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The Origins of the Queenslander House

Abstract: The inspiration for the ubiquitous external stud frame of the Queensland house has previously been assumed to be the half timbered houses of Britain. There was an assumed single point of dissemination throughout Queensland via the work of a British immigrant architect, Richard George Suter. This article demonstrates a direct connection between an 1853 house in Geelong designed by German immigrant architect Frederick Kawerau and the earliest known external stud buildings in Queensland. The earliest of these two buildings, the Rockhampton Railway house (1865), pre-dates Suter's arrival in Australia and was designed by a German architect, Richard Roericht, who had emigrated from the same town as Kawerau. Roericht spent six years in Victoria before he relocated to Queensland. The second building, the Nanango School (1866) was designed by Benjamin Backhouse. Backhouse had previously practiced in Geelong and his association with Kawerau is well documented.

This article challenges what we thought we knew about outside studding in Queensland and recognises the previously unexplored role of German architects in shaping the quintessential Queensland house.

Queensland attained Statehood later, and with less preparation, than other colonies in what would become Australia.¹ The new state was immediately beset by pressure to satisfy competing regions and to supply accommodation for the new state's administration.² The exposed stud framing technique, central to the quintessential Queenslander house, was born out of the need for expediency and economy. The stud frame, previously credited as inspired by British medieval housing, came to the state via two German immigrant architects. The Queenslander has been described by architect Don Roderick as having a "distinctive character that was the closest that Australia has ever come to producing an indigenous style".³ This new story about what makes the Queenslander House special opens our understanding of the influence exerted by German immigrants, an often-overlooked community, in our young Australian colonies.

By 1860, Victoria's gold rush decade, and the opportunities it presented, were fading. It is therefore not surprising that several entrepreneurs and architects who had contributed to, and benefited from, gold-fuelled development 'looked north.' Architects Charles Tiffin, Richard Roericht and Benjamin Backhouse; and businessmen Frederick Bauer and Alexander Fyfe were among those, previously from Geelong, who made the journey north to Brisbane. The new state did not settle quickly into self-government. Reflected in the emerging architecture of the era, several already established towns felt that they should have been the capital, and those situated some distance away believed that they owed little to the new capital Brisbane.⁴ This paper examines the history of two regional government buildings which incorporate the earliest identified uses of external stud framing in Queensland, and were the inspiration for the spread of the style in

1 See Allan A. Morrison: Colonial Society 1860-1890, p. 21.

2 See *ibid.*, p. 24.

3 Donald C. Roderick: The Origins of the Elevated Queensland House, p. 21.

4 See Northern Argus: 16 September 1865, p. 2 (Government Buildings).

other parts of the state.⁵ These pioneering structures are the Nanango School in Nanango and the Railway Offices in Rockhampton.

The Rockhampton Railway House

Rockhampton was a vocal critic of the central government and government administration buildings being built there were openly disparaged. The 'Northern Argus' editorial of 16 September 1865, called the design for the planned Telegraph and Post Offices a "pattern of architectural deformity" with "ugly proportions and worse taste [...] an ugly jumble of masonry".⁶ According to the article, the Colonial Architect, Mr. Tiffin, had already earned "imperishable fame" for his former designs, none of which met the standards expected by the community.⁷ It did not help that an earlier proposal for the Telegraph and Post Offices was withdrawn, as the government considered it too expensive for Rockhampton. The editor concluded by commenting that the cost would not have been too great for Maryborough.⁸

In this context, the initiation of the railway towards the east from Rockhampton was seen by many in Brisbane as a concession to Rockhampton's East Street businesses.⁹ There had been a "monster meeting" in Rockhampton, reported on 26 August 1863, at which resolutions in favour of separation had been carried and "embodied in a memorial for presentation to the Governor" triggered by dissatisfaction with the railway debate in Parliament.¹⁰ The local community continued to share their opinions.

Given the public commentary on other government buildings, it is unfortunate that local newspapers for the period immediately following the announcement and tender of the Railway Offices in Rockhampton have not survived. It would be fruitful to have a record of local attitudes to the building, of timber and tin construction, and the first external stud frame building known in Queensland.

The Railway Offices were initially built as temporary offices for the fledgling Great Northern Railway and were designed to become the manager's residence once the new Terminal Station and offices were established.¹¹ It is possible that the Railway Offices in Rockhampton were prefabricated elsewhere after being designed in Rockhampton.¹² The building shows some characteristics of a portable building, such as carpenter markings incised on joints.¹³ Roman numerals indicate the matching pieces.

Portable wooden buildings were widely used by the new government in the first 20 years after statehood to meet pressing administrative needs, particularly

5 See Don Watson: *Outside Studding*, p. 819.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

7 See *ibid.*, p. 2.

8 See *Northern Argus*: 16 September 1865, p. 2 (Government Buildings).

9 See Allan A. Morrison: *Colonial Society 1860-1890*, p. 27.

10 *Goulburn Herald*: 26 August 1863, p. 2 (Telegraphic Intelligence).

11 See *Rockhampton Bulletin*: 16 March 1865, p. 3 (The Northern Railway).

12 See Letter from Herbert to Plews: 24 November 1864.

13 See Miles Lewis: *The Diagnosis of Prefabricated Buildings*, p. 58.

in the regions.¹⁴ Twenty-four buildings intended for the new Port Albany (Somerset) settlement which had been pre-cut and constructed to framework stage in Brisbane in 1863 were deployed for other more pressing needs in other communities.¹⁵ The demand was so high that they were sent as post offices in Rockhampton, customs offices in Mackay, and administrative offices in Ipswich and Brisbane. By early 1865, Maryborough was also providing pre-cut buildings to meet the state government's urgent needs.¹⁶

The Railway Offices in Rockhampton were a speedy solution for accommodating a new government department in the north. A Department of Land and Works letter sent on 1 October 1864 to the then Engineer for Roads, Northern Division, Henry Plews, records that the "government has decided upon building suitable premises for carrying on the business of the Railway Department at Rockhampton as soon as practicable".¹⁷ The process of negotiating with Brisbane and the delays in dealing with a distant Head Office meant that work did not commence until at least 18 April 1865.¹⁸ By 22 June 1865 the offices were near completion when there was an attempted arson.¹⁹ Painters were already at work and skirting boards; fireplaces and other joinery were in place.

The government adopted wooden buildings as an expedient solution for large distances in the state. As sawn timber became plentiful, it was eagerly adopted by the broader community, even in the most elegant private homes.²⁰ The separate elements of the 'Queenslander' home, when set out as design features, are not in themselves innovations or unique to Queensland.²¹ Every significant technique later utilised in the Queenslander had been employed elsewhere. It is rather in the combination of a 'set' of design elements, and then in its widespread and persistent proliferation, that the Queensland house has grown to be the recognisable building form so strongly identified with the state.

The houses are generally recognisable as single stories, elevated on piles composed of timber and tin, with a verandah on at least one side, and studs exposed on at least two outside walls. There are other elements, decorative detailing between verandah posts and a steeply pitched roof, for example, that can fit the 'checklist' too.²² External stud architecture was not common, although not unknown, when the first outside-studded buildings 'appeared' in government buildings in Queensland in 1865. There were already several examples of exterior stud-framed buildings elsewhere in Australia, but these were relatively few and often erected in public spaces, such as parks, for their decorative value.²³

The 'Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture and Furniture' by J. C. Loudon (1853) admonished readers of this topic.

14 See Don Watson, *A Century of Distant Accommodation*, p. 8.

15 See *ibid.*, p. 8.

16 See *ibid.*, p. 9.

17 Letter from LWO to Plews: 1 October 1864.

18 See Letter from Plews to LWO: 1 April 1865.

19 See Rockhampton Bulletin: 22 June 1865, p. 2 (untitled).

20 See Rod Fisher: *Queenslanders*, p. 4.

21 See Peter Bell: *Square Wooden Boxes on Long Legs*, p. 37.

22 See Rod Fisher: *Queenslanders: Their Historic Timbered Homes*, p. 3.

23 See Miles Lewis: *Research Data Bases – Australian Building*.

Half-timbered cottages are very picturesque objects and seem particularly appropriate to a woody country; nevertheless, we cannot recommend them for general adoption, even if the expense were not an object, on account of the thinness of the walls, and the care requisite to keep the roof and other parts of the exterior in nice order. As ornamental objects in parks they are very desirable, both on account of their beauty and their historical interest.²⁴

Until the introduction of the outside stud frame, timber buildings in Queensland were clad both inside and outside. Structural framing was fully enclosed and not meant for view.²⁵ The deliberate use of outside stud frames was a significant and traceable change in timber construction in 1865.²⁶ The term only applies when the use of studs is intentional, and studs form a deliberate pattern with aesthetic intention.²⁷ To date, most scholars have identified the half-timber houses of Tudor England as the likely source of inspiration for exterior studding in Queensland.²⁸ The English model, however, differed significantly from exterior stud buildings, which became the norm in Queensland.²⁹ Traditional half-timbered buildings have brick or clay infill applied between the studs on the exterior of the house to create an outside finish that sits flush with the timber frame.

The Origins of ‘the Queenslander’

Bell’s overview of the research prepared for the Queensland Heritage Council in 2002³⁰ specifically called for further research into “the origins of the (Queensland) exposed timber frame in the 1860s”.³¹ This study seeks to address the gap identified by Bell and suggests a new antecedent to the outside stud frame of Queensland. It also challenges the established view that Richard Suter designed Nanango School. Bell’s call was prompted by the identification of Rockhampton Railway Offices in 1999.³² Watson identified the Queensland stud wall as an intentional, architect-driven device.³³ He concluded that the Nanango School was the earliest example of outside studding in Queensland and identified Richard George Suter as its likely architect.³⁴ He has since attempted to reconcile his original research (1988) in relation to the Nanango School and the stud frame’s origins with the Railway Office, a well-documented example from Northern Queensland.³⁵ In his 2021 paper, Watson confirmed his view that Suter was the architect of the Nanango School, and he suggested that the stud frame developed for the

24 John C. Loudon: *An Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture and Furniture*, p. 1147.

25 See Peter Bell: *A History of the Queensland House*, p. 10.

26 See Don Watson: *Outside Studding. Some Claims To Architectural Taste*, p. 22.

27 See Don Watson: *Outside Studding*, p. 812.

28 See Donald C. Roderick: *The Origins of the Elevated Queensland House*, p. 235.

29 See John C. Loudon: *An Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture and Furniture*, p. 1146.

30 See Peter Bell: *A History of the Queensland House*.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

32 See Margaret Strelow: *Railway Offices History*.

33 See Don Watson: *Outside Studding. Some Claims To Architectural Taste*, p. 22.

34 See *ibid.*, p. 28.

35 See Don Watson: *Outside Studding*, pp. 819 ff..

Railway Office was a separate but short-lived rendition of the style. Suter's style prevailed, and outside studding spread quickly across the state.³⁶

The Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, held in 1911, identifies the outer walls of private dwellings. At that time, nearly 79 per cent of Queensland's housing was made of wood, compared to the Australian average of 55 per cent. (Tasmania was not far behind Queensland at 75 per cent.)³⁷ At the time the Nanango School was built the school was described by a journalist as "somewhat in the Chalet or Swiss style".³⁸ The school had external cross-bracing (removed) and heavy upright studs. The school was designed in August and September 1865 and was built in 1866.

The Rockhampton Railway Offices were designed in late 1864 and occupied on 25 July 1865, predating the design of the Nanango School. The Railway Offices use heavy external studs and cross bracing to form a pattern not unlike that of the Nanango school, but heavier and more elaborate. The building was originally surrounded by verandahs and included a detached kitchen (removed).³⁹ The Rockhampton Railway Offices were first identified in an unpublished document disseminated privately to other researchers in 1999,⁴⁰ and its significance as an early external stud frame building was immediately recognised. The building has a strong public record that allows traceability from construction to its current location and ownership.

One of the Victorian architects who moved to the new Queensland state, Benjamin Backhouse, was appointed as an architect to the Board of General Education in 1863.⁴¹ He was the only architect paid by the Board in 1865, the year the Nanango School was designed.⁴² Watson postulated, however, that it was Suter who had designed the Nanango school while working in Backhouse's office,⁴³ as Suter later designed several very similar exterior stud-framed schools.⁴⁴ Suter may have spent some time employed in Benjamin Backhouse's firm,⁴⁵ but the specific timeframe is uncertain, and given that he arrived in Australia only five weeks before tenders for Nanango School were called (which required a completed design available for viewing), it is doubtful that Backhouse would have entrusted such a significant task to a newcomer. Suter had arrived in the colony on 7 August 1865,⁴⁶ but the design and documentation for the school likely took place between 18 August 1865 when the application for financial aid was lodged by the local community, and the calling of tenders on 13 September 1865.⁴⁷

36 See *ibid.*, p. 824.

37 See Peter Bell: *A History of the Queensland House*, p. 17.

38 Burnett Argus: 19 May 1866, p. 2.

39 See Margaret Strelow: *Railway Offices History*.

40 See *ibid.*, p. 10.

41 See John W. East: *Benjamin Backhouse in Brisbane, 1861-1868*, p. 27.

42 See Don Watson: *Outside Studding. Some Claims To Architectural Taste*, p. 26.

43 See Don Watson: *Outside Studding*, p. 811.

44 See Don Watson: *Outside Studding. Some Claims To Architectural Taste*, p. 30.

45 See Watson, *Outside Studding*, p. 816.

46 See *ibid.*, p. 820.

47 See *ibid.*, p. 816.

Designed by Richard Hugo Oswald Roehricht, a draftsman and architect in the employ of the fledgling Great Northern Railway,⁴⁸ the Railway Offices were already completed before Suter arrived in Australia.⁴⁹ Belland Lewis both identified similarities between Nanango School and Rockhampton Railway Offices.⁵⁰ This paper contends that Benjamin Backhouse was the architect of the Nanango School, rather than it having been designed by Richard Suter, and it will describe links between Backhouse, Richard Roehricht and a Victorian cottage, the likely antecedent for the two Queensland buildings. In his online database, Lewis identified a timber cottage in Geelong, Victoria, as a possible inspiration for the Nanango School.⁵¹ This cottage, known as Kawerau's 'Swiss cottage', was a clear landmark in Geelong's developing township. This is depicted in two contemporaneous sketches reproduced in the Lewis database.⁵²

Kawerau's Swiss Cottage: An Influence on the 'Queenslander'?

Kawerau's cottage was used as a reference point in newspaper advertisements, such as an auction of land "situated immediately opposite the very pretty Swiss cottage, erected by Mr Kawerau".⁵³ Another advertisement advised that an imported cottage, one of twelve for sale, had been "erected at the back of the residence of F Kawerau, Esq, in Newtown, for inspection".⁵⁴

Lewis described Kawerau's cottage as an expressed decorative frame of closely spaced studwork, with horizontal members at sill height and a band of criss-cross bracing below the eave.⁵⁵ It was completed by 17 January 1853. Geelong's population grew rapidly, from 3810 (406 houses) at the start of 1845⁵⁶ to 23314 by 1857.⁵⁷ By then, there were 6000 houses and 17 architects in town.⁵⁸ One of the architects, Frederick (Fritz) Kawerau (1818-1876), architect of the Swiss cottage, had studied at the Royal Academy in Berlin. He arrived in Melbourne in 1849⁵⁹ with his wife and brother, Theodore. Shortly after his arrival he visited the 'Argus' and the editor reported the visit,

A German gentleman of the name of Kawerau (pronounced Carvero by anybody wishing to be successful in finding him,) has left at our office some plans and drawings of buildings erected by him in Hamburg and elsewhere [...] is anxious to practice [sic] his profession in this district, and his talents appear equally to embrace the simplicity of a Pyramid and an elaboration of an Alhambra, and he

48 See *ibid.*, p. 819.

49 See *ibid.*, p. 820.

50 See Peter Bell: *A History of the Queensland House*, p. 9; Miles Lewis: *Research Data Bases – Australian Building*, section 5.06.14.

51 See *ibid.*, 5.06.17.

52 See *ibid.*, 5.06.08.

53 *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, 24 March 1853, p. 2 (Sales by Auction).

54 *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, 23 June 1854, p. 1 (Four Room Wooden Houses for Sale).

55 See Miles Lewis: *Research Data Bases – Australian Building*, section 5.06.7.

56 See David Rowe: *About Corayo: A Thematic History of Greater Geelong Theme Six*, p. 12.

57 See *ibid.*, p. 14.

58 See David Rowe: *About Corayo: A Thematic History of Greater Geelong Theme Two*, p. 15.

59 See Gabrielle L. McMullen: *Germantown Revisited*, p. 11.

speaks of being perfectly capable of undertaking any building from a dog-kennel to a tower of Babel, we wish to draw the attention of intending builders to his claims for support⁶⁰

A few years later, Kawerau followed the rush to the gold fields before returning to his profession as an architect, basing himself in Geelong in 1852.⁶¹ Kawerau designed a house for his new business partner, Edward Snell, in 1853, following the style set by his own 'Swiss cottage'.⁶² Snell's house included a small section with timber framed elements similar to the Swiss cottage. The house had criss-cross bracing and upright studs on a "small externally framed timber room projected from the upper level above the verandah".⁶³

Frederick Kawerau understood the opportunities of 1850s, both economically and politically. Kawerau's name appeared consistently on the pages of the Geelong newspapers. He initially established himself on Ryrie Street,⁶⁴ next door to compatriot Frederick Bauer, before forming a partnership with Edward Snell.⁶⁵ Kawerau and Bauer continued their business relationship by importing prefabricated houses.⁶⁶ Kawerau was active in the public life of his community. He was involved in seeking justice for gold miners during the months leading up to the fateful Eureka Stockade. He addressed a public meeting in support of the miner's cause on 11 August 1853 and was later appointed to a small committee to carry out the "objects of the meeting", to seek political and social rights for the miners, and to reduce the goldminer's licence tax.⁶⁷

On 8 August 1853, the 'Argus' printed a strongly worded Letter to the Editor, addressed to the Lieutenant Governor of Victoria. The Governor had disparaged the German community when presented with a petition regarding miners' grievances, and Kawerau demanded a public apology on behalf of the German community. Later, in the same month, Kawerau actively supported John Goldman, a condemned man, as he sat in his cell with only minutes to live.⁶⁸ The hanging was delayed for 15 minutes, while the hangman waited for the result of a last-minute appeal on the grounds that the killing had been unintentional. The news of a reprieve arrived at less than ten minutes to spare. The sentence was eventually commuted to 15 years of hard labour.⁶⁹

The early years of the gold rush made Australia very wealthy with a high demand for luxury goods.⁷⁰ Kawerau's enterprise helped to meet the demand. Although most imported goods came from the United Kingdom,⁷¹ with significant imports from America, Kawerau found a ready market for imported

60 Argus, 3 August 1849, p. 2 (Architecture).

61 See Lorraine Huddle: Architects of Geelong, p. 49.

62 See Louise Honman: A Conservation Plan for 2 Skene Street Newtown Geelong, p. 2.

63 Ibid., p. 12.

64 See Lorraine Huddle: Architects of Geelong, p. 50.

65 See *ibid.*, p. 49.

66 See Griffiths, Tom (ed): The Illustrated Diary of an Artist, Engineer and Adventurer in the Australian colonies 1849 to 1859, 23 June 1855 entry.

67 Argus, 12 August 1853, p. 12 (Geelong).

68 See Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer: 16 August 1853, p. 2. (The Condemned Criminal).

69 See Lorraine Finlay: Eliza Nelson and Dr John Singleton, p. 30.

70 See Lloyd Churchward: Australia and America 1788-1972, p. 42.

71 See *ibid.*, p. 52.

furniture and damasks. The 'Hamburg' furniture was manufactured "expressly to the order of Mr Kawerau".⁷² The goldrush peaked in 1853,⁷³ and declined in the late 1850s.⁷⁴ Geelong experienced a significant decline in trade and population stagnation⁷⁵ as Melbourne fiercely competed for the miner's gold.⁷⁶

The partnership between Kawerau and Snell had been very profitable but ended in May 1854,⁷⁷ by which time Kawerau was desperately trying to sell some of the portable houses he had imported with Bauer.⁷⁸ Although Snell entered in his diary that Kawerau was in poor health and was planning to return to Germany, it is more likely that Kawerau was in desperate need of funds.⁷⁹ Kawerau sold his share of the business to Edward Prouse and sold two of the portable timber houses to Snell.⁸⁰ The planned return to Europe did not happen until 1867, when he visited for a year,⁸¹ before returning to his home in Melbourne.⁸² Kawerau was not the only architect in Geelong in the early years of the goldrush. Benjamin Backhouse landed in Geelong in 1853 and remained there until 1860.⁸³

The son of a stonemason and Builder in Ipswich, Suffolk, Benjamin Backhouse junior initially emigrated to Australia because of financial embarrassment when his own business ran into difficulties.⁸⁴ His household furniture and stock in trade were auctioned on 13 September 1852 and he left London with his wife and children on 26 October.⁸⁵ The Backhouse family landed in Geelong on 8 March 1853 when Kawerau's 'Swiss cottage' was freshly built and the gold rush was at its peak. The acquaintance between Kawerau and Backhouse was documented in the records of the Geelong Society of Architects, Civil Engineers, and Surveyors, a short-lived association that published its Rules and Regulations in 1855. Benjamin Backhouse was Honorary Secretary and Frederick Kawerau was listed as one of 14 members. There were nine Honorary Members and five associates. Interestingly, one of these associate members was Charles Tiffin, who later became Queensland's first Colonial Architect, a role he held during the period when the Nanango School and the Rockhampton Railway Offices, both Queensland Government buildings, were built. Tiffin originally emigrated to Geelong but left shortly afterwards for Hobart,⁸⁶ where he stayed for two years⁸⁷ before making his way to Brisbane.

72 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer, 21 September 1853, p. 3 (Advertisement).

73 See Lloyd Churchward: Australia and America 1788-1972 An Alternative History, p. 42.

74 See David Rowe: About Corayo: A Thematic History of Greater Geelong Theme Two, p. 115.

75 See David Rowe: About Corayo: A Thematic History of Greater Geelong Theme Six, p. 675.

76 See *ibid.*, p. 671.

77 See Tom Griffiths (ed.): The Illustrated Diary of an Artist, Engineer and Adventurer in the Australian Colonies 1849 to 1859.

78 See Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer, 23 June 1854, p. 1 (Advertisement).

79 See Tom Griffiths (ed.): The Illustrated Diary of an Artist, Engineer and Adventurer in the Australian colonies 1849 to 1859.

80 See *ibid.*

81 See David Rowe: About Corayo: A Thematic History of Greater Geelong Theme Two, p. 110.

82 See Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer, 24 July 1856, p. 2 (The Rifle Corps).

83 See John W. East: Benjamin Backhouse in Brisbane, 1861-1868, p. 7.

84 See *ibid.*, p. 6.

85 See *ibid.*, p. 7.

86 See Colonial Times Hobart, 26 April 1855, p. 2 (Shipping Intelligence).

87 See Colonial Times Hobart, 9 May 1857, p. 2 (Shipping Intelligence).

Backhouse's early works in Geelong were of a "simple design" with little, if any, architectural detail.⁸⁸ His partnership with Reynolds, which began in 1856,⁸⁹ paved the way for the construction of more elaborate buildings.⁹⁰ Backhouse clearly saw the merit in learning from other architects' works. Huddle identified several buildings from this period with a clear relationship with either a pattern book plan or the work of another local architect.⁹¹ Significant parts of the Trinity Church (1858) are apparent borrowing from the church design that appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in 1854.⁹² With his move to Brisbane in 1861, Backhouse positioned himself in an era of "rapid pastoral expansion" in Queensland, allowing him to "ride the rising wave of prosperity".⁹³ Kawerau had already relocated to Melbourne, where he played a significant role in the advancement of the German National Association in Victoria, serving as a Chair in 1857.⁹⁴ The Association included in its principles the centralisation of military and diplomatic power under one head and the reinstitution of the German Parliament.⁹⁵

In Melbourne, Kawerau formed a close association with Professor Damm, a member of the Frankfurt National Assembly in 1848.⁹⁶ Damm also participated in the Baden Uprising, which followed the failed revolution.⁹⁷ Their signatures beneath each other on a petition calling for the protection of existing electoral rights.⁹⁸ A cover page attached to the petition held at the Victoria State Library recorded that the petition had been lying in the German Association rooms.⁹⁹ It is estimated that up to 10 000 German 48ers took refuge in the United States.¹⁰⁰ A small but influential percentage came to Australia. When Backhouse arrived in Brisbane in 1861, there were only a handful of architects in practice with whom to share opportunities.¹⁰¹ Backhouse quickly found clients, ecclesiastical, squatter, and with the Queensland Board of General Education.

The schools designed by Backhouse fit the individual budgets and communities they were designed to serve.¹⁰² Simple timber structures, along with more ornate and attractive brick designs, were adapted and repeated. The 'Romanesque' Maryborough National School became the model for Fortitude Valley Primary School and part of the Brisbane Normal School.¹⁰³ Nanango School was designed during his tenure as an architect of the Board of General Education. A journalist, reporting on the Nanango School writes, "Our school, schoolmaster's

88 Lorraine Huddle: *Architects of Geelong*, p. 65.

89 See *ibid.*, p. 63.

90 See *ibid.*, p. 65.

91 See *ibid.*, p. 70.

92 See *ibid.*, p. 70.

93 John W. East: *Benjamin Backhouse in Brisbane, 1861-1868*, p. 20.

94 See *Argus*, 20 August 1857, p. 5 (German Meeting at the Criterion).

95 See *Argus*, 17 June 1861 (German National Association), p. 6.

96 See *ibid.*

97 See Sonja-Maria Bauer: *Die Verfassunggebende Versammlung in der Badischen Revolution von 1849*, p. 56.

98 See 1856 Petition to Parliament by the German Community against the second clause of the Electoral Law Amendment Bill, State Library Victoria, Lists 3 and 4.

99 See *ibid.*

100 See Raanan Geberer: *The 48ers*, p. 56.

101 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

102 See *ibid.*, p. 43.

103 See *ibid.*, p. 45.

house, and adjunct are now finished – they are built somewhat in the chalet, or Swiss style”.¹⁰⁴ Although grainy and difficult to see, the cross-bracing and belt rail of the single-skin wall of the school were large, and the studs were widely spaced. Overall, the school has a practical and utilitarian design. The school underwent a significant remodelling in 1926, during which time it appears that the cross bracing was removed. Lewis has pointed out that its ‘Swiss’ appearance suggested that Nanango School belonged “in the tradition of Kawerau’s house”.¹⁰⁵ The use of outside studding was unusual enough for a school inspector to later comment, “floor hardwood, walls hardwood, boards tongued and grooved and placed upright – with outside studding. The only building of the kind, I have seen”.¹⁰⁶ Curiously, this Inspector’s report was written in 1876 when a good number of similar schools had already been built, but perhaps they did not come under the purview of our observant inspector.

Backhouse was not above borrowing ideas from other architects, and he certainly had ample opportunity to examine the ‘Swiss cottage’ in Geelong. Frederick Kawerau’s design for his Swiss cottage was unusual for its time. Swiss cottages were very popular,¹⁰⁷ but the use of exposed studs was normally not a feature of this style. Kawerau trained in Berlin at the prestigious Royal Academy under the famous architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Schinkel called for honesty in architecture, believing that the structure of a building should not be obscured or masked.¹⁰⁸ He would have approved of Kawerau’s choice to build a cottage with an exposed stud frame, showing the building’s structure. There is a possible model for the pattern of crosses and upright studs of the Swiss cottage in the half-timbering of the Peace Church in Jawor. This massive timber church was located 60 km from Frederick Kawerau’s hometown of Boleslawiec in Lower Silesia, and was of great significance to the local Protestant community. Kawerau was Lutheran and would have known the church.¹⁰⁹ Kawerau’s mother was Swiss, and we know the family visited the maternal hometown at least once during Frederick’s childhood.¹¹⁰

Not One but Two Germans Architects behind the Queenslander?

After years of unease and a short-lived civil war, 22 Swiss cantons formed a confederation in 1848. Kawerau would also have supported the new Swiss Confederation. The newly formed nation-state of Switzerland needed a national icon to inspire unity, and they embraced the ‘chalet’ as a “ready-made solution”.¹¹¹ It is easy to imagine that Kawerau celebrated his Swiss connection in the cottage design. Kawerau’s links with Switzerland were reinforced by his father’s career

104 Brisbane Courier, 28 May 1866, p. 4 (Nanango).

105 Miles Lewis: Research Data Bases – Australian Building, section 5.06.19.

106 Don Watson: Outside Studding. Some Claims To Architectural Taste, p. 27.

107 See Irene, Cieraad: Bringing Nostalgia Home, p. 267.

108 See Negar Saadat: The Impact of Schinkel’s Vision on German Architecture, Berlin, p. 2.

109 See Farmer’s Journal and Gardener’s Chronicle, 1 April 1864, p. 3 (News of the Week).

110 See Peter Kawerau: Dokument Henning.

111 Irene Cieraad: Bringing Nostalgia Home, p. 278.

which may also account for Kawerau's political activity in Australia. Kawerau's father, Peter, had been an eminent academic and educator who had trained with Pestalozzi in Switzerland.¹¹² Pestalozzi's teaching was originally embraced by the ruling class, but the Pestalozzian ideals supported a high view of "the common man",¹¹³ and many teachers were advocates of "a free education" for a "free people".¹¹⁴ As unrest spread across Europe prior to the Revolution, the ruling classes became distrustful of Pestalozzi's style of education, and a system of supervision of teachers, as they taught in the classroom, was enforced. They were also denied the freedom of association in their private time.¹¹⁵ Peter Kawerau was one of those specifically targeted but died in 1844, before the 1848 Revolution itself.¹¹⁶ Frederick Kawerau left Germany in late 1848.

Whatever the reason for Kawerau's small Swiss Cottage in Skene Street Geelong, it demonstrated an economical and attractive solution for housing in the new colony. Backhouse moved to Sydney in 1868, where he became the first Socialist Party Member of the Legislative Council of New South Wales.¹¹⁷ Richard Roehricht, meanwhile, the architect responsible for the Rockhampton Railway Offices,¹¹⁸ had migrated to Australia in 1854.¹¹⁹ Roehricht spent four years on the goldfields in Victoria, Australia. Unclaimed mail for Richard Roehricht advertised as being held at the Maryborough (Victoria) post office in both March and November 1858¹²⁰ led to the assumption that he had likely been working at nearby diggings. His obituary states that Richard Roehricht was born in 1834 in Breslau (now known as Wrocław) in Silesia.¹²¹ Wrocław was a major city, 76 miles from Boleslawiec, where Richard's father was an architect. Richard was educated in Wrocław but was in Boleslawiec by the age of 14 at which time he was articulated to his father in that town.¹²² The Peace Churches in Jawor and Swidnica are accessed via a road connecting the two towns. Boleslawiec was Frederick Kawerau's birthplace.¹²³ William Westgarth likely recruited Kawerau from there when he visited Lower Silesia in mid-1848¹²⁴ as he arrived on one of the Westgarth ships with others from the same area. Roehricht was in Boleslawiec at that time.

Boleslawiec has never been a large centre, with a population of only 5843 in 1840. Roehricht stayed in Boleslawiec for six years, saving a few months studying at Gewerbeschule, Liegnitz.¹²⁵ At 20, Roehricht moved to Australia to try his luck in the goldfields. Frustratingly, he is rarely mentioned in surviving records. Most

112 See Rebekka Horlacher: *Los Modelos Educativos Imponen La Estandarizacion*, p. 15.

113 Karl G Maeser: *Pestalozzi, Revolution, and the Reaktion*, p. 34.

114 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

115 See CHS. A (s.n.): *The Public Schools In Massachusetts Compared With Those In Prussia*, p. 57.

116 See *ibid.*, p. 63.

117 See *ibid.*, p. 74.

118 See Don Watson: *Outside Studding*, p. 820.

119 See *Grace's Guide: Richard Hugo Oswald Roehricht - 1891 Obituary*.

120 See *Maryborough and Donolly Advertiser*, 12 March 1858, p. 3 (List of Unclaimed Letters).

121 See *Grace's Guide: Richard Hugo Oswald Roehricht - 1891 Obituary*.

122 See *ibid.*

123 See Siegfried, *Kawerau: Kawerau family through 333 years*. P22.

124 See William Westgarth: *Personal Recollections of Early Melbourne and Victoria*, p. 120.

125 See *Grace's Guide: Richard Hugo Oswald Roehricht - 1891 Obituary*.

of this information was obtained from his obituary.¹²⁶ Roehricht had trained as an architect in Germany, and he returned to architectural practice in and around Melbourne, in early 1868. He volunteered in Melbourne with a local architect for a few months before serving for two years as a draughtsman for a firm in Kilmore,¹²⁷ north of the city. While Roehricht was employed at Kilmore, Kawerau was a Clerk of Works for the Victorian Public Works Department.¹²⁸ Given the strength of the connections between members of the German Community, and by the number of societies and organisations that had been established by German immigrants, it would be expected that architects Frederick Kawerau and Richard Roehricht had contact in Victoria.

Roehricht was also a practicing Lutheran and would have known the Peace church at Jawor.¹²⁹ There were few, if any, other half-timbered buildings in the places he had called home, neither in Boleslawiec or Wrocław. The town of Wrocław saw significant growth and wealth in the mid-fourteenth century, and timber frame buildings were replaced with bricks.¹³⁰ No half-timbered buildings are mentioned in the town's tourism profile. The Railway Offices bear a closer resemblance to Kawerau's Swiss cottage than Nanango School. Lewis identified that the Railway Offices belongs "to the same tradition as the buildings of Richard Suter".¹³¹ The upright studs were closer together and heavier than those at Nanango School. Cross-bracing is a strong and deliberate decorative feature of the building. Whether Roehricht saw Kawerau's cottage is unknown; however, he spent more than six years in the vicinity. His four years as a gold miner and his later years working with an architect both within and north of Melbourne created many opportunities for the two architects from the same small town in Lower Silesia to meet in Australia.

In 1861, Roehricht accepted a post as a draughtsman at the Roads Branch of the Department of Public Works in Queensland. He moved to Brisbane to take the position.¹³² It was early days for Brisbane, not unlike the first years of Geelong, with a huge demand for architects, especially to serve a growing government sector. At that time, there were only 6 000 residents in the township. We know that both Roehricht and Backhouse were in Brisbane at the same time for at least two years. These two architects, who shared common experiences in Victoria, were active in the Brisbane community, population 6 000 (and growing), for two years. They were social equals, known to each other, and recorded as attending at least one social event.¹³³ Roehricht remained in his government job in Brisbane until he was appointed to a similar position in Rockhampton in 1863. In Rockhampton, he designed Railway Offices. In mid-1865, when the circumstances called for a cost-effective and aesthetically pleasing building solution, Backhouse and

126 See *ibid.*

127 See *ibid.*

128 See David Rowe: *About Corayo: A Thematic History of Greater Geelong Theme Two*, p. 110.

129 See *Brisbane Courier*, 17 October 1863, p. 4.

130 See Jerzy Piekalski: *Transformation of Timber Building Construction in Medieval Wrocław*, p. 104.

131 Miles Lewis: *Research Data Bases – Australian Building*, section 5.06.14.

132 See *Grace's Guide: Richard Hugo Oswald Roehricht – 1891 Obituary*.

133 See *Brisbane Courier*, 24 May 1862, p. 2 (Queen's Birthday Levee)

Roehricht, within months of each other, designed their own 'Swiss' style building here in Queensland – in the criss-cross, outside-studded style of Kawerau's Swiss cottage in Geelong.

Conclusion

The story of the inspiration for the exterior stud frames of the Queenslander is a challenge to our assumptions about the makeup of our early population and their role in developing our culture. Most historians assume an English antecedent to the exposed stud frame. This assumption presupposes a homogeneous population of British immigrants. German-born residents accounted for five per cent of the Rockhampton population of 1868.¹³⁴ Queensland was a heady melting pot – perhaps not quite as pressurised as Victoria had been a decade earlier, however the need to respond to the pressures of growth led to some of the same solutions. Even without Kawerau's cottage, German similarities should have been considered.

The stud frame highlights the debt we owe to the influx of non-British immigrants and the skills they brought with them. Far from being isolated and unaffected by the tumultuous times of 1848, stories such as those of Kawerau and his influence have placed Australia in the context of tumultuous world affairs. There was a level of connectedness with events overseas and between colonies that could escape our notice. The story of Frederick Kawerau and his adventurous life in Australia deserves to be known, and he should be celebrated for his role as the architect behind the architects behind the Queenslander!

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¹³⁴ See Margaret Mary Shield: *Creating Capricorn*, p. 46.

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