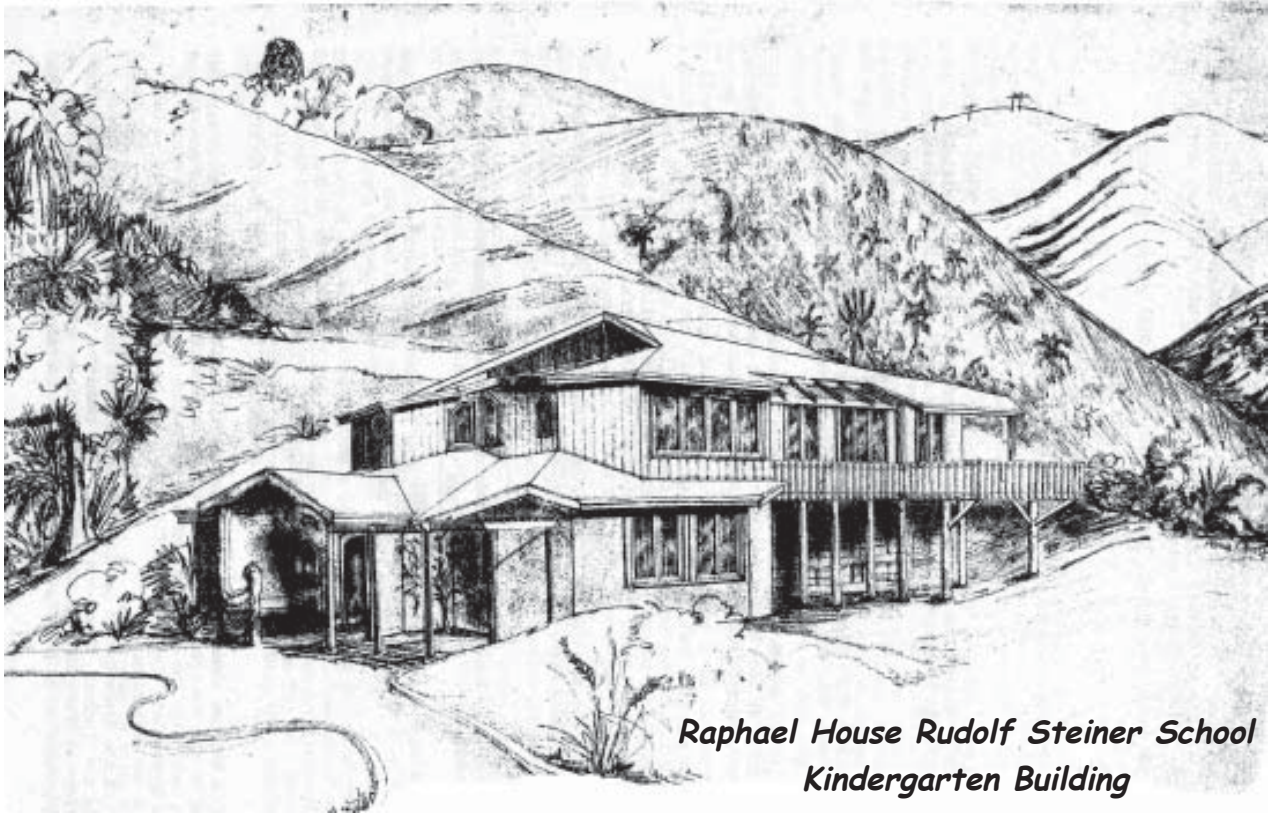


Raphael House

celebrating 25 years

1979 - 2004

CHRONICLE NO 5 - 2 April 2004



*Raphael House Rudolf Steiner School
Kindergarten Building*

“Building on the Rudolf Steiner Kindergarten in Matuhi Street, Belmont, is well underway and expected to be completed by the end of February.”

A sketch of how it will look is seen above.

The kindergarten is the first stage of plans for a complete Rudolf Steiner education system starting at kindergarten and going through to class 12 (equivalent to form seven).

The new building, which cost an estimated \$170,000 including the land, incorporates two large classrooms, a staffroom, toilets and a cloakroom.

A member of the school association, Mr Eric Turner, said some of the children will move into the building as soon as it is finished. The rest, including

45 new pupils who are expected to join the school this year, will remain at the old building in High Street.

Travelling to and from the new school will not be as easy as it is now, particularly for the large numbers of pupils who come from Wellington, so the school has bought an old bus.

“Having the bus will make us independent and also means we can use it for school trips.”

From: THE HUTT NEWS, TUESDAY,
JANUARY 27, 1981

Comments on the Design

FROM FIONA CHRISTELLER & NIGEL OXLEY, ARCHITECTS

For all of us the new school has special meaning. Especially this first building to be constructed on the site at Belmont. With this first building comes a statement of reality, solidity; the evolution of a school which many held only as a dream. It is appropriate then that the first building is also the Kindergarten: both represent new beginnings.

The design of the Kindergarten developed from the ideas and feeling of many people, principally the teachers, Nigel and myself. The building must embody some of the spirit of Anthroposophy and Rudolf Steiner Education.

Because of its setting, its size and the intended homely atmosphere for the children, the building is residential in scale. However we also want it to be visibly different from the surrounding buildings because it is not a house but a rather special school, and this we hope will be apparent to the public.

Anthroposophical architecture is a response to nature, natural forms and growth patterns. Geometric design or rectangular/square shapes is inappropriate. Instead a more organic approach is applied, hard angles are removed and interconnecting planes dissolve into curves. The external shape of the roof imitates the spiralling form of the ridge behind the hillside at Matuhi Street.

Also dominant is the entrance. Not only is this building a Kindergarten, enclosed and sheltered from the outside world; it is also the interface between the public and the school so its portal is important. We hope that this threshold will encourage visitors to enter and be a welcoming place for teachers to daily greet their pupils.

Inside, the same organic based ideas are the basis of the design. The spaces are concave in form with sloping ceilings and non-rectangular rooms.

This resultant building is the culmination of our collective energies. We sited the building close to Matuhi Street and the Council playground to allow easy access by parents and children; to minimise earthworks on the steep slope, and to allow maximum sun to the small school playground on the northern side of the classrooms.



Paul Denford watching the central beam being lowered into place

Fiona Christeller remembers, "Our first architectural commission was the toilet block at High Street. Then we did a lot walking around the (Matuhi Street) site and thinking about it. It was the beginning of our career, and we gave it our heart and soul.

"It had to be a South Pacific interpretation of anthroposophical design. We wanted to adopt the impulses Steiner talked about into the environment that is here: to interpret them for our time and space.

"Also we had to be pragmatic and make it possible with no money. The kindergarten was built through parent labour, donated goods, and recycled materials."

Later they brought in the office, designed classes 1-3, moved Petone West onto site, designed the tennis court and amphitheatre, and the eurythmy building.

Next Week : The Tangata Whenua