

# EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

EXPRESSIONS WHIRINAKI ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE

# PUMPKIN COTTAGE



**Expressions Whirinaki** is committed to providing visual arts programs, that are accessible, anywhere, anytime, by our local Students. We endeavour to provide local arts stories and activities that deliver learning that links to our National Curriculum.

As Aotearoa moves through the different Alert levels, due to Covid 19, our aim is to deliver meaningful art lessons that can be flexibly delivered, depending on the constraints that each level has in place.

This Education Resource supports the Pumpkin Cottage Class Kit that is available online at our Expressions Whirinaki website on the 'Online learning' page. This resource will contain Extended information on the topic of the Pumpkin Cottage Collection, to support Teachers, as well as the appropriate Curriculum links.

This Class Kit is flexible, and whilst currently an online 'Anywhere Learning' model, our intention is for it to be offered as an in-class Tutorial by our Learning Service Professional, when permitted.

**The Pumpkin Cottage Collection** is a nationally significant collection of work from the early impressionist movement which was nurtured at the legendary Pumpkin Cottage, Silverstream, Upper Hutt. It features paintings by James Nairn, Mabel Hill, Girolamo Nerli, Frances Hodgkins and Nugent Welch among others.

Local art collectors Ernest and Shirley Cosgrove gifted 39 Pumpkin Cottage paintings to Expressions Whirinaki Trust for the people of Upper Hutt in 2009 and the works have been in the Centre's safe keeping ever since. These significant Pumpkin Cottage paintings are the city's first permanent art collection which continues to grow thanks to several generous gifts.



WELLINGTON HARBOUR  
by James McLauchlan Nairn

# HISTORICAL SETTING

Upper Hutt was best known for its saw-milling and farming in the Late 19th century. It was a popular rural getaway for day trippers when the railway line was extended in 1875. Silverstream was lightly populated and regarded as an ideal painting spot for artists.

James McLachlan Nairn arrived from Scotland in 1890, he was an artist and advocate of the impressionist style of painting. He had been part of the fight for acceptance of impressionism in Glasgow, where he was a member of the Avant Garde 'Glasgow Boys'.



*James McLachlan Nairn*



*Pumpkin Cottage, 1940*

As early as 1891, James Nairn camped at Silverstream, by Whirinaki stream, during his summer holiday breaks away from Teaching at the Wellington Technical School.

Nairn first rented Pumpkin cottage in about 1895 near the train line at Silverstream and it soon became a rustic haven for the modern artists of the day, as it was easily accessible.

He began to lead excursions for students and fellow artists of the newly formed Wellington Artists Club out to Silverstream.

Long Idyllic Hours of painting at the cottage were interspersed with fishing, swimming, and partying. When the artists' were in residence, Silverstream would echo with singing and the sound of bagpipes played by Nairn.

The cottage name came about due to a signal devised by the sons of Charles and Emma Haybittle who owned the farm on which the cottage stood. When young Ralph Haybittle wanted to let his brother know that he should get off the Train at Silverstream to help with milking, he would hoist a pumpkin to the top of the cottage's chimney. The name stuck and Nairn and his fellows artists kept up with the name by painting a golden pumpkin on the side of the cottage.

The building was unremarkable in itself, a small matai cottage that had been used as a rental, and moved up to Silverstream further away from Upper Hutt central.



*Sketching party, 1894-96,  
probably at Silverstream.  
including Mabel Hill, Nairn,  
C.D. Barraud.*

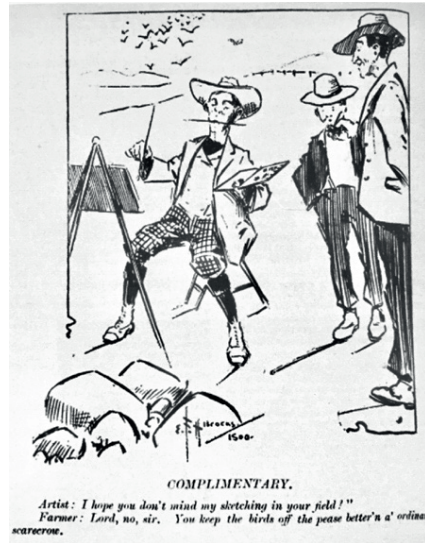
The Pumpkin cottage myth was at its height between the two world wars and was recognised by art Historians, although it was well known in Upper Hutt from the 1890s

James Nairn Died in 1904 at only 45. The subsequent sell out memorial exhibition of his work at the Academy of fine arts later that year helped build the mystique of Pumpkin Cottage. Its Leader was gone but the cottage itself still Thrived as an artist's retreat until the mid 1930s.

The cottage itself was pulled down eventually in 1980 after a failed campaign to move and save the building, which by then had become the property of St Patricks College Silverstream.

# PUMPKIN COTTAGE ARTISTS & THE IMPRESSIONIST MOVEMENT IN AOTEAROA

The Pumpkin Cottage painters were Impressionist painters, that valued this artistic style and the movement that it created. Impressionism is a way of making art that captures the moment, using quick motions to capture light and shade. Impressionism is about capturing the moment and a feeling, not about perfectionism and accuracy. This is in direct contrast to the popular artistic styles of the 1870s-1880s, where heavily contrived photorealism was considered 'Good' painting.



Cartoon- Hiscock from Free lance, Dec 1900. Alexander Turnbull library

New Zealand was still a Colonial Country at this time, and perfection, especially in mathematical art and drawing was still an important part of our economy, where bridges were being built, roads and railways planned and extended, and houses built.

Ordinary folk sometimes struggled to understand Bohemian artists and Impressionism. Newspaper critics who stoked the debate with inflammatory reviews were labelled Philistines by the artists.

The radicalism of their art united the impressionists as they sort camaraderie and mutual support. Like their French, Scottish, English, and Australian counterparts, the impressionist painters associated with Pumpkin Cottage were middle-class, talented creative people some of whom chose to follow the precarious career of a professional artists.

This artistic community welcomed opportunities to meet. In 1892 and 1893 Wellington and Christchurch fellow bohemians Nairn, John Bailey, John Madden and William Menzies Gibb all visited each other in their home towns. Frances Hodgkins visited Silverstream with her brother-in-law who was a patron of the impressionist movement. In 1896, Gerilamo Nerli an Italian artist of the impressionist movement spent a fortnight teaching art in Wellington and visited Pumpkin Cottage during this time.

While some of their ideas were regarded as radical, many of New Zealand's impressionists were part of the cultural establishment. Alfred Walsh, James Nairn, Mabel Hill and Mary Tripe were teachers, Fred Sedgwick worked for the government printing office, John Bailey was a book seller and photographer.

Others like William Leslie Morrison, and Nerli were eccentric and struggled with authority.

Most of the women impressionists were relatively emancipated for the era and several ran their own studios. Dorothy Kate Richmond wore loose bohemian clothing associated with the new women's movement, and Mabel Hill insisted on exhibiting under her maiden name after she married in 1898.

Despite being a colleague and close friend of Nairn, Hills comment that she was only invited there twice reminds us that propriety limited female participation in life at Pumpkin Cottage.

Some of the pumpkin cottage painters and members of the Wellington Art Club were: James M Nairn (founder), John Baillie (founder member and first secretary), Nugent Welch, Sydney Higgs,

Mabel Hill, Girolamo Nerli, Frances Hodgkins, George H. Garnham, William Tiller, Bessie Chapple, Carl T. Laugeson, Frederick Sedgwick, Arthur A. Bender, Henry Moreland Gore, Bill Wauchop, Archibald Frank Nicoll, Dorothy Kate Richmond, Maurice Crompton-Smith, Mary Tripe (nee Richardson), and Elizabeth Rosa Sawtell.



*Silverstream*  
by William Tiller

**Some artist biographies can be found online using the following links**

**James McLachlan Nairn**, 1859-1904: Te Ara biography  
[teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2n2/nairn-james-mclauchlan](https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2n2/nairn-james-mclauchlan)

**Mabel Hill**: Te Ara biography  
[teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3h27/hill-mabel](https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3h27/hill-mabel)

**M. E. R. Tripe**: Te Ara biography  
[teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3t41/tripe-mary-elizabeth](https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3t41/tripe-mary-elizabeth)

**Nugent Welch**: Te Ara biography  
[teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4w12/welch-nugent-herrmann](https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4w12/welch-nugent-herrmann)

# ERNEST & SHIRLEY COSGROVE, AND THE PUMPKIN COTTAGE COLLECTION

Ernest and Shirley Cosgrove Collected a significant group of Pumpkin Cottage paintings, and stored and displayed them at 'Efildoog', a small gallery in the Akatarawa Valley. The Cosgroves were passionate about the Pumpkin Cottage painters and safeguarding the paintings and the story of the Cottage itself.

They were instrumental in the establishment of a memorial at the former site of the cottage, donating a memorial boulder and plaque which was unveiled in 2000. Realising that their painting collection represented a significant part of the history of Upper Hutt, and that it was time to retire from running the gallery, Ernest and Shirley gifted their collection including much history of Pumpkin Cottage, to Upper Hutt City in 2009.

The collection is stored at Expressions Whirinaki as Upper Hutt's first permanent collection of art.

## CURRICULUM LINKS

The Pumpkin Cottage Collection class kit connects with the New Zealand Curriculum through the **Visual Arts**.

**Level 1–4:** students will:

### Understanding the visual arts in context

- Investigate the purpose of objects and images from past and present cultures and identify the contexts in which they were or are made, viewed, and valued.

### Developing practical knowledge

- Explore and use art-making conventions, applying knowledge of elements and selected principles through the use of materials and processes.

### Developing ideas

- Develop and revisit visual ideas, in response to a variety of motivations, observation, and imagination, supported by the study of artists' works.

### Communicating and interpreting

- Explore and describe ways in which meanings can be communicated and interpreted in their own and others' work.

**Level 5–8:** students will:

### Understanding the visual arts in context

- Use research and analysis to investigate contexts, meanings, intentions, and technological influences related to the making and valuing of art works.

### Developing practical knowledge

- Apply understanding from broad and deep research into the characteristics and constraints of materials, techniques, technologies, and established conventions in a selected field.
- Extend and refine skills in a selected field, using appropriate processes and procedures.

### Developing ideas

- Generate, analyse, clarify, and regenerate options in response to selected questions or a proposal in a chosen field.

### Communicating and interpreting

- Research and analyse selected approaches and theories related to visual arts practice.
- Critically reflect on, respond to, and evaluate art works.

The Pumpkin Cottage Class kit also Engages students with **Social Studies** curriculum, within the strand of history, and in this case Local history, providing meaningful learning to students within our community.

**Level 1–4:** students will gain knowledge, skills, and experience to:

- Understand how people pass on and sustain culture and heritage for different reasons and that this has consequences for people.
- Understand how exploration and innovation create opportunities and challenges for people, places, and environments.
- Understand that events have causes and effects.
- Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.

**Level 6–8:** students will gain knowledge, skills, and experience to:

### Social studies

- Understand how ideologies shape society and that individuals and groups respond differently to these beliefs.

### History

- Understand that the causes, consequences, and explanations of historical events that are of significance to New Zealanders are complex and how and why they are contested.
- Understand how trends over time reflect social, economic, and political forces.



*Pumpkin Cottage*  
Silverstream, Wellington [1930]  
by Higgs, Sydney Hamlet (1884-1978)



## READING LIST

### **Bohemians of the Brush: Pumpkin Cottage /impressionists**

Booklet Published 2010 to accompany exhibition developed by Expressions, based on the Pumpkin Cottage Paintings Collection gifted by Ernest & Shirley Cosgrove; curated by Jane Vial.  
ISBN: 978-0473167547

### **Nerli, an Italian painter in the South Pacific** by Micheal Dunn

ISBN: 978-1869403355

### **James McLachlan Nairn, a Catalogue of Works**

Bulletin of Art History, special series no. 3 1997

## FURTHER RESOURCES

### **The Pumpkin Cottage Collection online**

[www.expressions.org.nz/online-collection](http://www.expressions.org.nz/online-collection)

### **Wellington Art Club History page**

[www.wellingtonart.co.nz/about/history.htm](http://www.wellingtonart.co.nz/about/history.htm)

### **Auckland Art Gallery James Nairn Collection**

[aucklandartgallery.com/explore-art-and-ideas/artist/1924/james-nairn](http://aucklandartgallery.com/explore-art-and-ideas/artist/1924/james-nairn)

### **Te Papa Tongarewa James Nairn topic**

[collections.tepapa.govt.nz/topic/940](http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/topic/940)

### **Upper Hutt Recollect History archive**

[uhcl.recollect.co.nz](http://uhcl.recollect.co.nz)

### **Outdoor art ideas for kids**

[artfulparent.com/21-outdoor-art-ideas-for-kids](http://artfulparent.com/21-outdoor-art-ideas-for-kids)

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### **For further information, please contact**

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**EXPRESSIONS**  
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