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Of passing interest

Historic features in our landscape seen by Puke Ariki heritage collections manager **Kelvin Day**.

Opunake Power Station

Sitting at the base of the road that leads down to Opunake Beach is a large concrete building. This is the Opunake Power Station, which began supplying power to the Opunake district in September 1923. The possibility of supplying Opunake residents with electricity was first discussed by the Opunake Town Board in 1899 and a small scheme using the Waiaua River was proposed.

While tenders were received for the installation of the plant in 1904, the scheme did not proceed. Three years later consulting engineers Templin and Toogood were asked by the town board to draw up new plans for a power station.

A loan of £7000 was raised and construction started. Presumably due to customer demand, the Opunake Power Board was formed in 1921 in order to supply power to Oeo Rd in the south through to Moutoti Stream in the north. At the same time a loan of £70,000 was



raised. Two years later the supply district was extended to Puniho Rd with a further loan of £22,000. The Opunake Power Station was a hydro station, with water diverted via a water race from the Waiaua River into Opunake Lake. From here it is piped to the edge of the cliff above the power house and down

penstocks to the generating plant. The water then travels to the beach.

The cottage to the side of the power station was where the station operator lived. In 1963 the Opunake Power Board amalgamated with the South Taranaki Power Board to become known as the Egmont Electric Power Board. In 1996, a

365-kilowatt flight turbine generator was installed.

The following year the South Taranaki District Council sold Egmont Electricity to Powerco. More recently, in 2009, the Opunake Hydro Scheme was sold to Opunake Hydro and it continues to supply power to the community.