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**Electra**

A weekly feature on the  
communities in  
Horowhenua & Kapiti

# Caring for Our Community

## This week's feature – Horowhenua Historical Society

Even by New Zealand standards the settler history of Levin and the surrounding areas is quite recent, according to Horowhenua Historical Society spokesman Graeme Thompson.

"Foxton has a much earlier historical base than Levin, but it wasn't until the arrival of the railway in the 1880's that rapid development began. Levin Borough was founded in 1906 and one of our projects is the preparation of a Centennial History of the borough and district which is being compiled by historian Anthony Dreaver working with the Horowhenua District Council and the Library Trust for 2006."

Much of the work of the Horowhenua Historical Society involves the collection and preservation of anything to do with the history of the district. To this end they also work in with the historical societies in Foxton and Otaki.

"We are interested in anything to do with the history of the area – photographs, correspondence, memoranda and society minutes, for example. The church history of the area is intriguing. The main churches have had a considerable influence on settlement in the area. We also have historical data from organisations such as the Agricultural and Pastoral Show and CWIs.

"There is a great interest in the pre-European Maori history of the area. The whole of the area was formed by 'new settlers', even before the Treaty of Waitangi," Mr Thompson says.

In order to archive and preserve records and make them as widely available as possible the Horowhenua Historical Society is developing a database and information base for the history of Levin, Shannon, Manakau and the beach communities. The website, which uses a specialty US software package, has established a reputation as a model for small historical societies.



**Activity at the Levin railyard at Weraroa with Prouse's sawmill in the background.** Photo: Horowhenua Historical Society

"We have made a major effort of making photographs widely accessible for people. The beauty of putting them on a website is that people can view the images without having to handle the vulnerable originals. We are getting a good number of hits from New Zealand, Australia, the United States and elsewhere, both from people seeking information and those who are able to provide information for us.

"It's important for people to know that they don't have to hand over precious resources if they wish to keep them in the family. If they would like to share them with the Historical Society we can scan the originals and return them to their owners. However, some descendants are happy to hand over aspects of their family history in the knowledge it will be preserved."

Mr Thompson says many people see history as something that happened "over a 100 years ago."

"However much of the development of Levin took place post WWII, and we are interested in the history of industries such as caravan building and the garment industry, in establishments

such as Kimberley and Kotiri and the agricultural and horticultural developments that have helped create and build the town."

Horowhenua Historical Society members visit sites of historical interest and exhibitions and also enjoy talks about subjects of historical interest.

For more information about membership or about supplying historical data, contact Graeme Thompson (06) 368-5539 or visit the website <http://horowhenuahistory.library.org.nz>

## Adventure of the week

### Otaki Historical Society's Exhibition

#### "Memories of Main Street"



**The Lyric Theatre in Main Street Otaki.** Photo: Otaki Historical Society.

*Photographs and artefacts from bygone days.*

Former Bank of New Zealand building, Main Street, Otaki  
Contact Jan Harris (06) 364 7554

**Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10am to 2pm until Labour Weekend.**



**1996**

Electra scores another first by successfully negotiating a joint venture with Tasman Energy to supply services to 28,000 Richmond-Tasman customers.

**1998**

The Electricity Reform Act forces Electra (and all electricity companies) to separate into two distinct businesses – Lines and Electricity Retailing – and to sell one of these businesses

Horowhenua Energy Ltd Directors and Trustees vote to retain the line business and sell the company's higher risk electricity supply business, including meters.

The Energy Supply business is sold to Contact Energy with the proceeds returned to owners.

Electra changes its name to Electralines to reflect its new focus.

**1999**

Shareholders vote to retain the customer trust model for the ownership of Electralines.

## History of Electra



**1950's original building in Levin, demolished to make way for The Warehouse.**

**2000 to today**

Horowhenua Energy Ltd has 37,500 customers and assets worth \$73.1 million. Eight energy retailers use the Electralines' network to deliver electricity to households and businesses in the region.

Horowhenua Energy Ltd changes its name to Electra Ltd, the company trading name is simplified to Electra and all shares in the company are now held in trust by the Electra Trust.

Electra decides to pursue a deliberate growth strategy outside the core network business. This is designed to ensure that it continues to deliver valuable electricity sales discounts to electricity consumers in Kapiti and Horowhenua.

Electra purchases Stones Electrical Contractors Limited and Oxford Finance Corporation Limited,

both highly successful subsidiary businesses. These businesses assist Electra in maintaining discount payouts twice yearly to consumers connected to its network. Electra assets are currently worth \$100 million and it has almost 40,000 customers.

**NEXT WEEK: Home Heating**

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Ph. 0800 ELECTRA (0800353 2872)

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