



Huinga Tunnel

Raupuha Rd

1893

Use: Road tunnel
Materials: Gunited concrete
NZHPT Registered: Not registered
Legal Description: Raupuha Rd

Historic Value: 3 out of 5

Architectural Value: 1 out of 4

Technical Value: 2 out of 2

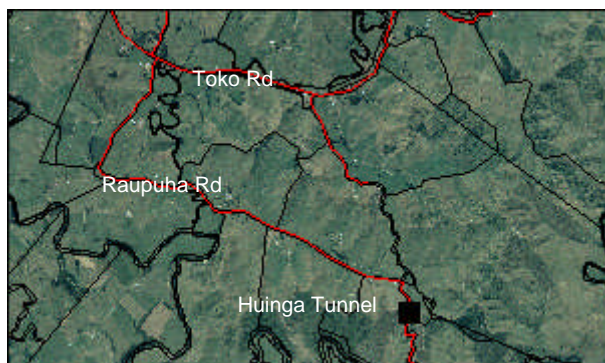
Symbolic Value: - out of 3

Rarity Value: 1 out of 2

Townscape Value: 1 out of 2

Group Value: - out of 2

Overall Heritage Value: 8 out of 20



Access to the end of Raupuha Road was not possible until 1883, when the Huinga tunnel was driven, following a trial drive. Not much is known about the actual building of this tunnel, although originally the roof and part of the lining was made of native timber; the sides being solid papa. A very unusual feature of the tunnel was the fact that it had large scrim timber doors at one end of the tunnel, to try and control the draught. A plaque was set in the wall of the tunnel to commemorate its completion, reading *"Fitzgerald Aug. '95"*.

After 30 years, the moisture inside the tunnel confirmed its degrading effect on the wood, with most of the south roof rotting through. Repairs were attempted, during which the tunnel collapsed, crushing two of the repair trucks. Major repairs were then done, resulting in the tunnel roof being lowered. By 1936, however, the roof was again raised with the inclusion of hardwood posts and railway iron arches. These posts were quite dangerous – two years later a local boy caught his leg on one of them, and so boards were put across for safety.



Huinga tunnel has almost always had a problem with earth and papa falling inside it. In 1944, there was a particularly bad slip, and a New Plymouth firm was contracted to fix it. They mixed the concrete on the floor of the tunnel and had a worker shovel it onto a platform and plaster it onto the roof with his shovel. By 1958, the south end of the tunnel was gunited (the concrete was coated) and was therefore declared safe.

In February 1971, however, floods blocked the tunnel and caused slips again to the north end, making it impassable. These were fixed, but made people question the necessity of the tunnel, as it was costing a large amount to keep standing.

The Huinga Tunnel is still in use today, the hard work involved in it over the years and the workmanship of it being admired by all visitors that drive through.