,” *Architectural Review* 180 (July 1986): 84. In the contents page the item was described as ‘New Zealand identity’. She had also reviewed the book earlier in New Zealand: Libby Farrelly, “Books: At Last the Great New Zealand Hovel,” *New Zealand Architect* 1985, no. 2: 39-40.

16. Farrelly, “Books: Pioneers Don’t Need Planning,” 84.

17. [Antony Alpers], “An Exhibition for Everyman: How We Design Our Homes,” *Auckland Star*, July 15, 1954, 2.

18. James Garrett, *Homebuilding 1814-1954: the New Zealand tradition: Catalogue of the Exhibition Group, School of Architecture, Auckland University College* (Auckland: Pelorus Press, 1954), 22.

19. Pers. comm., James Garrett, February 23, 2008.

20. The earliest exhibition of NZ housing that I have identified was in 1887 when a coach painter, J. E. Gilby, who had lived in Canterbury, exhibited a series of models in Sydney tracing the progression of architecture in New Zealand. It was reported to present: (1) a tent in the bush; (2) a sod whare [hut]; (3) a two roomed wooden lean-to with two rooms added; (4) the square house or T cottage; and (5) the handsome villa [my emphasis]. See “New Zealand Dwellings,” *Australasian Builder and Contractors’ News* 1 (May 14, 1887): 20. Gilby’s lineage appears to be one of increasing progress and sophistication. In 1949 Barbara Parker described an exhibition of New Zealand housing at the Architectural Centre in Wellington, where she visually traced a decline from ‘Simplicity and natural elegance’ of 1870; through a ‘[deterioration] to repetitive mediocrity’ of 1900; to end with the ‘calculated vulgarity’ of 1900. See Barbara Parker, “An Historical Exhibition of New Zealand Housing,” *Design Review* 1, no. 6 (April-May 1949): 5-6.

21. See, for example, “The Elegant Shed,” ep. 1.

22. Paul Pascoe, “Houses,” in *Making New Zealand: Pictorial Surveys of a Century* 2, no. 21, ed. E. H. McCormick (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940), 10; Courtney Archer, “New Zealand Architecture,” *Architectural Review* 91 (March 1942): 53-54; E. A. Plishke [Plischke], *Design and Living* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1947), 33; C. R. Knight, “Architecture,” in *1840 and After: Essays Written on the Occasion of the New Zealand Centenary*, ed. Arthur Sewell (Auckland: Auckland University College, 1939), 163-81; Cedric Firth, “Architecture in New Zealand,” *Studio* 135 (April 1948): 126; Parker, “An Historical Exhibition”.

23. James Edward FitzGerald, “On the Nature of Art: Lecture delivered at the Colonial Museum, Wellington, August 18, 1868,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* 2 (1869): 264.

24. In the early 1840s, the architect Edward Ashworth was critical of the wooden portico of the Supreme Court in Auckland and later writers criticised the colony’s shams in *The Builder*. Towards the end of that century, other leading local architects were also critical of the sham. See Frederick de J. Clere, “Wooden Churches in New Zealand,” *Journal of Proceedings of the Royal Institute of British Architects* 3, no. 1, new series, 1886/1887 session (October 21, 1886): 16.

25. S. Hurst Seager, “Architectural Art in New Zealand,” *Royal Institute of British Architects Journal* 7, no. 19, 3rd series (September 29, 1900): 482.

26. Peter Wood, “The Bach: The Cultural History of a Local Typology,” *Fabrications* 11, no. 1 (July 2000), 53.

27. In 1954 and 1958, Garrett described an aspiration to create ‘an oasis of simplicity, sanity and harmony in a complex chaotic and [often] brutal world.’ He amended the text in 1958 to include the word ‘often’. See Garrett, *Homebuilding 1814-1954*, 18; and “Home Building – Our Tradition,” *Home and Building* 21, no. 5 (October 1958): 43.

28. James Garrett, “Architecture,” in *An Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, ed. A. H. McLintock, vol. 1 (Wellington: Government Printer, 1966), 59.

29. Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture Without Architects: A Short Introduction to Nonpedigreed Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1964).

30. This is Garrett’s expression. Pers. comm., February 23, 2008.

31. The exhibition entitled “Castles on the Ground: A Visual Exploration of the Domestic Architecture in the Auckland Region over the Last One Hundred Years” was held at the Building Centre, Victoria Street, Auckland, as part of the Auckland Festival between May 17-29 1966. It was sponsored by the New Zealand Institute of Architects. Pers. comms., Garrett, July 2005 and April 16, 2005; *Auckland Festival Programme* 1966 (Auckland: Auckland Festival Society, 1966), 70.

32. Justine Clark & Paul Walker, *Looking for the Local: Architecture and the New Zealand Modern* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2000), 31.

33. The image was spotted in Coney’s book by the Auckland architecture graduate and sometime Piha bach-dweller, Brent Allpress. Thereafter, word swiftly spread through the local communities of postgraduates and architectural historians.

34. Coney, *Piha*, 63.

35. Garrett has noted that he sourced the image from Godber’s glass plate negatives rather than the Godber album.

36. The *ODNZE* (905) dates these usages to 1840 and 1855. It notes that the term was replaced by the expressions “bach”, “crib” and “hut”.

37. For example: ‘WANTED, Whare, seaside, from 12th January, for a fortnight.’ – *Evening Post*, January 7, 1915, 1.

38. Clark & Walker, *Looking for the Local*, 32. Furthermore, they identified that in Garrett’s 1954 publication the word “bach” first appeared in a history of New Zealand architecture.

39. Clark & Walker, *Looking for the Local*, 32-33.

40. Garrett, *Homebuilding 1814-1954*, 6.

41. Peter Gibbons, “Non-fiction,” in *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, ed. Terry Sturm (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1991), 35.

42. Gibbons, “Non-fiction,” 35.

43. Anna Johnston & Alan Lawson, “Settler Colonies,” in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Henry Schwartz & Sangeeta Ray (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 361.

44. Peter Wood, “Cultural Regionalism and the Development of the New Zealand ‘Bach’,” in *Habitus 2000: A Sense of Place, Perth, Western Australia, 5-9 September 2000* (Perth, 2000), cd-rom; “Trespassers will be Eaten: The Maori Land Occupation Structures at Waikaremoana,” in *Re-Framing Architecture: Theory, Science and Myth*, ed. Michael J. Ostwald & R. John Moore (Sydney: Archadia, 2000), 220-21.

45. Gill Mathewson, “Looking at the Icons,” in *Formulation Fabrication: The Architecture of History, Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand, November 2000* (Wellington: SAHANZ, 2000), 483.

46. Gill Mathewson, “Sketching in the Margins,” in *Exquisite Apart*, ed. Charles Walker, 126.

47. Walker, “The Bach,” 46-47.

48. Cook, “Living in the View,” 62-63.

49. Paul Walker & Justine Clark, “The Architectural Photograph: Image and Ideology,” *Architecture New Zealand* (May-June 2005): 108-10.

50. Coney, *Piha*, 62; and pers. comm., Sandra Coney, March 1, 2008.

51. He married Rose Emma Grey in 1890 and they had at least eight offspring, although only two sons survived into adulthood. Coney suggests that Rose had tuberculosis, which her progeny contracted in utero. Pers. comms. Coney, March 1 & 4, 2008.

52. Pers. comm. Coney, April 7, 2008.

53. Pers. comm., Coney, February 26, 2008.

54. Sandra Coney and I independently identified this interior as that of the Knutzen hut. Pers. comm., Coney, March 1, 2008.

55. Coney, *Piha*, 62-63; pers. comm., Coney, April 7, 2008.