



# 100 YEARS YOUNG

CELEBRATING A CENTURY AT  
THE MYERS KINDERGARTEN

Kerry Bethell





## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>An ideal space in every way</b>	<b>07</b>
Myers' gift to the children of Auckland	08
Kindergarten and the Myers family	09
Inspired relationship and improved conditions	10
Outstanding kindergarten design	14
<b>A hive of activity</b>	<b>17</b>
The 1916 opening	18
Training the teachers	19
Controversy over the name 'Kindergarten'	20
The kindergarten used as a hospital	20
Keeping children healthy	21
Life on the upper floor	22
Some key people	26
Not all worked well	27
The kindergarten building since 2001	27
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>30</b>





**To the Nines:**  
The Myers Family at the  
official opening of Myers  
Kindergarten, 1916

## INTRODUCTION

The Auckland Kindergarten Association (AKA) has influenced, educated and shaped young New Zealanders since 1908. With support from great Auckland families including the Logan Campbells and the Myers, the AKA has provided ground-breaking, child-centred, free or affordable services, giving Auckland's children the best possible start in life for over 100 years. The charitable trust currently oversees 107 kindergartens, four KiNZ early learning centres and five Playgroups. Over 10,000 children attend each year, and the Association employs over 1,000 permanent and relieving teachers, head office and support staff. The AKA is the largest kindergarten association in New Zealand.

From the very first free kindergarten in Freemans Bay, the AKA has looked to the very latest in educational evidence, and has consistently followed the philosophy that young children are empowered through play. The AKA firmly believes that this approach is the best way to start youngsters on the path to being independent, self-assured individuals.

The 'jewel in the crown' of the AKA's achievements was (and remains today) the purpose-built, locally funded, educationally innovative 'Myers Kindergarten'. Donated by Sir Arthur Myers (who also gifted Myers Park to Auckland) and established by Martha Washington Myers and other family members, the building celebrates a 100-year history in November 2016.

For a century, this incredible resource has operated as a children's learning centre (targeting Auckland families in 'greatest need'), a teacher training institute (providing a much-needed career path for young women in times when choices were few), and has doubled up as a hospital and a food-kitchen in times of crisis. Generations of dedicated and 'selfless visionaries' (staff, councillors, benefactors, volunteers and parents) created positive changes in the lives of young Aucklanders. Myers Kindergarten grew, adapted and re-invented itself decade after decade. Its current incarnation as KiNZ Myers Park provides full day care and early learning experiences for children aged three months to six years. The influence of the Myers family legacy reaches well beyond those

individuals who benefited directly – it travels out through the region's wider communities and over the whole kindergarten network around Aotearoa/New Zealand.

We would like to take this opportunity to join with families and whānau, staff, students, teachers, our partners, our supporters and the whole community to celebrate this important milestone in the AKA's history. This booklet contains the fascinating story of a vital, dynamic and invaluable Auckland institution. We hope you'll enjoy sharing in our history and marking this centennial step, linking the generations who built Auckland and made it what it is today with the upcoming generations who hold Auckland's future.





## MEMORIES

**ANN HAYWARD**

*Former teacher*

'I trained at Arney Road Teachers' College. We did our sections (now called practicum), in pairs. I was with Heather Preston. I was, I think, in my first year of training, probably the end of 1971. I remember the building, corridors, rooms, high windows of Myers Kindergarten. And in particular the indoor sandpit which took up a whole room, I remember the daily sweeping of the sand!

I visited Myers Kindergarten when I was teaching, because AKA had a storeroom downstairs off the kindergarten entrance that housed collage and resource material for all the kindergartens to access.'

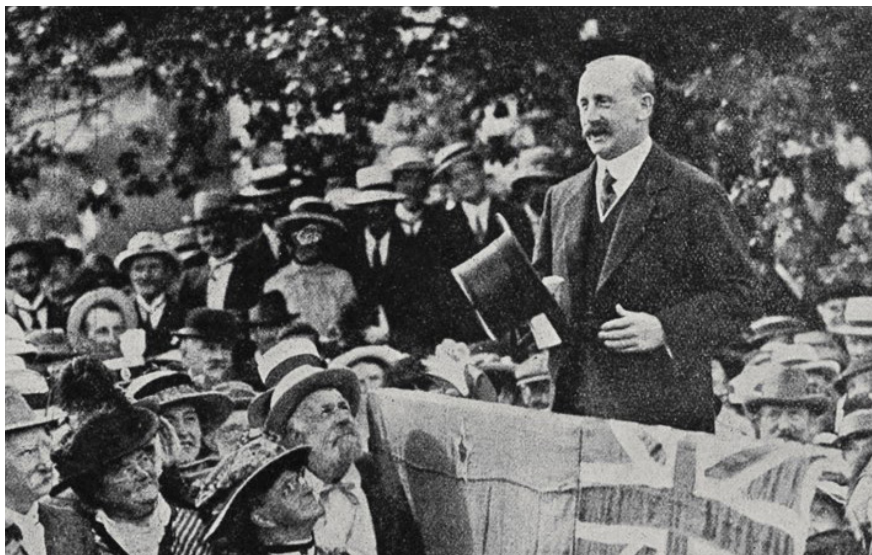




# AN IDEAL SPACE IN EVERY WAY

The Myers Kindergarten building in Myers Park is a valued taonga that, over the past 100 years, has provided children with an innovative safe place to learn and play. Inspiringly, every aspect was designed to enrich children's lives by providing child-friendly and child-sized equipment, and by encouraging children to be close to nature.





**Opposite:**  
Former Mayor, Arthur  
Myers, speaking at the  
formal opening of the  
Myers Park Reserve

## Myers' gift to the children of Auckland

Myers Kindergarten building, and the park in which it is situated, were gifts to the children of Auckland by former Mayor, Arthur Mielziner Myers. Myers' gift of land for a park contributed to a larger scheme by Auckland Council to improve their civic landscape with public parks and sports grounds. The gift allowed the Grey Street gully, an area of slum housing, and a dump for household waste, to be converted into a public park. Not just any park, this was to be a 'reform park' created specifically as a 'safe place for urban children to relax and play within a natural setting.'<sup>i</sup> The park was officially opened on 28 January 1915. In his speech Myers said that 'it was important for children to develop the all-sided activity of the child.' So it was fitting that the park 'should be associated with some institution of a more directly educational nature which might have the benefit of the park as a playground.'<sup>ii</sup> This institution was to be a free kindergarten built by Myers and donated to the children of Auckland.

In November 1916, Myers Kindergarten was officially opened and gifted by Mr Myers to the Auckland Kindergarten Association (AKA) and to Auckland City. The AKA had use of the bottom floor as a free kindergarten and for the teacher training programme. The top floor was to be a school for 'backward children'.

Like the park, the building was designed to represent the modern ideals of childhood and education – together a symbol of progress. The spacious kindergarten building was designed with care to provide an educationally-based programme around the pedagogical teachings of Prussian born Friedrich Froebel, founder of the kindergarten system for young children. The building also provided suitable space for AKA's teacher training programme. Together, the kindergarten and the park would mould new citizens of the future.

Arthur Myers' gift brought the number of free kindergartens under AKA's care to four, and was the second purpose-built building to be donated.<sup>iii</sup> For the AKA it meant further expansion without fundraising and so importantly, security of tenure. The formal opening of Myers Kindergarten on November 15, 1916 was the AKA's principal event for the year. 'We are not given to boasting, but we confidently assert that there is no better kindergarten south of the line.'<sup>iv</sup> Many agreed. Myers Kindergarten soon became the Auckland Kindergarten Association's 'showpiece', and Myers' munificence was the envy of kindergarten associations without permanent buildings. Christchurch's kindergarten trainer Miss Hull and council member Mrs Chilton were two of the many kindergarteners to visit. They agreed that Myers Kindergarten was 'ideal in every way, the most complete provision being made for the comfort and happiness, not only of the children, but also of the students and the trainer.'<sup>v</sup> What they wanted was to find a 'Mr Myers' (or as Mrs Chilton suggested, perhaps a Mrs Myers), who would do for Christchurch what that gentleman had done for Auckland.<sup>vi</sup> Wellington's training principal Miss Riley, having visited, also publicly expressed the same desire.<sup>vii</sup> The building became, and remains today, the AKA's flagship building.

## Kindergarten and the Myers family

The period between 1916 and 1949 was a time of limited government support, and the AKA relied extensively on voluntary work to establish its services. The Auckland Jewish Community made kindergarten education one of their philanthropic priorities<sup>viii</sup> and the Myers family and their friends contributed significantly in these early years. Founding members included Arthur's sister in law Martha Myers (Mrs Leo Myers), his sister Frederika (Mrs W Coleman) and his mother, Catharena Ehrenfried Myers (Mrs Louis Myers) who served on the Campbell Street Kindergarten Committee. A number of influential AKA women served on the



Myers Kindergarten committee. These included Simone Renee Nathan (Mrs David L Nathan), Emily Fuller (Mrs John Fuller) and Ethel Kidd (Mrs A Kidd), who also served as President of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union from 1934-1941.

AKA recognises the vital contribution community involvement made in kindergarten provision, which worked alongside and supported Arthur Myers' generosity.

## Inspired relationship and improved conditions

Myer's vision for the character of the park and kindergarten building was developed against a backdrop of intensive reform of the child welfare and education systems. In addition, the First World War brought a strong commitment to protecting and improving conditions for future generations.<sup>ix</sup> Myers found inspiration in the work of the American Reform and Playground movements. Furthermore, he supported the call for cities to develop children's play policies to protect children's interests, in particular that of urban children living in poverty in overcrowded areas and in need of public spaces in which to play.

A well-equipped and dominant children's playground was designed with modern ideas and special provisions, including a paddling pond, sand circle and playground equipment. The new building, which was to have a strong relationship to the park, was located on the embankment and was in direct contrast to the established urban pattern of setting buildings directly on the road. This gesture was 'consistent with the desire to remove children from street life.'<sup>x</sup> Myers' plan that the park be for all children was realised in a number of ways. For example, duplicated equipment for different age groups was provided to ensure the needs of all children were met. Myers paid and arranged for modern, age appropriate material to be imported from America.<sup>xi</sup> And a specific path was added to allow children access from the Campbell Crèche in Grey Street. The building's upper floor came about after Myers was made aware of the lack of accommodation for then-called 'backward' pupils at the nearby Normal School, giving Myers an opportunity to provide these students with 'the full benefit of an up-to-date building in congenial surroundings.'<sup>xii</sup>

Progressives in New Zealand interested in reforming education for young children were strongly influenced by the ideals of Froebel's work, including Myers and he drew on this during the implementation of his plan. Froebel legitimised play as the means of stimulating children to express their innermost thoughts, needs and desires in external action. In 1908, Martha Myers said:

*'The world of little children – the [sic] nations in embryo – waited for Friedrich Froebel with his God-given insight, with his broad and deep and generous views of education as a whole, to set forth these principles and lay the foundation in the Kindergarten of these methods which have greatly reformed and are continuing to reform our schools... The Kindergarten stands for rational, wholesome development. It is the centre of sweetness and light – by its very name, translated from the German and meaning 'child garden' the child, like the plant, is placed in an atmosphere of mental and spiritual sunshine.'*<sup>xiii</sup>



Right:  
The well-equipped  
children's playground.





## MEMORIES

**HEATHER JEAN PETERSON**

*Former pupil*

'I lived at 155 Grey's Ave Auckland and attended Myers Kindergarten around 1947 to 1949, I believe. I can remember waiting with my mum by a walkway and we would meet up with other children and walk up to Pitt Street fire station holding on to a loop handle in a long rope where we would collect waiting children.

One memory I have is a room with a sandpit in, the other a large cream or white rocking horse. Also we used to have an afternoon nap on little stretcher beds.

Congrats on your 100<sup>th</sup>, a milestone.'

**Left:**  
Sleep time for children,  
Myers Kindergarten,  
date unknown.



## Outstanding kindergarten design

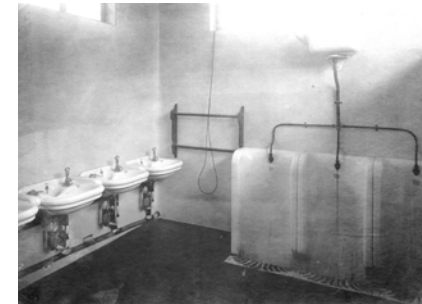
The metaphor of the child growing like a plant in 'mental and spiritual sunshine' is seen in the design of the Myers Kindergarten. For example, with the use of a green and white colour scheme and the window plant boxes. In addition, the external colours and textures of the kindergarten building were continued into the park's pathway surfaces, and flowerbeds were planted at the front of the building to encourage a love of botany in accordance with prevailing Froebelian practice.<sup>xiv</sup>

The building was designed to be as modern and as safe as possible and to incorporate Froebelian principles. The aim was to provide a bright and enriching environment that would benefit children living in poverty.

The ground floor classrooms were positioned to maximise the use of space and to make them (as far as possible) open air rooms. Two green circles painted on the floor in the main classroom symbolised Froebel's theory of unity and inner connection. Each circle represented the inner connection between children with the unity of each individual preserved by the space they filled within the cycle. The veranda faced north to catch the sun. Glassed in, it served as the sand tray room.<sup>xv</sup> A cloakroom was provided and outfitted with child-sized toilets and hand basins. A comprehensive description of the interior reported in a local newspaper reveals the clearly considered details in the kindergarten and the fittings and furnishings:

*'All the corners are rounded throughout the building and the wall joins the floor with a curve so that no dust can lie either in the corner or near the wall. The windows are three tiered, large and full of light, with power to open each square in different directions, so that always a current of air will flow through, yet no draught be felt. Stores and cupboards are provided to contain the materials used by the children. A specially constructed milk safe for the care of the children's drinks is constructed, also gas stoves to heat the milk, and low sinks for the babies to wash up their own mugs.'*<sup>xvi</sup>

Myers' plan for the upper floor and the proposed school for 'backward' children replicated the rooms below with the same attention to detail. The main classroom sits over the Circle Room. Similarly, the three veranda spaces (later covered) were located directly over the ground floor veranda, and diagonally-placed teaching areas allowed access to fresh air and sunshine. The upper floor had a separate entrance, thereby separating the two parts of the building.<sup>xvii</sup>



**Top**  
Circles on the floor of the main classroom symbolised unity and inner connection.

**Above**  
Child-sized bathrooms and furniture were cutting edge features of the time.

**Right**  
Rounded corners on walls and doors for extra safety.







## A HIVE OF ACTIVITY

From its official opening on November 15, 1916 to the present day, Myers Kindergarten has been a hive of activity. As well as improving educational outcomes for young kindergarten children, the building has been used as a training facility for kindergarten teachers, a hospital, to provide special classes for 'backward' children and as a school for partially deaf children.





## The 1916 opening

The official opening was on November 15, 1916 by the Governor General, the Earl of Liverpool. However, the AKA opened the kindergarten a month earlier (on the 16th of October), when 33 children aged 3–5 years were enrolled for morning sessions. The Director, Miss Jessie Fendall (herself an AKA graduate with five years' experience) plus one assistant and three students, were there to receive their new pupils. No doubt the day was exciting and full of new experiences for the children, as they explored the four kindergarten rooms and the indoor sandpit. Contemporary newspaper accounts and related images reveal the kindergarten contained a piano, a rocking horse and a nature study table. Then there were the child-sized toilets and bathing facilities and the children's kitchen with its own child-sized sink for washing dishes. Mr Myers had arranged for a large box of toys to be sent to the children for the opening. The unpacking of the box was reported to be 'a matter of much interest and excitement.'<sup>xviii</sup> Bifolding doors opened to the many delights of the accessible park and the novelty of daily 'games on smooth green grass instead of asphalt pavements.'<sup>xix</sup> Myers' wish for urban children living in overcrowded and unsavoury conditions to experience nature was realised.

The early programme upheld the essentials of Froebel's teachings for promoting healthy growth and development. These being: self-activity, connectedness and unbroken continuity, creativeness, physical activity, and happy and harmonious surroundings. 'Gifts and Occupations' and his 'Mother Songs' were an important part of the content of the programme, and these, along with talks, stories and play in a garden, were supervised, planned and directed by the teacher.<sup>xx, xxi</sup>

**Above:**  
Guests on the opening day flood the building and grounds.

**Opposite Left:**  
Arthur Myers and the Earl of Liverpool on the opening day.

**Opposite Right:**  
Miss Jessie Fendall, the Myers Kindergarten's first director, 1916.

## Training the teachers

The ground floor also housed training facilities for the kindergarten training students.<sup>xxii</sup> The need to supply teacher training was a central aspect of the AKA's work and written into the initial aims. The first two principals, Miss Margaret Gibson and Miss Alice Hopkinson, were both appointed from Britain and held the Froebel Higher Certificate. In contrast the third, Miss Constance Colegrove was an AKA graduate. She became Director of Myers Kindergarten in December 1920, and went on to become the training principal from 1925–1949.

These three women exerted considerable influence on the nature and provision of early kindergarten in Auckland and throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Two rooms were allocated to students: a common room painted in green and white, with a green tablecloth and furniture, and a lecture room also in the prevailing green and white tints. The nature theme continued in the two student rooms that were 'enriched by an inside window garden, filled with the most beautiful variegated foliage.'<sup>xxiii</sup> The Principal's office was similarly outfitted, with an observation window into the circle room.

The students were young women typically straight from school. They received no allowances and were required to pay fees and cover the costs of their books and uniforms. The two-year programme was a blend of theory and practice. Students worked at various kindergartens in the mornings, returning to Myers after lunch for two hours of lectures. For many students Myers was a 'gem of a kindergarten'.<sup>xxiv</sup>





## Controversy over the name ‘Kindergarten’

However, the new building was not without controversy, in particular throughout the war period from 1914–1918. Prior to the opening of the building, anti-German sentiment led to a discussion about whether the name ‘kindergarten’ should be used on the building, or even for the institution itself. Myers consulted with key AKA members and the Chairman of the Education Board. He received a resounding ‘No, keep the word kindergarten’, so continued as planned.<sup>xxv</sup> This wave of intolerance continued throughout the war period from 1914–1918, leading to regular (largely unnamed and often strongly worded) letters to the newspaper calling for a ban on the name ‘kindergarten’. In February 1916, Teaching Director, Alice Hopkinson put pen to paper to write a letter to counter some of the claims made, ending with:

*‘Does it not seem that by arbitrarily changing a name so long accepted we are offering less despite to the Prussians who repudiated him than to the memory of this beloved teacher who has not only benefited generations of little children but has influenced the system of modern education.’*

Rather than follow the norm and use an assumed name, she signed her letter, ‘Alice Hopkinson, Kindergartener and Trainer, Auckland Kindergarten Association.’ Her stance was clearly presented.

## The kindergarten used as a hospital

1918 saw New Zealand’s worst disease outbreak. The Influenza Pandemic struck, killing over 8,600 in just two months. In Auckland’s intercity area alone a total of 595 deaths were recorded. Many more people were hospitalised. In this time of unprecedented social upheaval, there was concern for the children whose parents had died or were sick, or who were ailing themselves. By November 11 all schools and kindergartens had closed in an effort to reduce cross infection. The authorities accepted the AKA’s offer of Myers Kindergarten as a temporary children’s hospital. The building was valuable because it had the latest appliances, including a hot water service, baths and cooking facilities, and for the sunlight and fresh air it offered.

Myers Kindergarten opened as a temporary children’s hospital on November 11 under the supervision of Sister Broun, with a staff of volunteer kindergarten teachers and assistants. Infected children were bedded in cots and stretchers in the large circle room downstairs and in rooms upstairs. The circle room’s blackboards, normally used for children’s drawing, were now used to record



Above:  
Children affected by the  
influenza epidemic.

the information of the children in their care. The situation of many children is summed up in one child’s report published on November 26th that year: ‘Mother died at her home on November 13. Father died in hospital on the 17th. Four children, two in Myers hospital. No friends or relatives in this country.’<sup>xxvi</sup>

Five children died at Myers Kindergarten. The names of two can be found amongst the lists of the dead published in the local papers. They were ‘Ida Mary, infant daughter of Charles Robert and Maud Duke; aged 4 months’ and ‘Kathleen Maude, dearly beloved daughter of Ida Maude and Edward C Farr, ... aged 5 months.’<sup>xxvii</sup> A week earlier another two died over night.<sup>xxviii</sup>

The two floors of the YWCA building next door were allocated to the care of healthy children whose parents were hospitalised or had died. Kindergarten volunteers (including Myers Kindergarten Director Jessie Fenton and the Misses Peacock, Newman and Brooke Smith) catered for over 40 children aged from a few months old to 12 years. Equipment from Myers Kindergarten, such as the small tables and chairs, were transferred for the children’s use.

## Keeping children healthy

The temporary hospital returned to being a kindergarten at the end of December, but epidemic diseases continued to be a matter of concern for AKA throughout the 1920–1930s. For example, outbreaks



of measles forced Myers Kindergarten to close again for a week in 1920, and for over a fortnight in 1924. And Myers did not open until April in 1925, because of a nationwide epidemic of infantile paralysis.

Such events prompted the implementation of preventative measures into the daily routine of Myers Kindergarten. In 1921, the kindergarten's medical inspector, Dr Alice Horsley, began monthly medical checks on the children giving 'by her tact and kindness, inestimable aid to the mothers as well the children.'<sup>xxxix</sup> Milk and biscuits, already an established practice, were supplemented with apples and other fruit. Interestingly, national health guidelines advocating 'fresh air and sunlight and rest' were much easier for Myers Kindergarten to comply with than many other kindergartens, which often operated in cramped conditions with limited access to the outdoors. Furthermore, the design of the building and its indoor-outdoor flow readily assisted the fight against infection and disease.

Another notable and interesting practise during the interwar period involved AKA teachers escorting the children to and from the kindergarten using a rope with knotted loops. Each child held on to a loop with a teacher in front and sometimes one behind.<sup>xxx</sup> A past student, David Birch (born 23 December, 1935) lived with his mother in a boarding house she owned in Hobson Street. He remembers the daily walk to the busy corner from where he was collected by the teacher and walked with his peers to the kindergarten.

## Life on the upper floor

Unlike the lower floor, a range of different groups has occupied the upper floor. The first group were a special class of about twenty children from Auckland's Normal School, part of an innovation to establish special classes for 'backward' children in schools. In 1918 this arrangement was formalised in an agreement between Auckland City Council, AKA, and the Education Board that the 'Educational Board shall have the use of the upper floor so long as it shall be required by them, or used as a school for backward children.' Again education and health needs combined, with pupils allowed to 'work under open-air conditions and have a hot mid-day meal.'<sup>xxxi</sup>



## MEMORIES

**BARBARA HOLMAN**  
*Former teacher*

'Sir Dove-Myer Robinson was at that time Mayor of Auckland. Every morning he would bring his daughter Jenny to kindergarten in the mayoral car, get out and accompany her to the kindergarten door to say good-bye.

We had white mice who lived on the disused bowels of wringer washing machines. The children loved to watch them darting about and were always amused when they went round and round on their spinning wheels.

One task I was given was to sterilise the rubber dolls after the children had left for the day. I carefully removed their heads and limbs and spread them out to dry. When this was discovered I was severely reprimanded because of the psychological effect it could have on the children if they saw the dolls not entire!

Stories were always popular and if you made up one using the children's names they were enthralled. Painting was another activity the children loved – some of them were very good artists in the making. They put me to shame (I was best at stick figures.) Dressing up was another favourite and two children in particular refused to do any daily activity until they were suitably dressed!



In early 1921, a school for partially deaf children, under the auspices of the Education Board, shared the upper floor. Newspaper reports suggest the number of pupils was small – around five. The school shifted to other premises in 1932, but returned in 1935, staying for seven years. The Hard of Hearing League also shared the space catering for adults with hearing problems.

‘KINDERGARTEN TEACHING HAS BEEN SEEN AS A PROFESSION IN ITS OWN RIGHT, RATHER THAN FOR WOMEN WHO LIKED CHILDREN AND PERHAPS DID NOT NEED TO WORK.’

— Sue Crockett, ex-AKA President, 1992

The 1940s saw a significant change in the use of the upper floor that assisted the AKA's future growth. In late 1943 the AKA successfully applied to the Mayor for full use of the upper floor as a teacher training centre to cater to a rapidly growing demand. A formal agreement was drawn up in July 1948 between the AKA and the Council giving the Association sole and exclusive use of the building for the purpose of a free kindergarten, free of rental. The Council were to be responsible for the maintenance of the exterior of the building and the AKA for the interior and insurance for the full building.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Alterations to the upper floor were carried out, including the glassing in of part of the balcony and the building of a new office for the current principal. This change saw the AKA teacher training shift to the upstairs floor. Greater government recognition of kindergarten saw the introduction of student allowances in 1941 and an increase in capitation grants in 1943. Growth in demand for both kindergartens and for teachers brought a need for additional training space. In 1944, the student training programme moved to the upper floor where they stayed until late 1958 when, having again outgrown their premises, they moved to a large house in Arney Road, Remuera.

Post WWII saw a rapid growth in the establishment of kindergarten provision along with an expanding need for paid staff, and thus office space. The AKA administration staff slowly took over the upper floor, radically changing its use. The team eventually grew so large it had to move to larger premises next door.

Today the upper floor is again a space for teachers: this time for qualified teachers undertaking professional learning. Kindergarten teaching too has changed since 1916. As long term AKA Council member and past president, Sue Crockett, said in 1992, ‘Kindergarten teaching has been seen as a profession in its own right, rather than for women who liked children and perhaps did not need to work.’<sup>xxxiii</sup>

**Below:**  
Kindergarten graduates  
and staff, 1953.





## Some key people

A number of key people central to the work of the Association have inhabited the building. One was Miss Jessie Neil, who served as AKA General Secretary from 1951 until her retirement in 1970. From her office in the lower floor by the Parents’ Entrance, Jessie Neil was a constant presence through the whole building. She had a strong reputation for having rapport with staff and students, and for being highly efficient.

*‘When we joined the AKA Jessie Neil was the General Secretary and it was amazing how she handled the job on her own. She knew every staff member and was always available to help and advise. We will never forget her red hair (dyed) and she was almost a chain smoker, and often accompanied by her Sydney Silkie dogs. A wonderful person, she was ‘The AKA.’<sup>xxxiv</sup>*

Jessie Neil was made an AKA Life Member in 1971. She left a legacy to the Association in her Will, and the Jessie Neil Estate was invested wisely. It was used to appoint additional senior support staff, and later to build the much needed Te Atatu Village Kindergarten.

The influence of the Myers in our country’s kindergartens has been maintained. Family members from later generations (including Kenneth, Geoffrey and Edwina Myers) became active and respected members of the Association. Kenneth served as president in 1936 and Geoffrey for six years from 1958–1964. Edwina Myers was a long term and valued member of the AKA Council.



**Left:**  
Miss Alice Hopkinson, 2<sup>nd</sup> AKA Training Director 1914–1919 (1<sup>st</sup> Training Director at Myers Kindergarten).



**Right:**  
Miss Margaret Gibson, 1<sup>st</sup> Training Director 1910–1913, reappointed 1919–1924.

**Opposite:**  
Mesh fences and gates were installed to enclose the kindergarten from the decreasing safety of the park grounds.



## ‘Not all worked well’

However, not all of Arthur Myers’ intentions worked according to plan. In particular, his claim that the kindergarten should have the park as its playground proved problematic. Kindergarteners responsible for children’s safety had to ensure children did not slip away ‘either down to the high slides in the Park, which were much higher than they are now, or up into Queen Street.’<sup>xxxv</sup> Men, worse the wear for alcohol sleeping under trees, posed another problem for teachers.<sup>xxxvi</sup> An early resolution to this problem saw half-height wire mesh gates installed to the veranda, limiting children’s access to the play area unless supervised by staff. Later in 1954, the AKA proposed the enclosure of a play area in front of the building. Over the next two decades, the kindergarten’s outdoor area was enclosed and then further extended. This included the altering of ground levels, and in 1993 a shade cloth was installed. Such changes, whilst necessary for children’s safety and wellbeing, have raised concerns related to the growing visual separation of the building with the park.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

## The kindergarten building since 2000

Kindergarten enrolments declined gradually from the 1950s, and in 2002 the kindergarten became uneconomic to run. A decision was made to close the kindergarten and re-open it as an early childhood care and education centre (KiNZ in the Park). Objections were raised arguing that this went against Arthur Myers’ insistence that provision should be free for all children. This requirement was recognised with the allocation of eight free places for children. The centre opened in 2002 and the building’s future as a place for children is secure for now.



The 1998 Myers Kindergarten Conservation Report stated that the building ‘appears to have been soundly constructed and has generally been well maintained and is in largely original condition. Changes to the plan of the building have been reasonably limited to the ground level bottom floor which maintains a reasonably high degree of integrity.’<sup>xxxviii</sup>

To ensure the continued integrity of the Myers Park building, and to meet the earthquake IEP assessment method requirements, the AKA has recently undertaken earthquake strengthening. The work involved installing structural beams on the ground floor to help support the first floor. Structural beams were installed on the upper floor and seismic bracing was installed in the ceiling and roof cavity. The work has greatly improved the buildings ability to withstand earthquakes, making it a lot safer for the occupants of both floors.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Today the Myers Kindergarten building is registered as a Category 2 building by the Historic Places Trust and forms part of the Myers Park Historic Area (which includes the Terraced Queen Street shops, the Theosophical Society Hall and seats and the Queen Street entrance to Myers Park). As stated in the Conservation Report these buildings illustrate ‘the transformation of what was a substantially residential area on the periphery of Auckland’s commercial centre to an area of commercial and community character.’<sup>xi</sup>

In 2016, the kindergarten building that Arthur Myers gave to the children of Auckland reaches its first century, the oldest remaining kindergarten building still in use in New Zealand. Whilst Arthur Myers’ generosity deserves historical recognition, it needs to be viewed within a broader recognition of the on-going and lasting contribution of familial and friendship involvement in kindergarten provision.

From 1916 to the present day one well-loved item in the building has been a constant in Auckland children’s lives, that of a rocking horse. Student Gwen Court gifted the current rocking horse to Myers Kindergarten in 1932.<sup>xii</sup> Today it stands inside the Children’s Entrance, greeting and farewelling children each day. A reminder that the building is now imbued with memories and a strong identity as a place for children and adults that are sure to last as the building enters its second century.



## MEMORIES

### LORRAINE EWINGTON

*Former teacher*

‘I remember being accepted to train as a kindergarten teacher. Our group was made up of 24 girls between the ages of 18–22 years. We had most of our lectures in the main entrance room and were free to sit in the lounge for lunch, overlooking the kindergarten playground below. Fay Carkwall was head of the department with Miss Burt and Miss Rothbury as her Assistants. Jessie Neil used to be in the office down stairs. We used to go down there and collect our allowance once a month (from memory this was 11 pounds a month).

In those days there were three terms a year. As students, we spent half a term in lectures and the other half out on section (practicum). Myers Kindergarten was always a popular one to be on section at. I loved my time there.

The kindergarten overlooked the park so there were always lots of people passing by. On rainy days we were the envy of the other kindergartens because the sand pit was inside. Two rooms could be cordoned off to give you quiet places to read and for quiet activities.

We all wore uniforms while on section. These were double breasted smocks like nurses uniforms. There were three colours to choose from – pink, blue or green. These had to be starched and ironed. We also wore metal badges depicting a girl with building blocks and with Auckland Kindergarten Association written around the edges.

The kindergarten because of its central setting was used for all the staff meetings and Christmas gatherings.

I include a photo of us all dressed up ready to go to the Town Hall to receive our diplomas and badges in 1956.’





## CONCLUSION

The 'Myers Kindergarten' building begins its second century of innovation and influence with its founding principles and vision intact. As well as the KiNZ provision for under-5s on the ground floor, the building currently hosts the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme. Early Childhood teachers from all over the region have the opportunity to learn in an environment where ECE began in Auckland, offering a sense of stewardship and connection to a historical undertaking.

Connections are also paramount in the building's future. The AKA is actively pursuing opportunities to use the upstairs space as a community hub for parenting and family-focussed initiatives.

Ever mindful of the changing cultural make-up of Auckland's CBD and the increase in families living in apartments, many of whom may feel a sense of isolation, the aim is to help these families gain a stronger sense of social connectivity.

The AKA as an organisation also continues its focus on strengthening bi-cultural connection and inclusion, with the ongoing development of specific indicators for Māori educational success within its social outcomes work. We want to build our reputation as a culturally responsive organisation where our staff are culturally competent and all children, but particularly tamariki Māori and their whānau, are engaged in an enriched early childhood experience reflecting Aotearoa's unique heritage and identity.

Our Strategic Plan for KiNZ Myers Park, as well as the other 114 operations, hundreds of staff and thousands of children across Auckland, builds on Four Pillars we believe the founding families and Friedrich Froebel would be proud of. Our outcomes are:

- Giving children strong foundations for ongoing learning.
- Ensuring families and communities engage with children's education.
- Enabling employees to perform to their full potential.
- Being a forward-focused organisation.

These outcomes are built into our Constitution, link back to the original intentions of the AKA when it was founded over 100 years ago, and position us

squarely to support, grow and encourage Auckland's children well into the future. We look forward to welcoming new families to the kindergarten community, and continuing to live our dream of providing quality early childhood education to thousands of children.

In this Centenary Year, we'd like to say an enormous 'thank you' to everyone who's played a part in the history of KiNZ Myers Park.

And a very warm welcome to the next 100 years!



IMAGE REFERENCES

Cover	Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 236_7521
Contents Page	Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, c1933, NZMS1275(Album1931-36)
Pg 02–03	Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZMS 1275
Pg 04–05	Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, Myers Kindergarten NZMS 1275.Bx29(iv)
Pg 06–07	Myers G Copy, Chilwell & Trevithick records (Arch.0079), Architecture Archive, University of Auckland Library
Pg 08	Arthur Myers, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, AWNS-19150204-38-4
Pg 11	Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 236_7522
Pg 12–13	Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZMS 1275.Bx29
Pg 15	Top: Myers L copy, Chilwell & Trevithick records (Arch.0079), Architecture Archive, University of Auckland Library. Middle Left: Myers J copy, Chilwell & Trevithick records, (Arch.0079), Architecture Archive, University of Auckland Library. Middle Right: Myers I copy, Chilwell & Trevithick records (Arch.0079), Architecture Archive, University of Auckland Library. Bottom: Myers F copy, Chiwell & Trevithick records (Arch.0079), Architecture Archive, University of Auckland Library.
Pg 16–17	Water Play at Myers Kindergarten, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZMS 1275
Pg 18	Official Launch Myers Kindergarten Building 1916, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZMS 1275.Bx28(iv)
Pg 19	Arthur Myers and Lord Liverpool, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZMS 1275 Jessie Fendall, first Director at Myers Kindergarten, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZMS 1275 Bx2(JessieFendall)
Pg 21	Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 7_A11672
Pg 23	Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZMS 1275.Bx28(1916)(ii)
Pg 25	Kindergarten Graduates & staff 1953, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZMS 1275.Bx2(Grad1953)
Pg 26	Left: Miss Alice Hopkinson 2nd AKA Training Director 1914–1919 (1st Training Director at Myers Kindergarten), Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, Auckland Kindergarten Association Records NZMS 1275 Right: Miss Margaret Gibson 1st Training Director 1910–1913, reappointed 1919–1924, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, Auckland Kindergarten Association Records NZMS 1275
Pg 27	Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZMS 1275 Bx29.2(ii)
Pg 29	Photo supplied by Lorraine Ewington
Pg 30–31	Photos supplied by Myers Kindergarten
Back Cover	Water play at Myers Kindergarten, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZMS 1275

TEXT REFERENCES

i	Myers Park Conservation Plan, Prepared by Jane and Antony Matthews for Auckland City Council, 1998, 4.
ii	'Myers Park opened', Auckland Star, 29 January 1915, 7.
iii	The first was Campbell Kindergarten gifted in 1910 by John Logan Campbell.
iv	'Kindergarten Work: A years progress', Auckland Star, 2 March, 1917.
v	'Our free kindergartens' Sun, 29 March, 1917, 4.
vi	Ibid, 4.
vii	'Free Kindergarten' Dominion, 7 December, 1916, 3.
viii	Paul Goldsmith and Michael Bassett, The Myers (Auckland: David Ling Publishing, 2007), 110
ix	See Helen May, The Discovery of Early Childhood, (Wellington: NZCER Press, 2013).
x	Marta Gutman & Ning De Coninck-Smith, (Eds). <i>Designing Modern Childhoods: History, Space, and the Material Culture of Designing Modern Childhoods: History, Space, and the Material Culture of Children</i> , (Rutgers University Press Rutgers University Press, 2008)
xi	<a href="http://www.kroad.com/heritage/myers-park/">http://www.kroad.com/heritage/myers-park/</a>
xii	Betty Cosson, A history of the training of kindergarten teachers in Auckland 1908 – 1948, An Original Investigation submitted as part of the requirements for a Diploma of Education, Auckland University, 1970.
xiii	Mrs Leo Myers, Friedrich Froebel's method, <i>New Zealand Herald</i> , 31 October, 1908, 1
xiv	<a href="http://www.thearchitectureofearlychildhood.com/2011/04/birth-of-kindergarten-in-nz-and-of.html">http://www.thearchitectureofearlychildhood.com/2011/04/birth-of-kindergarten-in-nz-and-of.html</a>
xv	The sandpit remains in place today but is no longer used. Instead it is covered with flooring. A new sandpit was built outside.
xvi	'A Garden of Children', <i>Auckland Star</i> , 23 September, 1916, 17.
xvii	'Deaths' <i>New Zealand Herald</i> , 23 November, 1918,1.
xviii	'Myers Kindergarten' <i>New Zealand Herald</i> , 18 October 1916, 5.
xix	Myers Park Conservation Plan, 32.
xx	Ibid, 18
xxi	Later methods saw a rejection of the more formal aspects of Froebel's teachings 'replaced by freer methods likely to promote self expression, self development, and self-reliance; New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union Handbook, N.Z.F.K. Union 1956. Revised 1961, 1966, 5. Cited in Cosson, 20.
xxii	Ibid.
xxiii	<i>Auckland Star</i> , November 8, 1916, 8
xxiv	Beryl Carr (nee Winstone), AKA Reminiscences, 1992
xxv	<i>Auckland Star</i> , July 20 1916, 2
xxvi	'What of the children', <i>New Zealand Herald</i> , 26 November, 1918, 3
xxvii	'Deaths', <i>New Zealand Herald</i> , 23 November, 1918, 1
xxviii	'Influenza Epidemic', <i>New Zealand Herald</i> , 14 November, 1918, 6
xxix	'Kindergarten Work', <i>New Zealand Herald</i> , 16 December, 1921, 9. For a description on the process undertaken see report by Hilda Keane, 'At a Free Kindergarten', <i>Auckland Star</i> , 20 August, 1921, 1
xxx	Elizabeth Tunks, AKA Reminiscences, 2002.
xxxi	AJHR, E. 11.10 Education: Medical Inspection of Schools and Schoolchildren, 1917.
xxxii	The agreement was later amended to allow the Association to sub licence part of the top floor to Girl Guides Association.
xxxiii	Sue Crockett (nee Woolley), AKA Reminiscences, 1992.
xxxiv	Interview Auckland Kindergarten Association Reminiscences, 1992.
xxxv	Elizabeth Tunks, AKA Reminiscences, 1992.
xxxvi	Beryl Carr (nee Winstone), Interview AKA Reminiscences, 1992
xxxvii	Myers Park Kindergarten Conservation Plan 1998, 57.
xxxviii	Myers Park Kindergarten Conservation Plan, 57.
xxxiv	Email from Peter Pablecheque, Property Manager to Jean Elmer – 11.8.2016.
xi	Conservation Report, 1998, 62.
xli	Beryl Carr (nee Winstone), Interview AKA Reminiscences, 1992.



**igniting minds**  
**Hei Whakahihiko Hinengaro**



**Tel** 0800 4 KINDY  
**Email** [info@aka.org.nz](mailto:info@aka.org.nz)  
**aka.org.nz**  
**facebook.com/mykindy**

PO Box 6933  
Wellesley Street  
Auckland 1141

**KNZ**  
care and early learning

 **Auckland  
Kindergartens**