

Te rangahau i te
hītori o tō whare i
Tāmaki Makaurau

Researching the history of your house in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland

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Contents

Welcome	2
Land	3
Your house	8
Architects	11
Your neighbourhood	12
People	14
Websites	16
Contacts	17

Welcome

This guide will help you find out more about the history of your house. It is divided into different sections to help you research land, houses, architecture, architects, and local history in Auckland.

The history of houses includes the people who lived in them, so this guide also shows you how family history tools and online resources can help you learn about the people who have lived in your house.

Good luck with your research!



A woman, cat, and dog stand outside a square-fronted villa. Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 589-8.

This guide has been prepared by the Auckland Council Heritage Unit with assistance from Auckland Council Libraries and Auckland Council Archives.

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Land

This section will help you find out about your property, including when it was first subdivided and who has owned it in the past.

You can find out about the **Māori history** of your area by looking at iwi histories. A good place to start is Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand, which has entries about some [Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland iwi](#). Many iwi share their stories on their own websites and [Treaty of Waitangi](#) settlement documents include comprehensive histories. Use this [page](#) to find out more about the iwi in your area. [Auckland Council Libraries](#) also has books about Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland iwi histories.

Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga has [guidance](#) on [researching Māori land history](#).

Land ownership records are split between Archives New Zealand and Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand (LINZ). LINZ has [guidance](#) about [which agency holds which records](#).

LINZ has compiled a useful [glossary](#) of the [technical jargon](#) used in land documents.

Archives New Zealand has [research guides](#) about [researching land](#).



Archives New Zealand stacks. Photograph by Dave Sanderson. Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara O Te Kawanatanga CC BY 2.0.

Land documents

The most common land document you will find is a record of title. **Records of title** record land dealings: who has owned the land, when they purchased it, and any other interests in it. They can also tell you about subdivisions, mortgages, and sometimes leases. You can search for a record of title by reference, address, or legal description. Each title you view will have a prior reference number, which is what you will need to track through the chain of historic titles.

You can purchase and immediately download records of title from the [LandOnline Web Search](#) with a credit card.

Deeds are an earlier form of land document, which record ownership, mortgages, probates, and leases. The digitised **Deeds Indexes** can give you lots of information and are available online through [Collections Search](#), the Archives New Zealand online catalogue. If you would like to view the paper deed, you will need to visit the appropriate Archives New Zealand [reading room](#).

The image shows a page from the Deeds Indexes, folio 454-942. The page is filled with handwritten entries for land transactions. At the top right, it says '694'. In the center, there are handwritten numbers: '11163 c' and '7192 c'. To the left, it says 'SAC 9'. On the right, it says 'N^o 1.2'. The table has columns for 'No.', 'Description of Instrument', 'Nature of Instrument', 'Date of Instrument', 'Where Recorded', 'Reference', and 'SIGNATURE'. There are many entries, mostly in the first two columns, with dates ranging from 1859 to 1915. The signatures are mostly initials or short names. A small printed form is visible at the bottom of the page.

An example of a page from the Deeds Indexes, which are usually handwritten. They record a variety of land transactions, dates, and names. Deeds index 9A – Folio 454-942 [Eden County, Auckland]. BAJZ 23662 A1660 843 / a 9A 2. Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara O Te Kawanatanga. CC BY 2.0.

You may also come across **Crown Grants**, which are the original land transfer documents from the 19th century. These record the first land purchases from the New Zealand government (who, for a time, were the only ones able to sell land). References for Crown Grants can be found on Archives New Zealand's Collections Search, but the physical copies must be viewed at an Archives New Zealand reading room.

Maps, survey, and subdivision plans

Maps and survey plans can also show you the history of your land. They may show the outlines of buildings, fences, and even the names of early owners. You can view **Cadastral plans** (survey and deposited plans and other kinds of plans) at [Auckland Council Libraries Research Central](#). These are also available through the LandOnline Web Search.

In 1908, Auckland City Council commissioned **extensive and detailed maps** of central Auckland. The maps were updated through to 1923. They provide detail on streets and individual buildings. They have been cross referenced with valuation rolls from 1908/1909, which allows you to see who owned the property, who lived there, what material the building was constructed from and how much it was valued at. Similar maps for other areas are also available to view in person at Auckland Council Archives.



A land use map for Symonds Street, 1932. Auckland City Council land use maps, ACC 003/35. Auckland Council Archives.

Auckland Council Archives also holds **land use maps** from the 1920s to 1950s which show the type of building construction, building footprints, and the types of businesses operating.

Auckland Council Libraries [Kura Heritage Collections Online](#) (Kura) holds many **subdivision plans** which were used when advertising new subdivisions and suburbs for sale. These include auction posters and colourful subdivision plans. They are often decorative as well as informative.



Studying aerial photographs at the Auckland Council Archives reading room.

Historical aerial photographs

Historical aerial photographs will also tell you about your land – was it once a farm or a market garden? Did it used to have another house on it, before yours? You can view these photographs through websites like [Retrolens](#), which has free and downloadable images.

Auckland Council has georeferenced historical photographs available via its [GeoMaps viewer](#). The [National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa](#) has made thousands of [Whites Aviation](#) aerial images free to download through its website.

Your house

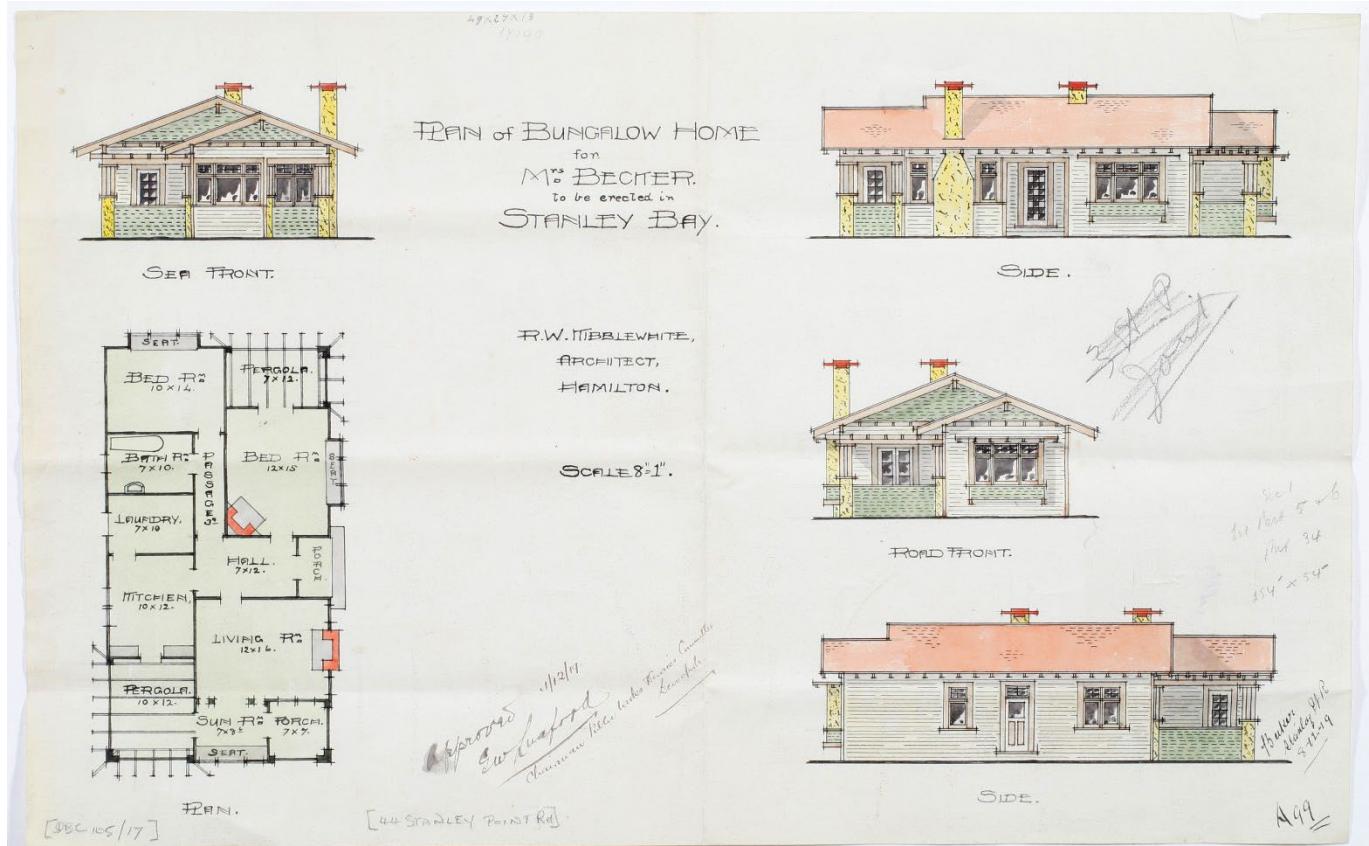
Now it's time to focus on your house.

Your Auckland Council property file

The first thing you should do if you want to find out about your house is request your **property file**. You can [order this](#) through the council website. You might already have a copy from when you purchased your house. It will contain any available **building permits**, **building consents**, **architect's drawings** and other information retained by Auckland Council (and any of its legacy councils).

Auckland Council Archives

[Auckland Council Archives](#) holds historical records for Auckland Council and its legacy councils. It holds **rate books** and **valuation rolls** for most parts of Auckland. These show how much a property was valued at, who was living there, and whether they owned the property or were tenants. They may also have information about when the building was constructed and when any alterations were made. Some have been transcribed and can be found on the Auckland Council Archives webpage. **Valuation field sheets** give yearly valuations of a property, any improvements, building permits and the name and occupation of the owner and occupier.



Plan of bungalow home for Mrs Becker to be erected in Stanley Bay, 1919. Devonport Borough Council sample building permit plans, DBC 105/17. Auckland Council Archives.

Other useful records that will give you the names of owners, architects, and other contractors include plumbing and drainage plans, building permit registers and permit plans, photographs, and termite records. **Plumbing and drainage plans** will tell you when a building was connected to water and waste water and often show a rough plan of the building. **Property and rate books** can tell you about a property's value and who lived there. **Building permit registers** can tell you when additions and alterations were made.

Historic heritage places scheduled under the Auckland Unitary Plan or the Auckland Council District Plan – Hauraki Gulf Islands Section.

If your property is **scheduled** under the [Auckland Unitary Plan](#) or the [Auckland Council District Plan – Hauraki Gulf Islands Section](#) as a historic heritage place, you can contact the Auckland Council Heritage Unit to find out what information is held about your property. This could be legacy council documentation, a historical narrative, or further references for you to follow up on.

Contact heritage@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz for further information.

Cultural Heritage Inventory (CHI)

Auckland Council has a **database of historical and cultural sites around Auckland** and includes many private residences. The database has at least basic information about the type and location of a site, along with references for this information. Please contact the heritage@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz for further information.

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga

If your place is on the [Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga list](#), they will hold a registration report about your place. They can also help with advice about archaeology on your property, including features like basalt stone walls.

State houses

If your house is a former state house, you can [contact Kāinga Ora](#) (formerly Housing New Zealand) for plans and drawings of your house and photographs of state housing developments.

The **Fletcher Archives** contain many images of the state housing developments they worked on. The collection is searchable [online](#).

House styles and architecture

There are many **books and online resources** to help you understand more about the style of your house.

For a **general overview**, start with Te Ara – Encyclopedia of New Zealand's entry on [housing](#) in New Zealand.

This is a short list of **useful books** about common Auckland housing styles which you can find at Auckland Council Libraries.

Arden, Stuart and Bowman, Ian (2004) *The New Zealand Period House: a Conservation Guide*. Random House.

Cochran, Christopher (1984 and 1991) *Restoring a New Zealand house*. New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

Cooke, M B. (1972) *The age of houses illustrated*. Lincoln College, Farm Management and Rural Valuation Department.

Gatley, Julia (2008) *Long Live the Modern: New Zealand's New Architecture, 1904-1984*. Auckland University Press.

Photography by Patrick Reynolds; text by Jeremy Hansen & Jeremy Salmond (2009) *Villa: from Heritage to Contemporary*. Godwit

Photographs by Patrick Reynolds; edited by Nicole Stock (2014) *Bungalow: from Heritage to Contemporary*. Godwit

Salmond, Jeremy (1986) *Old New Zealand Houses 1800-1940*. Reed Methven

Stewart, Di (2002) *The New Zealand Villa: Past and Present*. Penguin

Historical building and architecture **magazines** like *Home and Building* and *Building Progress* are available online and can give you a taste for the prevalent building styles of the time.

The National Library has images and **pattern books** available online which show the decorative elements of villas and bungalows.

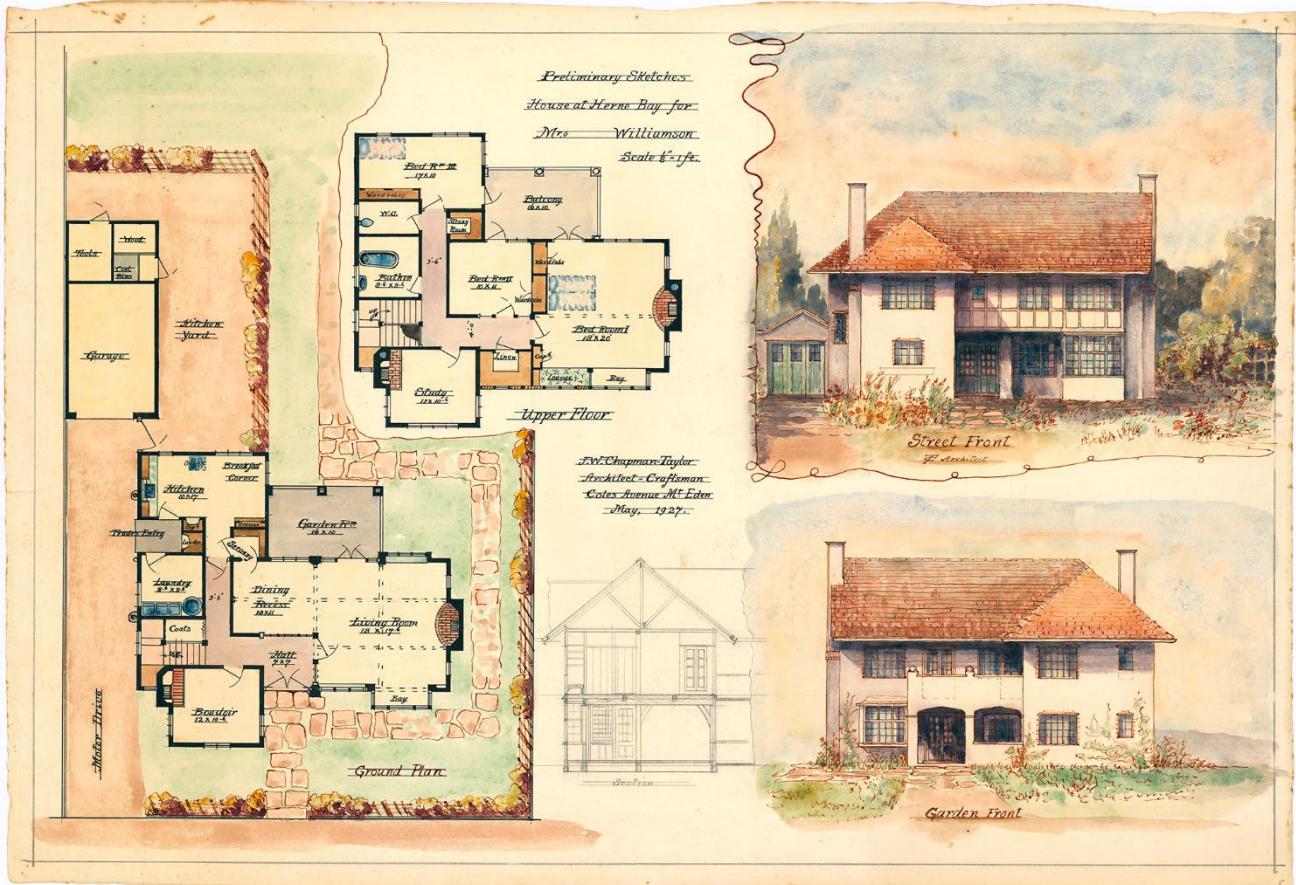
[Heritage New Zealand](#) has a **historical wallpaper collection**, which might help you identify when your house was renovated.

Trees, gardens, and landscaping

Auckland Council's **notable tree schedule** ([Schedule 10 of the Auckland Unitary Plan](#) and part of the [Auckland Council District Plan – Hauraki Gulf Islands Section](#)) will tell you if any of the trees on your property are scheduled. Contact the Auckland Council Heritage Unit, which may hold further information about these trees.

You may also be able to chart the history of your garden through aerial photos or online resources like the [City of Auckland 1908 interactive map](#).

Architects



Chapman Taylor, J.W. (1927) House for Mrs Williamson. Chapman Taylor Collection (CT6) Architecture Archive, Special Collections, Libraries and Learning Services, University of Auckland.

If your house was designed by a notable architect, it is worth checking with the [University of Auckland's Special Collections](#) team. They hold collections of **architects' drawings**, as well as **building company archives**. You can search via the University of Auckland Library catalogue, or you can contact them directly.

Auckland Council Archives has the Auckland City Council [Indexes to Building Calculations Database 1919-1964](#). The indexes can give you the names of owners, architects or engineers and can be searched by architect's name or by street.

You can also find out more about specific architects from books or from online resources like [Papers Past](#) or the [Cyclopedia of New Zealand](#). Papers Past is an amazing free resource you can use to search more than 150 historical newspapers.

The [Auckland Branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects](#) has created pamphlets about specific architects and their work.

Your neighbourhood

To find out more about the context of your property, it's time to look at your suburb.

Auckland Council Libraries

Check out your local library for **books** about your suburb. Find out about the iwi histories of your area and the significance of maunga and other places. Was your neighbourhood once an industrial suburb or farmland? Sometimes a local history about a church or school will also have information about the wider neighbourhood.

Your local library may have files and photographs about your area, including back copies of **local and suburban newspapers**.

Auckland Council Libraries' Kura database has **local history indexes and guides** which might give you leads.

You can also check Auckland Council Libraries' [**street names database**](#) to find out the history of your street name.



Exploring the archives at Auckland Council Libraries' Research Central. Photograph by Jay Farnsworth, Auckland Council.

Photographs

Photographic collections such as Auckland Council Libraries' Kura and [Heritage Images](#) may reveal aspects of your house, street, and suburb. You can also search [DigitalNZ](#) for photographs and other digitized material.

Historical associations

Your local **historical society** is a wealth of information. You can find your local historical society [here](#).

Area studies

The Auckland Council Heritage Unit has published **area studies** about parts of Auckland. You can find these [here](#).

People

By now you will have discovered some names for the people who have lived in your house. You can use online sources and family history resources to find out more about these people. Small fragments of information may add up to a narrative about the people who once lived in your house, or the people who designed or built it.



Using family history research tools. Photograph by Jay Farnsworth, Auckland Council.

Family history tools

You can utilise [family history resources](#) through Auckland Council Libraries or through websites like [Ancestry](#) or [Family Tree](#). Your local library may have a subscription to these services.

You can access limited historical births, deaths, and marriage record information through the [Te Tari Taiwhenua Internal Affairs' Birth, Death and Marriage Historical Records website](#) for free, or you can pay a fee for the full certificate.

Street directories can help you understand who else lived and worked in your street; **electoral rolls** can help you find people as well.

Online sources

Try searching for names and places in [Papers Past](#) – you could find out all kinds of things about the people who lived in your house, the tender process for your house, or about the development of your area.

You can find **wills, probates, land** and even **divorce records** in Archives New Zealand's Collections Search simply by entering a person's name.

Immigration records, such as shipping indexes, can also help with stories about people. Many of these have been transcribed and can be found online.

Auckland Council Archives webpage has various [indexed resources](#) which include **burgess rolls** (lists of rate payers), **cemetery and burial records**, various licensing registers and **First World War memorials**.

You might even find a person you are looking for in the historical [Police Gazettes](#), which are available online.

You can also search the Auckland Council [burial and cremations database](#).

You can search for **photographs of people** in Kura and Heritage Images.

Websites

These websites are good places to start.

Auckland Council

Auckland Council Archives www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/councilarchives

Auckland Council Libraries – Research Centres

<https://www.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/Pages/research-services.aspx>

Auckland Council Heritage Unit <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/arts-culture-heritage/heritage/Pages/default.aspx>

Auckland Council GeoMaps

<https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/geospatial/geomaps/Pages/default.aspx>

The City of Auckland 1908 interactive map <http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/dbtw-wpd/CityArchives/1908Map/browse1908map.htm>

Find mana whenua contacts for your area <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/building-and-consents/resource-consents/prepare-resource-consent-application/Pages/find-hapu-iwi-contacts-for-your-area.aspx>

To request your Auckland Council property file, complete the online form here

<https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/buying-property/order-property-report/pages/order-property-file.aspx>

Central government

Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand <https://www.linz.govt.nz/>

LandOnline Web Search <https://www.linz.govt.nz/land/landonline/landonline-web-search>

Libraries and archives

Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga <https://archives.govt.nz/>

National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa <https://natlib.govt.nz/>

Papers Past <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>

Special Collections at the University of Auckland Libraries and Learning Services Te Tumu Herenga <https://www.library.auckland.ac.nz/about-us/collections/special-collections>

Other sources

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga <https://www.heritage.org.nz/>

Te Ara – Encyclopedia of New Zealand's entry on housing in New Zealand
<https://teara.govt.nz/en/housing>

Contacts

Auckland Council Heritage Unit

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Auckland Council Archives

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Auckland Council Libraries – Research Centres

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Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga

infonorthern@heritage.org.nz

09 307 9920

Next page: Herne Bay in the western suburbs for sale by auction on Tuesday 17th March 1863 by Jones & Co. Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections Map 4495-46.

"HERNE BAY" IN THE WESTERN SUBURBS.

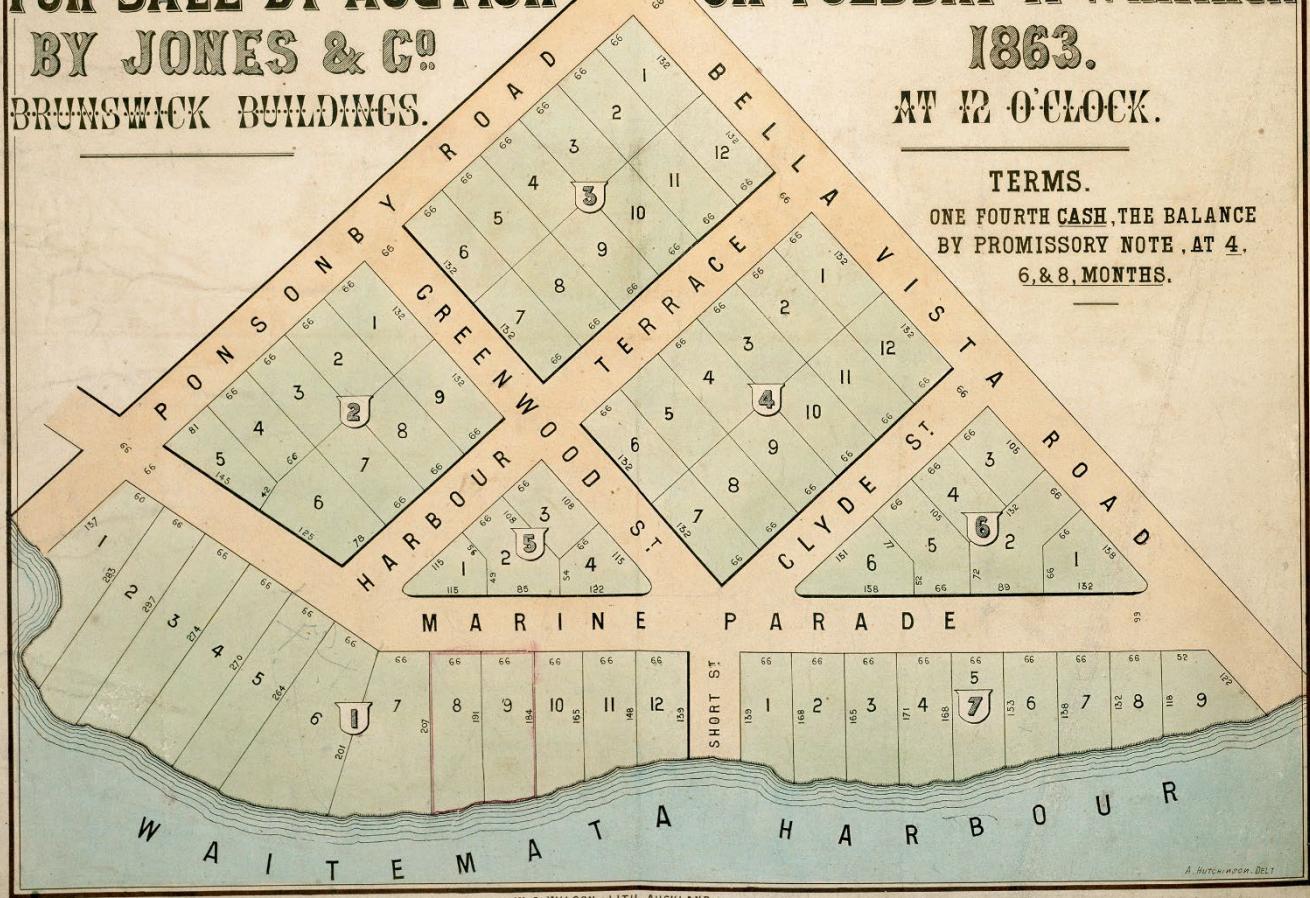


FOR SALE BY AUCTION
BY JONES & CO.
BRUNSWICK BUILDINGS.

ON TUESDAY 17TH MARCH
1863.
AT 12 O'CLOCK.

TERMS.

ONE FOURTH CASH, THE BALANCE
BY PROMISSORY NOTE, AT 4,
6, & 8, MONTHS.



W.C.WILSON, LITH. AUCKLAND.

A HUTCHINSON DELT

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