



THE RUMPFES

The Rumpff family at Seaton:

Back: Lou, George, Arthur, Alfred.

*Seated: Carl, Juer, Lena, Ada, Rose,
Charlie, Mary.*

Front: Maggie Lyons (family friend)

Absent: Fred.

Tucked away in a soak at Spring Hill, north of Licola, is a hut that never appears on any maps. Rumpff's hut, a far from pretty galvanised iron hut, is slowly falling down. No longer used by the cattlemen who built it, it still stands as a memorial to three brothers from a Seaton family.

Carl Rumpff, the father of the family, arrived in Tasmania from England in 1852. He was employed there as a cadet drill sergeant and engaged in commercial enterprise. In 1863 he came to Seaton with his family, buying a property formerly held by Gibson and Knox, where he established an hotel. Seaton was a supply town for the goldfields, and at one time the family also ran stores at Happy, Jordan and Red Jacket. The boys in the family were engaged in packing stores from Seaton, often taking the horse teams through freezing weather. The hotel became a focal point for the town, and Carl ran the Post Office from there for fifty two years until his death in 1920.

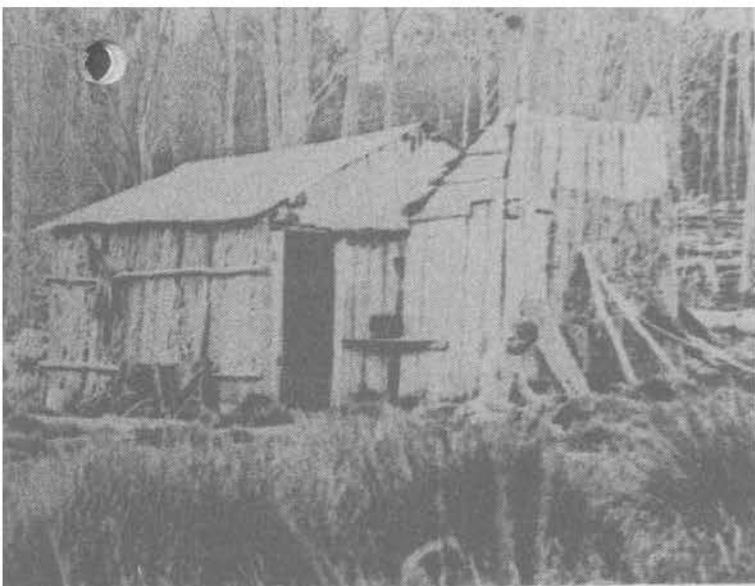
Carl and Rose Rumpff had ten children; George Augustus, Marie Louise, Otto Ludwig, Frederick Seaton, Robert Carl, Adelaide Elizabeth, Richard Juer, Arthur Henry Anton, Charlotte Lena and Alfred James. The three youngest boys, Juer (sometimes called Joe),

Artie and Alf were to be involved with the high country till the end of their days.

It is difficult to say when the emphasis shifted from commerce to cattle, but it most likely corresponded to the decline in gold mining. By 1920 the Rumpff's cattle were consistently topping the stock market at Heyfield, with three year old steers "of their own breeding" achieving a district record for that year at £18. 17. 6.

In 1921 Artie took over the Spring Hill run where Grimmes from Heyfield had previously grazed, and in 1929 the brothers took on George Hoskin's Skene run when he retired from the bush. The Monds family had previously held freehold at Spring Hill, the three brothers bought the first of the two blocks from the estate of Annie McMichael. They paid off the selection of 299 acres in 1929 and in 1939 they purchased the other block of 192 acres from the Monds family. Today's hut at Spring Hill is on Annie McMichael's block.

When the brothers took over the Skene run they also took over one of Hoskins' huts on the divide below Skene. This small log hut still stands today in an almost identical state to what it would have been then. Being small, it was easy to warm and often provided refuge from the snow. Knowledge as to it's original



Rumpffs' hut at Spring Hill in 1926

builder has been lost, although it was an old hut when Rumpffs took it over.

The next move for the brothers was the purchase from the Lyndon family of a large block just on the Glencairn side of Primrose (Riggall's) Gap. They also took out a selection further up the valley at Glencairn. A hut was built on the Gap block, but this was burnt down in 1938, beginning a fire that saved much of the area from the later 1939 fires. This was replaced with a magnificent, well-proportioned two room hut of galvanised iron on split timber frame. The iron was packed in from Seaton by packhorse, much to the distress of at least one animal that bolted with a full load. It was a hallmark of the brothers that everything they did was done with the care of a craftsman, and this hut was no exception. Today the iron from the hut has gone to make a hayshed at Glencairn, but the frame is still there as a reminder of the work of these bush carpenters.

The hut at Spring Hill was built to the same proportions, but smaller for warmth. It shows the same care in construction as the one lower down at the Gap. It boasted a large, rock-filled fireplace beside the door and a split slab sleeping platform at the rear. A table of split slabs near the door disappeared many years ago. It was originally iron roofed, with bark and upright log walls, with a log and split weatherboard chimney. At a later stage, possibly in the late 1930s, the walls and

chimney were replaced with iron from another hut nearby.

Most of the bush trips were made by Artie and Juer. They are remembered for their neat and polite manner, as well as their astute bushmanship. When on the road with their cattle they travelled phenomenal distances, usually making the trip from Seaton to the Gap in one day. After spelling them for a day or so there they were pushed on over the Barkly and up the Middle Ridge on to Skene, or went up Violet Spur to Spring Hill. As they came out in the autumn, locals could track their progress from the smoke as they burnt off behind them coming down the Middle Ridge, ensuring there would be fresh pasture for their cattle next season. During the 1939 fires they lost none of their cattle in the bush, and the undergrowth reduction where their cattle had grazed resulted in minimal losses to the Woollybutt stands on their runs.

In June 1933 Artie took part in a successful search for two prospectors lost in an unexpected blizzard on Connors Plains. The two men, Michael Evans Mack aged 33 and Thomas Adams aged 64 were both from Wood's Point and travelled to the area with George Gregory from Glencairn who was returning from one of



Rumpffs' Spring Hill hut, iron-sheathed and part derelict.



Rumpffs' hut near Mt Skene (Frogs' Hollow).



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*Remains of Rumpffs' hut
at Primrose (Riggall's) Gap.*

his regular trips over the mountains. Gregory left them at the Spring Hill hut on Wednesday, arranging to return for them on the Friday following. They prospected until late on Friday, when they were suddenly caught in an unexpected blizzard as they were trying to find their way off Connors Plain. They later claimed that at the height of the blizzard two feet of snow fell in five minutes. Gregory, unable to reach them, returned home due to the weather and was unable to report them missing until the following Tuesday. A search party of Constable Hanrahan from Heyfield, Bill Floyd and Artie Rumpff went to Coleman's hut on the Licola side of the Gap that night by car meeting up with Gregory. The next morning they rode up top, and located the two men that afternoon in an abandoned hut on Connors Plains. They were in a bad way, having had no food since the Friday, existing on snow and grass, and were wet through and suffering from frostbite. They were taken the fifteen miles to Coleman's hut across the saddles of Artie and another of the party. This was an incredible ride, with the first ten miles being through knee-deep snow. At the hut Artie, Bill Floyd and George Gregory stayed with the men while Constable Hanrahan drove to the Hill property "Glenlonan" to summon a doctor by phone. They were taken out the next day and hospitalised. It is a tribute to the bushmanship of the party that they were able to locate the men in

the first place, and then to be able to carry them out to safety.

The brothers relinquished their runs in the early 1950s. The freehold at Spring Hill was sold to Ernie Hugg for £115, and fenced for the first time. Their yard on the fence line was bulldozed and replaced with a modern one. Hugg ran cattle on the freehold, servicing them and some of his timber operations from a transportable hut that was located across the track from the original hut. This more recent hut was burnt to the ground a year or two ago. After the Rumpffs the area was grazed by Maurice Coleman, George Barraclough and Ron Sweetapple, with their areas also incorporating George Gregory's runs. Today the leases are still Crown, and the freehold from the Gap is owned by the Higgins family who bought it in the early 1950s.

Juer, the only one of the brothers to marry, died in 1951. Artie died in the following year and Alf passed away in 1963.

The hut on Spring Hill is slowly falling down. Every time I visit it more sheets of iron are gone from the chimney and names so labouriously pencilled year after year on the tin above the table can no longer be read. A wombat has made his burrow under one of the corner posts so now that swings in mid air. No doubt next time I am there that part will have started to collapse. It isn't a famous hut, or even one of great architectural significance amongst cattlemen's huts. It certainly isn't the oldest, but it is still sad to see it ending this way. Huts such as this one, that have a long association with cattlemen should not be allowed to fall down forgotten once their useful life is over. In New South Wales there is now an Association dedicated to the care of the Alpine huts around Kosciusko. The question now is — will we see the same recognition here of the historic character of our unused huts in time to ensure that we have more left than just photographs and memories.

Linda Barraclough