



Triumph (Ngaere) Dairy Factory

Finnerty Road

1914

Use: None
Materials: Concrete
NZHPT Registered: Historic Places Category II
Legal Description: Lots 6 - 10 DP13087 Blk VI
 Ngaere SD

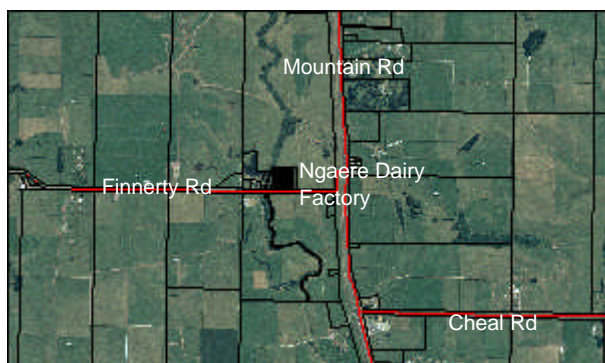
Historic Value: 3 out of 5
Architectural Value: 2 out of 4
Technical Value: 1 out of 2
Symbolic Value: - out of 3

Rarity Value: - out of 2

Townscape Value: 2 out of 2

Group Value: - out of 2

Overall Heritage Value: 8 out of 20



In 1888, thirty farmers set up a butter packing company at the bottom of Climie Road, managed by Mr. Taylor. This enterprise started out confidently – with Mr. Charles West writing “we each churn our own butter to the granulated state and then take it to the factory fresh from the churn, where it is all blended together, kegged and sent to England in the cooling chambers. As their winter is our summer we get a good price.”

Despite this, the venture failed. The chairman resigned, and there were complaints about the quality of the butter. Shareholders refused co-operating with other factories, and so operations ceased by June 1890, with the company winding up a year later.

The Ngaere settlers then held a meeting and it was decided that making cheese would give a better profit. Consequently, the Ngaere Creamery was formed in late 1892, with great success –getting up to 1200 gallons of milk per week.

The Ngaere Co-operative Dairy Company was formed in 1893, with Herbert Hurst as manager. A working bee was held on 25 August 1893 to clear the grounds, and the shareholders who could not attend this gave cash contributions towards the building of the factory. This was the only money received, and so a sum of £1,448 was lent to the company by the Bank of New South Wales – making Ngaere begin practically only on borrowed capital.

The original factory was wooden, and was built at the bottom of Finnerty Road. It was opened in January 1894 with 39 suppliers and 49 shareholders. 81 tons of cheese was made during this season, and sold in London for a total of £3,362. In this year, figures show that Taranaki was producing over three quarters of all the butter leaving New Zealand, and the Ngaere, Cardiff, Eltham and Stratford companies had produced over half the cheese from the North Island.



Ngaere was a very successful company. During its first eight years, the company took 35 prizes for cheese suitable for export. By 1896, 177 tons of cheese was being produced – over twice the amount produced three years earlier, and by 1926 it had an output of 732 tons. Ngaere has also been at the forefront of many ventures – in 1910 it became the first dairy company to produce cheese from pasteurized milk and the first to install a mechanical milk agitator.

Due to the ongoing thriving nature of the company, it was decided that a new building was required. As a result, in 1914 a concrete 12-vet factory was built, costing approximately £6,000. It was renamed “Triumph Dairy Factory” after its own brand of cheese, also called Triumph. In 1947 Ngaere became the first NZ factory to successfully use ‘Single Strain Cultures’ in bulk starter heaters, and continued to win numerous awards.

Ngaere also introduced “big cheese”- making cheese containing up to 15 pounds worth of coins, including gold sovereigns. These became a feature at Palmerston North and Dunedin shows, and were cut up and sold in slices. The Dominion Dairy Control Board asked Ngaere to

make some of this cheese for the New Zealand display at the Wembley Exhibition in England, April 1924. Ngaere obliged, making four cheeses each weighing a ton for the exhibition. Large signs in London at the time proclaimed that this was the “Largest Cheese in the World”.

Milk was delivered to the Ngaere factory in horse-drawn carts – with the farmers often calling into the butchery, the store and the blacksmiths before going home for breakfast. Most children also managed to get rides to school on these carts. However, this all changed in 1955, when Ngaere started the first tanker collection in Taranaki. (In fact, this was the first collection in New Zealand outside Waikato). The first tanker was purchased at a total cost of £4,875. Only sixteen enthusiastic suppliers agreed to form the first tanker group, as there were a lot of people against this move.



In fact, some of the suppliers believed Keith MacArtney (who first pushed for tankers) was “going to ruin the whole dairy industry” and there were death threats against him. However, the idea was successful, and a second tanker group was formed in the following year, with the company being completely reliant on tankers three years later.

In 1966, Ngaere and Lowgarth companies amalgamated, with the Lowgarth factory closing. A few Ngaere people felt sad, as they were very proud of the Ngaere Dairy Company and its reputation. However, amalgamation did have the advantage of diversification, and it meant that the 96 suppliers could produce up to 2,565 tons of fat-reduced cheese. This caused a period of growth – with the factory being added to, a second machine being put in operation, 39 chiller vats being installed, a pre-press and vacuum press being made and a full time engineer being appointed. This opened a new era in the concept of cheese making, and Ngaere became even more successful and advanced.

On September 25 1973, Ngaere suppliers received proposals for amalgamation with the Taranaki Dairy Company. These proposals were accepted and shareholders merged to construct a multi-million dollar milk powder plant at Midhirst. The Triumph (Ngaere) factory continued as a branch factory until December 1977 when it was closed, with the milk being processed at Kaponga and Normanby branches. This had a large negative effect on the Ngaere community, with the store and post office closing almost straight away.

The factory has been put to many uses since its closure – first becoming a grocery warehouse, then a clothing factory, indoor cricket arena, rave dance hall and saw mill. The factory housing was sold and turned into an Alcohol and Drugs Rehabilitation Centre.

Bibliography

The Ngaere Story

Ngaere Co-operative Dairy Factory – Milestones in Company's History 1953-1969

Triumph (Ngaere) Dairy Factory, Voullaire, Marc Frederic, Pukiariki Archives

Stratford District Centenary: 1878-1978

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