



Dawson Falls Tourist Lodge

Manaia Rd, National Park

1896

Use: Commercial – lodge and restaurant

Materials: Timber, concrete, iron roof

NZHPT Registered: Not registered

Legal Description: Sec 6 BlkII Kaupokonui SD

Historic Value: 4 out of 5

Architectural Value: 1 out of 4

Technical Value: - out of 2

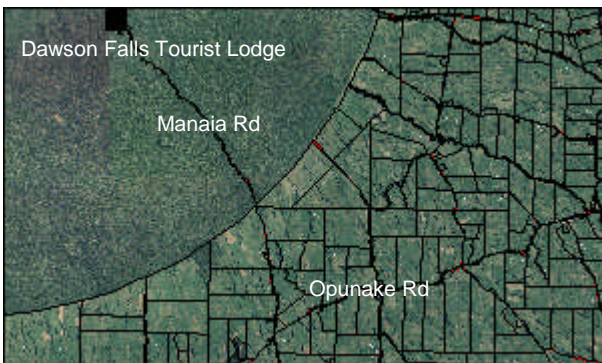
Symbolic Value: 1 out of 3

Rarity Value: - out of 2

Townscape Value: - out of 2

Group Value: - out of 2

Overall Heritage Value: 6 out of 20



Thomas Dawson, Manaia's first postmaster, discovered the falls (that were then named after him) in March 1883. The 16.5 metre natural twin falls were immediately recognised as a potential tourist attraction, with the Manaia track being formed by the South Egmont Board of Conservators shortly afterwards to make them more accessible.

In February 1896, the Falls Mountain House was established, due to the attraction formed from the falls. (The name was later changed to Dawson Falls Tourist Lodge, to try and eliminate confusion with the Stratford Mountain House). Old press reports show that the original building cost approximately £170 in total, with £100 coming from a government grant, and the rest from subscriptions. The cost was kept at a minimum through volunteer labour, and the builder (Mr. Elliot) not charging anything for his services. The Lodge was built 902 metres above sea level, with the timber being sledged up by local residents with two bullocks, and the netting being brought up on horseback by W.H. Hollard.

Due to the Lodge's easy access it became a popular visitor site. In 1904, 2,608 visitors were recorded compared with 200 at the Stratford Hut which had been opened in 1899. The Lodge could accommodate around 40 people, with a caretaker being appointed in the summer tourist season.

The building was not only used as a shelter for trampers and people enjoying the mountain, it also served as a post office until 1959, and it still houses a working telephone office from this era (which was opened in March 1910 under caretaker Henry Graham). It was initially administered by the South Egmont Board of Conservators, before being sold to Mr. Henry Hill in 1920.

The often harsh conditions on Mount Taranaki play havoc on buildings, and so in December 1928 a new Dawson Falls Lodge was built by James Murray as a replacement. During the 1970's, the facilities were all upgraded, with a new Konini Lodge, and Visitors Centre being built. The County upgraded the Manaia Road at this time at a total cost of \$44,000, and sealed the road through the park.

The Dawson Falls Hydro-Electric Generating Station was set up at the Kapuni Stream in 1934. By 1975, the Station was supplying the Dawson Falls Visitors Centre and Konini Lodge as well as Dawson Falls Lodge. In 1982, mains electricity arrived on the Mountain and soon after the Dawson Falls Lodge became the only building to be using power from the Station.

The Lodge had had many owners, including the Anderson's, who presently own the Stratford Mountain House. By the time they arrived in 1980, the building had become neglected – being "little more than a tin shed with pinex walls...the carpet had holes and the wallpaper was torn". The Anderson's revived it, adding a Swiss theme, which has remained until the present day.

The Lodge serves as a warm, comfortable environment for visitors to Mount Taranaki, serving excellent food, and catering for reasonably large numbers.

Bibliography

Daily News, 11 January 1996

Church, Ian, *The Stratford Inheritance*, The Heritage Press (1990) p121-122

Dawson Falls Tourist Lodge website – www.dawson-falls.co.nz