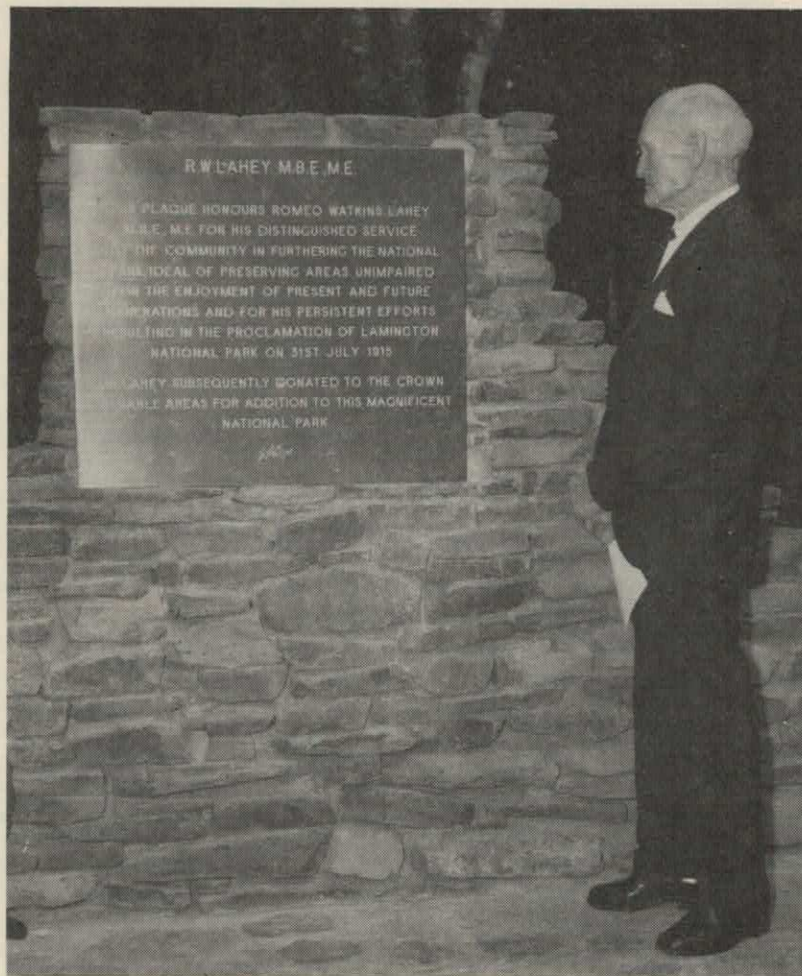


Fifth Romeo Watkins Lahey Memorial Lecture  
21st March, 1975.

Sponsored by the National Parks Association of Queensland  
"HISTORY IN QUEENSLAND NATIONAL PARKS"  
by J.K. Jarrott



On 28th May, 1967, this plaque was unveiled by  
Sir Francis Nicklin (then premier of Queensland).  
Dept. Forestry photograph of R.W. Lahey



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**"HISTORY IN QUEENSLAND NATIONAL PARKS"**

by Keith Jarrott

Hon. Secretary, National Parks Association of Queensland,  
1946-1975.

A check of copies of N.P.A. News reveals that history has been included in scattered articles such as Flinders Islands — (visited by Philip Parker King and Allan Cunningham in 1819/21, Hinchinbrook Island's confirmation as an island (1841), Chillagoe Caves first reservation, Bunya Mountains and recently, Mt. Lindesay's last 100 years. Many of you will have read my account of "A Walk Along and Over The Border" in October 1974 N.P.A. News which touched on some of the history of the border reserves. I hope in the future to cover fully the subject of early communications over the McPherson Range.

Tonight it is desirable to concentrate on some National Parks present and future on the Great Dividing Range — namely Cunningham's Gap and Spicer's Gap. In tracing the history of communications through this area, important aspects of early Queensland settlement will be covered, also early motoring, the declaration of the Cunningham's Gap National Park in 1909, its enlargement as one of the first projects of the National Parks Association of Queensland in 1930 and, last but not least, this association's objective of expanding the National Park southwards to include Spicer's Gap as well as along the crest of the Range to Wilson's Peak.

On 11 June, 1827, Allan Cunningham set out from his camp at Logan Vale (now Swanfels) on the Darling Downs and climbed a steep ridge above the camp.<sup>1</sup> He followed this ridge or lateral range in a north easterly direction to a point a few miles from the Great Dividing Range. From here at 3 p.m. he took bearings and described a gap as "a very singular deeply excavated part of the range" bearing N.N.E. from his vantage point. "This gap appeared likely to prove on examination a very practicable pass. . . ." The late R.C. Hamilton and Dr. J.G. Steele identify the gap seen by Cunningham as the present Spicer's Gap.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to recall the doubts expressed by Surveyor Warner to Wm. Coote "as to whether the precise line of Cunningham's real route has ever been found."<sup>3</sup> 12 June was very wet and Cunningham sent two men to examine the Gap on 13/14 June. Following their trip, he described the actual gap "with large masses of rock having fallen down from the lands on each side into the gap. Immediately to the south, the range presented a very moderate surface, over which a line of road might be constructed without much labour. . . ." Allan Cunningham's own map as reproduced in Ida Lee's *Early Explorers In Australia*<sup>4</sup> makes it clear that the gap seen from here is the present Spicer's Gap. He marked "Pass" between Mt. Mitchell and Spicer's Peak, both unnamed at that time. He had intended to head to the "Western Marshes." His eleven horses were in a weakened condition and he decided to return to Sydney. There is only mention of pack horses, so it can be assumed that he and his six men walked all the way from Newcastle to the Downs and back.



Fourteen months later, Cunningham was approaching the Gap from the eastern side, leaving Limestone on 14 August, 1828. On 20 August when about 18 miles from the Gap "the inability of the pack bullocks to travel over some stony hills, owing to the extreme tenderness of their feet" forced a halt. Next day Cunningham wrote "the Gap into which I had simply looked from its western side in June, 1827 and which certainly did appear to offer a very practicable passage to the eastward, was very distinct from the one now before us." He moved his party northward but on reflection changed his mind and concluded he had been in the right vicinity and turned south again.

On 24 August he camped "within three miles of the entrance of the gap" now suspected to be the Pass of last year's journey. James Swainsborough<sup>6</sup> who had been with Cunningham on the Darling Downs in 1827, was sent up a ridge and ascended into the Pass and from above it looked into the western country and identified this hollow back with the Pass at the head of Millar's Valley notwithstanding its very different appearance from the east. Next day, Allan Cunningham took one man and an odometer at 7 a.m. and followed up a ridge for nearly three miles and "immediately the summit of the Pass appeared broad before us, bounded by most stupendous heads, towering at least two thousand feet above it."

These he named Mts. Mitchell and Cordeaux after the Surveyor General and an Assistant and went on to describe his climb in great detail (see Coote's History of Queensland, page 22 or Dr. J.G. Steele's Explorers of The Moreton Bay District, page 290).

After penetrating the gap by a quarter mile, he climbed the north peak of Mt. Mitchell, recognising the country of his 1827 expedition. We call this the West Peak. After taking bearings and mapping he returned to Camp Six at Rocky Creek and was hit by a violent and lengthy tempest which lasted till midnight. After returning to Limestone and Brisbane, he reported to Governor Darling that the line of road should be 18 miles S.W. from Limestone Hills, requiring only one bridge, then up Bremer Valley and onto his 24/25 August Campsite another 12 miles, thence up the forest ridge to the base of the Pass. "In the formation of a practicable road through the last quarter mile to the pitch of the Pass, the skill of the practical engineer will be called into action. There are abundance of materials of stone and large timber on the spot at his command, and there is sufficient room to avoid the abrupt face by which we ascended, by taking a sweep round so as to intersect the wall of rocks further to the southward and then by tracing it northerly to the point at which it terminates in the Pass. The passage through the Pass westerly to the head of Millar's Valley requires simply the brush to be cut away, the construction of a small bridge over a narrow water channel and the ground smoothed. . . . The distance from Darling Downs to Brisbane Town by the nearest line of communication overland is about 77 miles." <sup>7</sup>

Ninety years passed before a local contractor, J. Maddox, for the Goolman Shire constructed the first road up that ridge<sup>8</sup> and along the base of the rock wall, to meet with a voluntary construction team from Warwick at the head of Cunningham's Gap. If the settlers who penetrated the Gap from the west, including the Leslies, had followed Allan Cunningham's instructions, the course of Queensland history would have changed with every possibility that Warwick and not Toowoomba would have been the main city of the Downs. As this paper develops it will be seen that the settlers attempted the impossible by merely dropping down the 60° eastern face of Cunningham's Gap and even later, the bridle track<sup>9</sup> which when established, climbed partly up the slope of Mt. Cordeaux and then down the long steep narrow ridge on the north side of East Gap Creek, crossing the creek on the flat and then following Cunningham's lower spur down towards the present Aratula.

On 16 September, 1828, Allan Cunningham was on Windmill Hill, Brisbane and sketched the profile of the Great Dividing Range<sup>10</sup>. He included the following names — Spicer's Peak, Mt. Mitchell, Gap, Mt. Cordeaux.

Peter Spicer was an overseer of convicts at Moreton Bay.



Contrary to popular belief, Patrick Leslie was not the next white visitor through Cunningham's Gap. Lieutenant Gorman (Commandant at Moreton Bay) sent Bush Constable Brown (a coolie) and Constable Giles to search for an escaped convict in the direction of Cunningham's Gap on 21 August, 1839. He then sent temporary Constables Thompson and Eagan with 14 days' rations to accompany Brown and Giles and three blacks and to proceed three or four days' **march** past the Gap. They carried letters of introduction and authority for further rations should they reach pastoral stations in New England.<sup>11</sup>

The word "march" is significant as these men had no horses or bullocks and walked all the way, no mean achievement as there were no tracks. Thompson, Giles and Eagan were all recommended for pardons by Lt. Gorman. At the time of their journey they were still serving sentences for offences in Britain.

Whilst we can see the Gap from the road and from many vantage points, these men and Allan Cunningham's party journeyed through virgin forests and through 100's of miles of country in which the aborigines at least regarded them with suspicion and might have shown hostility at every mile of the way.

Thompson and party arrived at McIntyre's head station at Byron Plains (west of Glen Innes) on 13 September, having penetrated the Gap. Mr. A. Cooper of Byron Plains gave them limited rations and they started back on 17 September. The same evening Thompson, Giles and Eagan were back at Byron Plains claiming Brown and the blacks had evaded them taking all the rations. Two blacks then returned having "escaped" from Brown. Mr. Cooper believed them and forwarded them to Mr. McDonald,<sup>12</sup> Commissioner at Armidale, but he placed them under arrest. Eventually they were moved south to Sydney and at Lieut. Gorman's plea were shipped back to Brisbane. In the meantime, Brown and one black returned to Brisbane via the Gap on 27 September claiming the others had moved on while he stopped to mark a tree. Lieut. Gorman in his report to Sydney praised Thompson, Giles and Eagan and quoted Thompson's report<sup>13</sup> on the Gap "after getting over the Gap the northern [eastern] descent from which he says presents the only difficulty to a Road being made. . . they came down upon a fine. . . country with vast parklike plains, running from east to west as far as the eye could reach, and intersected by. . . streams all running to the westward — that they neither crossed nor saw any large river — nor eastern water."

According to the Brisbane Courier, the Sydney Herald, April, 1840, published a letter from Moreton Bay reporting "abundant grass and. . . the opening in Dividing Range called Cunningham's Gap has been surveyed and found to be easy of ascent by pack bullocks; a gang of twelve men could in a fortnight make it passable for drays."<sup>14</sup>

(Source of this information has not been traced).

In late June, 1840, Patrick Leslie, Walter Leslie and Peter Murphy took horses through Cunningham's Gap from the west and rode towards Limestone, reaching the Bremer Valley. Having second thoughts because they were well aware that Moreton Bay Settlement was then forbidden to free settlers, they returned through the Gap at the end of June. Their report to their colleagues was that the steep slope on the eastern face precluded the use of drays.<sup>15</sup>

Desperate for supplies, Gilbert Elliot and Arthur Hodgson rode from their station, Eton Vale (at Mt. Rubieslaw) to Cunningham's Gap, down the steep eastern slope and on to Ipswich (Limestone) thence to Brisbane. Returning empty handed they dragged themselves and their scrambling horses hand-over-hand to the Downs again.<sup>16</sup>

On 28 October, Henry Stuart Russell and Pemberton Hodgson reached Eton Vale to learn from Cocky Rogers that Gilbert Elliot had recently taken drays across the Downs to Cunningham's Gap intending to lower them down the eastern side and thence to Brisbane for supplies. This he did, knowing he could not return the same way.

Geo. Thorn of Limestone told H.S. Russell there were four drays in the party.



In the meantime, the Moreton Bay Commandant, Lieut. Owen Gorman, Dr. Simpson plus Baker (Boralcho) — an ex-convict who had lived with the aborigines in the Lockyer Valley, Constable Thompson and another constable, reached Hodgson and Elliot's Eton Vale on 19 October.<sup>17</sup> H.S. Russell wrote that Gorman had taken an Irish jaunting cart with a bullock in the shafts up a new route "Gorman's Gap" to a head of Hodgsons Creek. Lieut. Gorman continued across the Downs and after camping at Mt. Dumeresq on the night of 22 October, "commenced the ascent to the Gap. The road became almost impassable with stoney creeks and stumps of trees. In two or three places it was very precipitous. The boldings of the peaks on each side rendered the scene very picturesque. After a good deal of difficulty we reached the summit (of the Gap). The day was hazy and we could not get a view.

We hastened to descend and for nearly two miles the way was very precipitous and quite impassable for a loaded dray. We halted (after) having gone about 16 miles. . . ."<sup>18</sup>

On the final leg of his journey, 54 miles via Bremer River, he reached Brisbane in 22 hours, having walked throughout the night.

His report to the Colonial Secretary in Sydney for Governor Gipps stated "I feel convinced no drays with any sort of loading can pass thro' Cunningham's Pass" and went on to recommend his new route "Gorman's Gap" as suitable for loaded drays.<sup>19</sup>

On 12 November, Elliot arrived with his drays on the Downs from Moreton Bay by Gorman's new route, thus helping to seal the fate of Cunningham's Gap as a commerce carrying route until 1926.

Henry Stuart Russell wrote of Cunningham's Gap — "I once went down its three 'pinches' on foot, because I could hardly stop myself: to go up again — without rattlins — I declined."

Jean Bull (an N.P.A.Q. member) writing of Fassifern Homestead, records that John Cameron and Richard Coulson from Maryvale, lowered sleds loaded with wool down ridges of Cunningham's Gap in 1841 and a year later settled at Kingbah and Fassifern, presumably bringing their sheep down over the Gap.

As the shortest route from the southern Darling Downs to Brisbane, the Gap continued to be used by horsemen. Edward Anderson who arrived "at Brisbane Town on 10 July, 1843, journeyed by Normanby and the Gap to enter employment with the Leslies at Canning Downs."<sup>20</sup>

One distinguished traveller, Ludwig Leichhardt, had camped at Mt. Greville on 13 March, 1844, where he lost a mare and foal. A week later Leichhardt climbed up through Cunningham's Gap on the way to Fred Bracker at Rosenthal. Dr. Leichhardt in letters written from Rosenthal furnishes descriptions of the Gap. "The rock which forms Flinders Peak, is found in Mt. Edwards, Mt. Greville and if I am not mistaken in Mts. Mitchell and Cordeaux. . . . The finest mountain country I have seen in this Colony is the eastern side of the Gap through which the road passes from Brisbane to the southern part of the Downs. Sunny ranges covered with fine grass and open forest ascend pretty rapidly to the Pass. A waterfall rushes over a precipice 300 feet high into a rocky valley. Both sides of the mountains have some brushes, particularly the western side in which many of the trees of the Bunya brushes reappeared."<sup>21</sup>

Later in 1844, the second white child born on the Darling Downs, Harry Bracker, was brought down through the Gap from Rosenthal. Aged five months, Harry was carried most of the way to Brisbane on a pillow by Mrs. Fred Bracker, on her horse "Trusty". Their spring cart with bedding etc. was lowered by ropes from tree to tree down the Gap. The cart was later returned to the Downs via Gorman's Gap.<sup>22</sup>

Herb. Krause in "Gaps in History" refers to an advertisement in Moreton Bay Courier, 15 August, 1846. "Bush Inn, Cunningham's Gap: John Perryman begs to inform Gentlemen who traverse the Cunningham's Gap Road, that he has lately purchased the premises known as the Bush Inn, lately occupied by Mr Young, where it will be his constant study to provide comfortable accommodation." This Inn was at the Fassifern Reserve on Warrill Creek.



Bracker, the Leslies and other southern Darling Downs settlers hoped for "a new road which would obviate the necessity of sending drays by the present circuitous and difficult route over Hodgson's Gap" (i.e. via Drayton). Henry Alphen (stockman of Leslie Bros.) in April 1847 found "an excellent road over the Main Range about 2½ miles south of Cunningham's Gap. The new line of road comes down on Reynolds Creek over a very fine leading ridge and is only two miles longer than the present one through Cunningham's Gap. There is only one pinch on the range and a scrub about three quarters of a mile wide, which is not dense, and can easily be cut through at very little cost. We understand this slight obstruction is to be cleared away immediately to allow the drays to pass; it is entirely free from rocks and gullies." <sup>23</sup>

"It is impossible to overrate the importance of the discovery to the interests of the inhabitants of this district, as there is very little doubt but that the squatters in the northern parts of New England, the Severn and other places, will avail themselves of this projected line, and send their teams to Moreton Bay instead of to Port Macquarie and the Clarence." <sup>24</sup>

Three weeks later the Moreton Bay Courier reported from the Bush Inn (22 April) that "Fred Bracker, Messrs Leslie, John Deuchar and J. Millar have carefully inspected the new line of road. . . . much better than expected would have been found over the Range." An appeal fund was launched through the newspaper. <sup>25</sup>

By July, "the clearing of the new line of road from Darling Downs, over Main Range to the southward of Cunningham's Gap was now being proceeded in earnest. Six labourers and five natives are removing obstructions; it is expected it will be made passable for teams some time before the wool season commences." <sup>26</sup>

From Ipswich, came a report that on the first Monday in August, 1847, two drays each loaded with eleven bales of wool, belonging to Mr. Bracker, had arrived, having effected the journey in three days less than they would have performed it on the old line. "Mr. Bracker informs it is a saving of 70 miles from his station (Rosenthal) by the new route; it must therefore be of advantage to all stockholders south of Cunningham's Gap. The expenses of the road have been principally defrayed by Messrs. Leslie and Bracker. . . ." <sup>27</sup>

In December, 1847, £100 was voted by the New South Wales government for all roads in Moreton Bay/Darling Downs. Eighteen months later, the vote was increased to £300 but this had to cover the road to Toowoomba also. <sup>28</sup>

W.J.B. (Billy) Gray in "Pioneers and Pioneering On The Darling Downs" written in the 1890's says — "I drove the first load of wool over Spicer's Peak Road, in fact it wasn't a road at all; just a track made from the top of the Range to the bottom. The scrub was called cleared; there was a tree cut here and there to admit of the bullocks passing between them." Billy Gray was fifteen years of age at the time.

Billy Gray claimed "once and once only that any supplies came up through Cunningham's Gap and that had to be taken off the drays and drawn up the range on a slide, two or three bags at a time. It took as many as 30 bullocks to draw up the empty drays."

He also had a further claim to fame as "I drove the team that drew the first load of grog to 'Horse & Jockey Inn' [at Warwick] by way of Spicer's Peak." <sup>29</sup>

It is now appropriate to record that the name "Spicer's Gap" was not used in print until July, 1909, nor on maps until about 1918 — after motor vehicles had commenced to use this road. It was called variously "the Road Gap", or "the road over Spicer's Peak."

Some N.P.A.Q. members have seen bullock teams hauling timber wagons but this is radically different to the system of hauling the early drays which were massive two wheel vehicles with two shafts, one bullock in the shafts and others chained ahead. The heavier the load, the more strain there was on the first bullock.

James Craig, a blacksmith on the western side of the Gap, invented the bullock dray pole, using two bullocks. <sup>30</sup>



Donald Gunn referred to these as "Pollers", the pair in front of them as "pin bullocks" and the pair of leading bullocks as "leaders".<sup>31</sup>

Henry Alphen, the discoverer of the new route received official approval to establish an inn on the western side of Spicer's. After a few years he sold out to Jubb. Alexander Balbi set up yet another inn at the foot of the climb on the eastern side.

In late October, 1848, Thomas Henry Huxley (later a distinguished scientist) while assistant surgeon on H.M.S. *Rattlesnake* (Captain Owen Stanley) rode from Limestone to Leslie's property on the Darling Downs. With him were Messrs. Hay and McCrady. They stayed overnight at Perryman's Bush Inn at Fassifern, on over Spicer's Peak Road to Hay's or Leslie's. Extracts of Huxley's description are. . . "We crossed by a new, and as they call it, improved road. What the old one must have been I cannot conceive. We dismounted and even then it was one of the toughest climbs up the last pass that I ever had. . . a deep stillness reigned over all, broken only now and then by the sweet musical chime of the bell bird. . . ."

A full account is contained in "Diary of Thomas Henry Huxley" edited by Julian Huxley, London, 1935.

In 1851 or 1852, Lord Ker and Lord Scott stayed at Jubb's Inn on a visit to the Darling Downs.<sup>32</sup> Two years later, the Rev. W.B. Clarke, who seemed to spend more time geologising than saving souls, wrote of minute quantities of gold at the base of the main range between Mt. Leslie and Cunningham's Gap. He also described with some colour, his journey from the Downs. "Finding it impossible to get down Cunningham's Gap, down the escarpment into the Moreton Bay by that route, I attempted to cross on the southward of Mt. Mitchell and between that mount and Spicer's Peak, where a road is now being made. Owing to the carelessness of the driver, the vehicle was unfortunately upset and great damage done to it 200 yards down from the top. Mr. Balbi [of the Inn at the foot of the Range] loaned bullocks to extricate it." <sup>33</sup>

Rev. Clarke listed some strange heights in the vicinity; Cunningham's Gap 2,300 ft, Cordeaux 4,100 ft, Mitchell 3,129 ft, and Huntley 4,153 ft. The latter two he gave as recorded by J.C. Burnett, the surveyor. Burnett's notebooks have not been traced but may be in Sydney.

On the 27th March, 1854, Governor General Fitzroy, during a three weeks visit to south Queensland, left Brisbane on horseback, rode to Drayton, changed to a gig and stayed at Eton Vale on 29th. Continuing on to Warwick, he left there for Jubbs Inn (described as at Cunningham's Gap) and stayed overnight on 3rd April. On the 4th he rode across the Range and reached the Bush Inn owned by Mr. R.E. Dix (at Fassifern Reserve) in the evening. Next day he went to Ipswich and returned to Brisbane on 6th April. <sup>34</sup>

In mid July, 1854, Nehemiah Bartley, who became<sup>35</sup> a frequent visitor to the Downs, stayed overnight at Jubb's Inn. "The next day I had to tackle the scrub on the Spicer's Peak Gap. This road cut through a dense vine scrub, had been at one time paved with thick pine logs — a corduroy road, in fact — and while it lasted, all was well. But, the place was naturally almost a bottomless morass, full of springs; the logs had rotted in the middle and the sound ends tilted up in all directions. . . after crossing a clear mountain stream, I drew near this redoubtable scrub of Spicer's Peak. . . the staccato "swipp" of the coachwhip bird seeming to make it the boss spirit of the weird and gloomy "Der Freischutz" scene. . . In I went, leading my horse and dodged from log to log, tree root to tree root, my horse sinking to his knees at each step. At last, in I went up to my hips. . . but I was rewarded for it all when I got clear of the scrub. Glorious was the view to the south, over the peaked mountains which mark the heads of the Clarence and Richmond Rivers, from this 1,900 feet of elevation; while another 1,900 feet above me was the narrow rocky eastern horn of Mt. Mitchell." <sup>35</sup>

Six months later, Bartley and Robert Meston went up the road on Spicer's Peak and found it "dry as a bone." No wonder, as he recorded temperatures of 108° at Warwick on 13th, and 108° at Clifton on 14th and 110° at Drayton on 15th January.



Bartley and Meston went back to the coast via Cunningham's Gap. Robert Meston said he knew the way. . . . "We soon came to the top of the awful slide. Imagine a slope of some 45° for a stretch of 2,500 feet and you have Cunningham's Gap, at home, though it looks pretty enough at a distance." Meston remarked, "it is not customary to ride down this Gap, so we dismounted and I held onto the bridle of my faithful steed, who planted his forelegs, alternately, and stiffly in front of him, and so kept me from going downhill 'by the run' ". . . . When that trouble was over, Meston went off to the left to see the beautiful waterfall of Tarome, 370 feet, as it forms the head of Fletcher's Creek. . . . <sup>36</sup>

Road conditions deteriorated. A report from Warwick on 9 June, 1855 read "The roads require attention being in a fearful state, particularly the line over Spicer's Peak which is almost impassable. Mr. Windeyer of Deepwater (New England) is sending 2 drays of wool through to Brisbane and. . . . Tenterfield etc. growers may follow." <sup>37</sup> The Rev. W. Ridley rode from Ipswich on 24 July to Mercer's Bush Inn and next day onto Jubb's Inn over the almost impassable road through the scrub on the Range. <sup>38</sup> Pressure for road repairs was made by the squatters and on 20 September, 1855, Nehemiah Bartley wrote, "Coming down the Main Range from Warwick, I had a long talk to Yates, the overseer of roads, and saw his new marked line, cleared to ease the terrible scrub track." <sup>39</sup>

A meeting was held at Warwick about 12 July, 1856 when it was resolved "road trains might be adopted in these districts, the only obstacle being the Main Dividing Range. . . . and a petition was signed to plead completion of permanent works over the mountain near Spicer's Peak, which is the direct route from New England to the port of Brisbane." <sup>40</sup>

In July, 1857, nine llamas were brought from South America by Edward Daveney for Gilbert Davidson of Canning Downs, which they reached via Spicer's Gap. They did well at Canning Downs but could not oust the merino and were transferred later to Eton Vale where the last of their descendants died not so long ago." (pre 1927). These docile coarse-haired animals were first shorn by Jack Howe, Snr. <sup>41</sup>

In January, 1859 John Gill was awarded a contract to carry interstate mail including drops at Warwick and Ipswich, once weekly via Cunningham's Gap. <sup>42</sup>

February, 1859 saw Balbi move from the foot of the Range to Bush Inn, Fassifern. "Travellers from Ipswich to Warwick putting up at his Inn, will be guided in shortening the journey (as the usual route is almost impassable) along a line through Cunningham's Gap, which shortens the journey by 10 miles." <sup>43</sup>

Still as part of New South Wales, the Surveyor of Roads, was allocated £1,200 for the Ipswich — Spicer's Peak — Warwick road, with contemplated work from the Peak to Jubb's Inn. <sup>44</sup>

This Inn was pulled down by Mr. Jubb on or about 18 July, 1859. Nehemiah Bartley saw this happening when he made a fast ride from Warwick leaving 7 a.m., passing Maryvale at 10.45, Jubb's Inn at noon, the top of the Range at 2 p.m., stopping briefly for "a glorious view to the southeast of Lindesay, Barney etc." and reached Balbi's at Fassifern at 5.30 p.m.; 10½ hours in the saddle. <sup>45</sup>

Separation of Queensland came in December, 1859 with nothing in the Treasury, but by June, 1860, the first estimates of expenditure included 80 miles at £14 per mile for the Ipswich to Warwick road. <sup>46</sup> As a result on 28 August a newspaper report stated "Surveyor Austin is engaged on a survey of the Pass of Cunningham's Gap and the line thence to Warwick, also from the Gap to Ipswich by the valley of the Bremer. By concentrating an equal amount of labour on this line at the Gap to that which has been expended at Spicer's Peak, an excellent road to Warwick may be formed, far superior to the present, and from 10 to 12 miles shorter." <sup>47</sup>

The Bremer Valley route was the one recommended by Allan Cunningham 32 years previously.

The Mails from Warwick to Ipswich and return were running twice weekly in July, 1860. <sup>48</sup>



The Governor, Sir Geo. F. Bowen, saw the road for himself during a triumphant tour of South Queensland in March, 1860. He rode on horseback the whole way from Ipswich to Fassifern then through "Cunningham's Gap" (but the official map shows his route over Spicer's Peak) to Millar's Vale and Warwick. Later he returned to Brisbane via Drayton and Toowoomba.<sup>49</sup>

Sir Geo. Bowen wrote to H. Merivale, Permanent Under Secretary for the Colonies on 10 April, 1860. . . .

"Some of the squatters of Merivale had descended to the lowlands to meet and escort me to their houses; so we formed a very picturesque cavalcade as we wound up through the luxuriant forests of the Gap. On the summit I was greeted with loud cheers. . . . and found another batch of hospitable squatters, with cold collation and plenty of champagne and hock, spread on the grass at the top of the Pass, nearly 3,000 feet above the sea. . . . I rode one day seventy miles in eight hours, with a change of horses. You should never send a Governor who cannot ride and shoot. . . ."<sup>50</sup>

It seems everyone forgot to point out to the official party, the "deplorable state of the road."

Road conditions formed the major portion of evidence taken by a Queensland Parliamentary Select Committee enquiring into Internal Communications in July, 1860.<sup>51</sup> Names of well known Queenslanders appear in the evidence. F.E. Roberts (later of the McPherson Range border survey) reported "I returned from Warwick by Spicer's Peak. To the foot of the Range it is passable in dry weather but the ascent on the Warwick side of the Range is very bad—nasty short chopping ridges, and in wet weather, dangerous gullies. . . . A better line of road could be made through Cunningham's Gap. . . . down the valley to the Bremer, passing Rosevale Station and joining the main Drayton-Ipswich line about six miles from Ipswich. . . . there would be one great difficulty, in cutting through a cliff on this [Moreton] side of the Gap. . . . the road would save eight or ten miles.

To a question — "Why was the road changed from Cunningham's Gap to Spicer's Peak," Mr. Roberts answered, "I imagine that it was to avoid the great pinches on the present Cunningham's Gap track. I would take for the new road, the southern side of the gorge until I came to the cliff and a cutting would be required to get onto the summit level."

Answering the question "Is the present horse track above the true water level of the Gap?", Roberts replied, "Yes, about 150 feet or more, for I recollect there were two tall pines growing in the centre of the Gap some time ago, the tops of which did not reach the summit of the present crossing."

Later F.E. Roberts estimated an expenditure of £8,000 to £10,000 to make the cutting and put the road through Cunningham's Gap. "The cutting would be a quarter mile long."

A.C. Gregory (Surveyor General) in his evidence stated — "The slopes on Spicer's Peak as they are at present are — Upper slope 21 degrees, the long lock is 17 degrees. The slope at the top could be reduced to 10 degrees, but the others could not be made less than 17 degrees. The steepest slope on Cunningham's Gap was 11 degrees, except at a few short pinches which can be reduced to 10 degrees. Cunningham's Gap will not be practicable for drays until some cuttings are made; . . . I have ordered a survey."

Mr. Gregory was "aware that considerable traffic existed" on the Ipswich-Warwick road.

The 1860 enquiry did not result in a new road but repairs were made to the Spicer's Peak route. In 1863, another Select Committee spent most time on the Ipswich-Drayton road and gave little attention to the Ipswich-Warwick road.<sup>52</sup> The inaction of the new government did not satisfy southern Darling Downs residents. A Warwick meeting on 1 October, 1861, resolved to send a memorial to Governor Bowen outlining (1) great inconvenience and loss to the inhabitants by the bad state of the Warwick to Ipswich road (2) Worst part of the road is Maryvale to Spicer's Peak (3) A line has been marked avoiding the bad country between Creighton's Public House and Spicer's Peak and a competent surveyor should report thereon (4) £4,000 should be spent in 1862,



all this sum between Maryvale and Spicer's Peak.<sup>53</sup>

A permanent road overseer was resident at this time on the eastern side, about half way up the range — Clinton's Camp. On 14 September, 1861, the Courier reported Mr. Clinton's house had been burnt down in the night. The children and a few items were rescued. "Mr. Clinton is noted for his courtesy to travellers and a collection is being made."<sup>54</sup>

The Mail Service seemed to change hands every few years. Geo. Pearce in October, 1861 obtained the 1862 contract. In October, 1863, Crichton, the mailman was killed by a kick from his horse. The mails were then leaving Ipswich every Monday, 10.30 a.m. and Thursday 1 p.m. via Flinders Peak, Fassifern, Clintons (on Main Range), Maryvale, Glengallan, arriving at Warwick every Tuesday at noon and Friday at 4 .m.<sup>55</sup>

The Postmaster-General, Thos. Lodge Murray Prior was appointed on 6 November, 1861 and shortly afterwards visited the post offices of Ipswich, Warwick, Drayton, Toowoomba, Dalby, etc. by horseback. Later, either he or his son was among the first to climb Mt. Lindesay.

The Queensland Daily Guardian on 20 September, 1862 wrote, "Repair of the range road under superintendence of Mr. Clinton, is fast approaching completion. Fifteen culverts are formed and a substantial bridge erected over worst part of Wienholt Creek. When completed this road will be a saving of 50 miles between Warwick and Ipswich." The Postmaster was back at Warwick via Toowoomba in December, 1862, returning via the Gap and Fassifern to Ipswich on M.O. Business. Thirteen months later, the residents of Warwick were still taking a dim view of the state of the road.

"Why are no men working on the Main Range getting the road in order for the wool drays and allowing Warwick to get supplies up at a remunerating rate instead of the present exorbitant rate of 20 shillings per 100 lbs." This did some good as three days later there was a report that metal would be placed in the cuttings.<sup>56</sup>

Mr. R.J. Cottell recollected "In 1864 I was a Clerk of Works in Roads Dept., and travelled in the saddle from Ipswich to Fassifern to Spicer's Peak Road where a road party was at work under Clerk of Works, Mr. Clinton. His camp was at a spring halfway up the Range. One day we rode to the top of Cunningham's Gap. I remember well my wonderment that anything on wheels could possibly have gone either down or up such a breakneck looking place."<sup>57</sup> The official accounts showed that Foreman of Works Clinton had expended £11,536 in the year to June, 1864 on culverts, a heavy side cutting, outfall culverts, catch drains, inverts, metalling the Black Pinch, one mile of side cut in rock on the west, 1¼ miles of bog cleared, formed logged for a half mile and all metalled, more cuttings and fencing of the Top Pinch Cutting at Spicer's Peak.<sup>58</sup>

In February, 1975, three sections of this cobbled or paved road surface was still in good order.

In 1867 the railway from Ipswich reached Toowoomba and by 1871 it was at Warwick. The expenditure on the Spicer's Peak road declined and the use of the road declined sharply. Little road work appears to have been done on this road for the next 40 years but it was convenient for local traffic and timber getters.

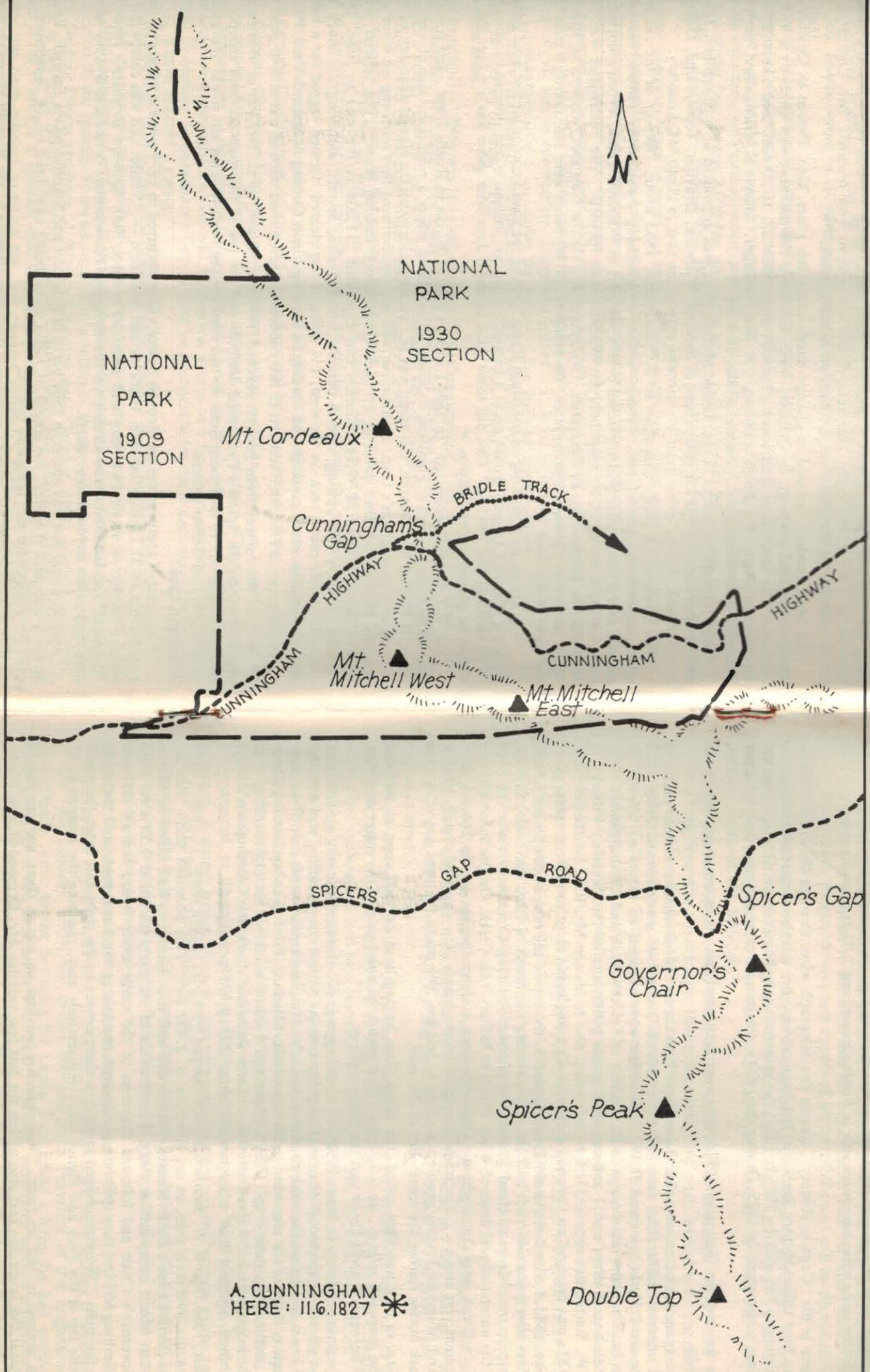
#### Telegraph Line

A new era of communication through Spicer's Gap occurred in 1879 when a telegraph line was commenced on 21 January between Warwick and Fassifern — 45 miles and was completed on 27 May. This was a single iron wire and provided a direct link between Brisbane, Ipswich and Warwick.<sup>59</sup> The latter city was already on the Brisbane-Toowoomba-Tenterfield-Sydney telegraph line (completed in November, 1861).

An additional line was added in 1886 between Brisbane and Stanthorpe via Ipswich, Fassifern, Spicer's Gap and Warwick, the length of 138½ miles being completed on 14 September. It was used for the quadruplex telegraph system.

The official report for 1886-87 contains a startling reference to the Ipswich-Warwick telegraph





A. CUNNINGHAM  
HERE: 11.6.1827 \*



line. Many miles were destroyed on and after 22 January, 1887 when "trees innumerable were uprooted and thrown over the telegraph lines. The country for long distances was under water, bridges were swept away, rivers and creeks were over their banks, roads were impassable. Many days elapsed before some wires were workable in South Queensland." That must have been a wild cyclone!

Herb Krause in his "Gaps in History", quotes five telegraph wires through the Gap in 1901. The Australian Post Office History Section at Brisbane advises that telephone communication was probably operating to Warwick by 1905 but that the interstate telephone service, Brisbane-Sydney via Spicer's Gap, commenced in 1925. During the 1920's, the iron wires were replaced with copper circuits.

In the last few months (February, 1975) the posts and wires have been removed from both sides of the Gap.

With the expansion of railways in Queensland the survey of alternative routes and the advantages of interstate rail traffic, exercised the minds of Queensland governments. From 1883 to 1886 Surveyors C.B. Lethem and R.W. Southerden were engaged in exploring alternative routes for a railway over the main range in the vicinity of Spicer's Peak and Cunningham's Gap. Mr. Southerden kept a diary and I am indebted to the publishers of the 'Steering Wheel', in which Mr. R.W. Southerden repeated letters and notes, also to his son Mr. R.L. Southerden who in the mid 1920's was engaged on the road survey up Cunningham's Gap from the western side.<sup>60</sup>

"On 10 May, 1883, I travelled the old Ipswich road to the top of the range near Spicer's Peak and had my first view from Governor's Chair. After visiting the heads of Emu and Swan Creeks, we shifted camp up past Maryvale Head Station and pitched it on Gap Creek near where the road turns to cross the watershed and descend Black Pinch to Millars Vale Creek. On the following day we went up Gap Creek into Cunningham's Gap and down a short distance on the coastal side, finding the descent very steep. . . the track through Cunningham's Gap was used chiefly I think by Fassifern and Maryvale Station people travelling to and fro. We made frequent use of it with saddle and pack horses during the remainder of the year."

Spicer's Gap, or as it was then called, the Road Gap, having been decided upon as the best crossing for the proposed railway, we followed on foot round the coast side of the range as far as the watershed between Warrill Creek and the Bremer River.

Our first permanent camp in June, 1883 was at the spring, two-thirds of the way up the road from Anderson's house at the foot of the range. For ten months all our camp shifting was done by pack horses." From a camp on the western side of Spicer's, Mr. Southerden wrote on 8 February, 1885, "last Sunday three of the men went to the top of Mt. Mitchell. I did so today. Leaving camp at 10.30 a.m. and taking water bags, C.B. Lethem and I found a way to the top reaching it at 11.45 a.m. The height was 1,500 feet above camp. Later we looked down into Cunningham's Gap. From Mt. Mitchell, Spicer's Peak was estimated about 200 to 300 feet higher."

On 1 August, 1886, Mr. R.W. Southerden was camped with Mr. Lethem about 15 chains from the summit on the Warwick side, at an elevation of 2,400 feet.<sup>61</sup> This provided them with an opportunity to climb Spicer's Peak. Messrs. Southerden and E.J. Matthews had failed in March due to a late start from a camp further away. This time six of the party started at 9.50 a.m. They headed for Governor's Chair and followed the crest of the range along which ran an old wire fence. After climbing 600 feet they split into two groups, one taking the direct route and the other striking off to the right. "We were obliged to make a short detour to the right and enter the scrub which covers the top of the Peak and then it was comparatively easy, reaching the summit at 11 a.m."

The others arrived in half an hour. "We were not the first on top as there are axe marks visible; . . . about five years ago and also within the last few months. Mr. Ormond Hill of Maryvale has been on top of Spicer's Peak and Mt. Mitchell. Our aneroids. . . gave an altitude of



about 3,900 feet above sea level."

Mr. R.W. Southerden gave a long description of the scene from Spicer's Peak and his notes expressed a hope they would soon climb Mt. Cordeaux. His son, Mr. R.L. Southerden, told me that the party was recalled to Brisbane and his father never had the opportunity to tackle Cordeaux. The railway proposals were not approved in the 1880's and will be discussed in more detail later in this paper.

In 1902, the Hon. Arthur Morgan in addressing the Royal Geographic Society of Australia (Q'land) reported "the Cunningham's Gap track which is now so overgrown with dense vine scrub as to be almost impassable even for equestrian traffic, crosses between Mt. Cordeaux and the northern peak of Mt. Mitchell."

There was another recorded climb of Mt. Mitchell in February, 1908 when Wm. Gaylard wrote a long account in a newspaper (Boonah or Ipswich), made available by courtesy of Mr. Herb Krause of Kalbar. Gaylard and two others from Boonah rode horses to the foot of the Gap road., They left camp at 4 a.m., walked to Governor's Rock, had a meal and started the climb up Mt. Mitchell at 7.30 a.m. They failed temporarily 70 feet from the top and worked around to the **north** peak and from there to the top at 11 a.m. "There were a good few names carved on the trees." Three hours later they were back on the creek at the head of Spicer's and then walked back down the Range.

In this era, Mr. R.A. Wearne of Ipswich Technical College, was prominent in exploring the Gaps. He organised a week's School of Geology for 20 teachers at the foot of Spicer's Gap in January, 1910. A climb of Spicer's Peak was included and Dr. Woolnough described the peaks and their razorbacks (Cordeaux, Mitchell and Spicer's) as "denuded remnants of an uplifted peneplain."<sup>62</sup>

Spicer's Gap as a thoroughfare was used by the early cycling enthusiasts. Messrs. Belleridge, Bloxham and Hitchcock rode bicycles from Sydney to Brisbane in 1889. Leaving Warwick at 4.30 a.m. they took till 6 p.m. to get over the pass, commenting on the magnificent view from a jutting rock (Governor's Chair).<sup>63</sup>

A Warwick cyclist and his Brisbane colleague rode out from Warwick on 22 May, 1909 to Maryvale, then along a bush track to The Huts (Craigs) at the west end of Cunningham's Gap which they explored on foot next morning. Returning to their bicycles, they turned south east and reached the Spicer's Gap road. They negotiated "the long black pinch which must be a demon in wet weather." The ascent to the Gap was gradual but in awful condition — the old track was impassable and the corduroy and culverts all washed out. After a better surface near the top they reached Governor's Chair. A two mile ride brought them to Moss's Well, where a sign read "Turn in here for a nice cool drink."<sup>64</sup> (G. Beverley and B. Hill). The Warwick cyclist had travelled the road 15 years earlier and had drunk out of a pot hole by the roadside through a handkerchief. They camped at Moss' for the night. The scrub was alive with bellbirds and whipbirds at sundown. A month before this talk, my wife and I walked up this section of the road to Moss's Well and welcomed "the nice cool drink."

Three months later, two cyclists rode from Warwick to Brisbane via Spicer's Gap but carried their bicycles down the range road. Near the fine old cottage at the foot of the eastern side they noted relics of the old public house.<sup>65</sup>

#### **Origin of Cunningham's Gap National Park dedication**

By courtesy of the Conservator of Forests, the following reserve history is conveyed:—

On 19th January, 1909, Sir Arthur Morgan (then President of the Legislative Council of Queensland), wrote to the Secretary for Lands, forwarding a letter he had received from Mr. Harry Gwyther of Mt. Dumaresq, Gladfield, Warwick, protesting against a proposal to make the area, then a Reserve for timber for railway purposes, open for selection, and suggesting that the



whole of the land from the head of Goomburra Valley to the top of Spicer's Creek be set apart as a public park. In support Mr. Gwyther stated that the land was of very little value for grazing or agricultural purposes. It consisted almost wholly of high mountains covered with dense vine scrub with occasional patches of palms and tree ferns. There were a few hundred acres of fair grazing land at the edges of the scrub, but this would be needed for camping grounds for visitors to the park, and would also add to the scenic effect by being left in its natural state. The scenery was the finest mountain type in Southern Queensland, and it would be a pity to alienate any more of it than necessary for township and residential sites.

In his covering letter, Sir Arthur Morgan endorses Mr. Gwyther's remarks and stated that the land was of little value for settlement purposes, on the other hand it was very picturesque country, it was historic country, and he was thoroughly in accordance with the suggestion that at least a considerable portion of it should be permanently reserved for the purposes of a mountain township site and a national park. He asked that a thorough examination of the country be made before final action was taken to open for selection.

Following on these representations and oral support lent by Mr. G.P. Barnes, M.L.A., District Forest Inspector Lawrence was instructed to report on the National Park proposal. On 27 February, 1909, Mr. Lawrence forwarded his report on the area; his recommendation was for the dedication for National Park purposes of an area of about 3,300 acres, being about half the area suggested by Mr. Gwyther, of which it embraced the northern section.

Mr. Lawrence described the country as follows — East of Portion IV the country is very steep and rugged being composed of high stony forest spurs with pine scrub in places at the head of the gorges. There is a rocky pinnacle on surveyed Portion 16 [above Camp Stacey], from which one can see a large scope of the surrounding country. Tree ferns grow at the head of the gully immediately north east of Portion 16, and there are a few small waterfalls in this gully. Between Mts. Cordeaux and Mitchell, dense pine scrub grows with half a dozen varieties of fern and many fine specimens of staghorn. Water is permanent in all the creeks. The ascent to Cunningham's Gap is only a moderate climb. The farthest point up Gap's Creek to which vehicles can travel has been marked on the map. Here there is a small area suitable for camping purposes.

With the exception that Portion 16, the northern part of which Mr. Lawrence had recommended for inclusion, was entirely excluded, Mr. Lawrence's proposal was adopted and the National Park was proclaimed in Gazette 3 July, 1909. It would appear that the omission of the northern portion of part of Portion 16 was due to an oversight in not withdrawing the area from selection, as it was selected between the dates of Mr. Lawrence's report and the proclamation of the National Park.

This National Park of 3,100 acres is situated principally on the western slope of the Main Dividing Range in the vicinity of Cunningham's Gap. It embraces Mt. Mitchell, 3,757 feet in height, and the west slopes of Mt. Cordeaux, Bell's Creek, Gap Creek and Millar's Vale Creek. The feeders of Condamine tributaries have their head waters on the Reserve.

In July, 1909, Sir Arthur Morgan, who had become Lieutenant Governor of Queensland, presided at the Executive Council and signed the Order in Council for the National Park which was gazetted on 3 July, 1909, the Lands Minister being D. Denham. However, 4,700 acres was retained on the eastern slopes of Spicer's Peak, as a railway timber reserve.

To meet up with an official party at Gladfield, Arnold and Dan Wienholt rode horses from Fassifern on 24 October, 1909, taking extra saddle horses and packhorses. They reached the east foot of the range at Spicer's at 1 p.m., went up the Range passing Burdorf's old inn (about halfway up). The road at the foot was covered in boulders but along the brow of the Range was in good order. The party camped at the old Maryvale run on Mr. Tom's property. Next morning, Sir Arthur Morgan (Lieut Governor) plus several parliamentarians left Warwick by motor cars at 5.15 a.m., passing Patrick Leslie's first home and Ross' corner where the first plough on the Darling



Downs was used, Mt. Dumaresq (climbed by Allan Cunningham in 1827) to Maryvale where a railway deputation met them. Changing to the horses provided by the Wienholts they rode up to Spicer's Gap. The reporter commented that there was little doubt Queensland's best drivers would take a car over the whole road.<sup>66</sup>

The party enjoyed the magnificent view from Governor's Rock and found the eastern road steep but mostly good except for the boulders in the final few hundred yards. They lunched at Clumber with Mr. and Mrs. Anderson (in their 80's). Mrs. Anderson (formerly Mrs. Balbi) had lived here for upwards of 50 years. The party transferred to buggies for their next stage to Fassifern.

Coinciding with the extension in progress of the Munbilla railway towards Mt. Edwards and with the completion of the Warwick to Maryvale railway, the influential graziers on both sides of the Main Range mounted an impressive effort towards a rail link-up on 30 September, 1911. A ministerial party, including the Premier, after staying overnight at Fassifern Station, left early in the morning in buggies provided by Messrs. A. Wienholt and Hill. They drove along the Munbilla-Sandy Creek railway and the proposed route of the Via Recta railway. Cunningham's Gap and Spicers Peak Gap showed against the skyline — only 10 feet difference in elevation. At Sandy Creek (Mt. Edwards), a deputation urged construction of the line. At old Clumber (800 feet elevation) the buggies were abandoned and horses used to Spicer's Peak Gap, rising 2,513 feet in 3 miles.

"The best grade is 1 in 33 and the line will twist (loop) over itself. From Maryvale to Sandy Creek is 28 miles."

At the top of the range, the party met a buggy descending with a small tree dragging behind in the manner adopted in the old teamster days. At the top the tick inspector, C. Evans, stopped the horses.

The Warwick party met the Premier here and after morning tea, the travellers in sulkies and buggies and a four in hand team, on horseback and some in motor cars made their way to Maryvale. Here the Premier opened the rail line by driving Engine No.80. Six special trains from Warwick had brought 2,708 passengers to Maryvale at one shilling each. About 5,000 people were at the opening.<sup>67</sup>

Here we have a new era commencing for the Spicer's road — not a railway but the advent of the motor car. Skipping four years ahead for the moment, great doings were recorded in the 'Steering Wheel' when a headline wrote of "Cunningham's Gap Conquered by Motor Car" — quickly amended to refer to Spicer's Peak Road.<sup>68</sup> Then other information came in<sup>69</sup> and pieced together it would appear that the motor car first conquered Spicer's Peak road in 1913 when Mr. W.T. Forrest drove a Napier through from the western side, followed by Mr. Jim McDougall. In November, 1914 Mr. C.M. Must of Rosewood drove his car through from the east taking 3½ hours to negotiate the 8½ miles of range road. Messrs. K. Webster and A. Nicholls negotiated the Gap successfully in early 1915. Messrs. C.F. White of Pikedale and Rudder in a Buick driven by Wm. Truss went through in both directions; also Mr. W.T. Forrest in the same week in a 20 H.P. Napier with 5 passengers who described the road as "unspeakably vile." I. Kirk and J. Fraser rode a motorcycle and sidecar through Spicer's Gap from the west — reported on 13 October, 1915.<sup>70</sup>

In October, 1915, a party of Overland car owners camped at the Spicer's Peak Gap and went through. Mr. T.E. Campbell of Tannymorel was using the Gap regularly. The R.A.C.Q. Rally Tour on 18/19 November, 1916 saw 30 cars negotiate Spicer's from the West side.<sup>69</sup>

Before returning to rail proposals, it is appropriate to include a horse drawn journey of one of our own N.P.A.Q. members. Mr. R. Allen Clelland, when ten years of age, accompanied his father from Warwick to Boonah where Mr. Clelland had been appointed Shire Engineer. Mr. Clelland with Allen and his brother, Clyde, travelled by horse and sulky in April, 1914 from



Warwick through Spicer's Peak road. They stayed overnight at Maryvale and were told they could not get through Cunningham's Gap but a sulky had come through Spicers last week.

"The descent on the Boonah side was so steep we had to tie a log to the back of the sulky. That night we stayed on Pearson's farm on the east side of the Gap. . . . Three days from Warwick to Boonah; how times have changed."

Allen's mention of the log as a brake is confirmed by a letter of Isaiah Titmarsh (Kalbar) published in a Boonah or Ipswich newspaper 11 February, 1933. "Very noticeable as a boy at the foot of the range at Balbi's old pub there were great stacks of trees by the roadside that the carriers used to snig down the range tied to the axles of the drays to steady them down, and keep the weight off the necks of the polers. . . . On the terrible pinches, one in particular, the locked wheels would not hold the dray; the bullocks used to skin their hocks holding the dray back."

Another Select Committee of Queensland Parliament in 1914 heard evidence on the proposed Via Recta railway.<sup>71</sup> Four alternative routes were submitted:—

1. Bremer River Valley, foothills of the Ramparts, a long tunnel (3 miles) under the Range emerging in Bell's Creek (north of Cunningham's Gap).
2. Bremer Valley and Cunningham's Gap with three-quarters of a mile tunnel.
3. Munbilla and Cunningham's Gap with three-quarters of a mile tunnel.
4. Munbilla and Road Gap (Spicer's) with a 12 chain tunnel, 300 feet below the level of the Gap.

The Railway Commissioner had submitted a report of 4 November, 1913 to Parliament on the Mt. Edwards to Maryvale route with a detailed map.<sup>72</sup> The report of the Select Committee was included in the same volume.<sup>73</sup> Reports and controversial letters appeared in the newspapers including much discussion on cattle duffing in one section of one of the proposed routes.

The Commissioner, with an eye to future revenue, suggested "the summit and upper slopes of the range may be occupied for residential purposes to some extent on account of the salubrity of the climate." The Commissioner also wrote of Brisbane to Sydney rail links via Tweed or via Kyogle; he could not recommend three routes and in fact recommended against the Mt. Edwards-Maryvale link.

The loop tunnel location was about two miles east of Mt. Matheson. All of the routes and proposed tunnels appear to be based on the work done by Messrs. C.B. Lethen, R.W. Southerden and party in 1883 to 1886.

The 'Steering Wheel' of 1 June, 1923 contains the next mention I can find of the possibility of another National Park for the area. On 7 May, 1923, there had been a motorists' conference at Spicer's Gap — this name had become accepted since motorists used this route after World War I. The conference was attended by R.A.C.Q., Shire Councils of Glengallan, Goolman, Normanby, Warwick City, Ipswich and Warwick Chambers of Commerce and Mt. Edwards Progress Association. The need for a good road was stressed and most speakers advocated the claims of Spicer's Gap Road. One suggested Cunningham's Gap route should be considered. Of the Spicer's Road, the 'Steering Wheel' wrote. . . . "a great part of this road would pass through what will doubtless be a great National Reserve or Park". . . .

After much exploratory work by R.C. Brett and F.D. Deveney taking levels and marking a road route on the western side of Cunningham's Gap, 102 volunteers built a track over Easter 1926.<sup>74</sup> By Easter Monday afternoon a dozen cars were at the top of that Gap. G.P. Barnes, M.L.A. quoted Allan Cunningham "the only difficulty to a through road was a few hundred yards immediately below the Gap on the east side." The Aratula-Cunningham's Gap Road League had a volunteer party trying to complete this road in May/June, 1926. On 29 June the Main Roads Commissioner, J.R. Kemp, was taken by hired car to the head of the Gap from Warwick. The party walked down the east path for 20 minutes to where Mr. R.C. Brett was waiting with his car. He drove them to Brisbane. Mr. Kemp admitted he was struck with the simplicity of the proposition. It was news to him of the long connecting spur of 14 miles from Aratula to the edge of the Range at Cunningham's Gap. <sup>75</sup>



At Easter, 1927, the Warwick and district volunteers worked on improvements to the road. The Goolman (Boonah) Shire engaged a local contractor<sup>76</sup> — J. Maddox who completed a rough road up the ridge recommended by Allan Cunningham in 1828 and by F.E. Roberts in 1860. It went along the base of the cliff on the east face of Mt. Mitchell and squeezed over the Gap at a level twenty feet high that the present road level. The linkup enabled access to the Allan Cunningham Memorial cairn which was unveiled and the road declared open on 11 June, 1927.

In the previous five years Spicer's Gap road had been a key to record-breaking interstate journeys by motor cars such as Fred Eager's "Whitey" and Wizard Smith's Essex, while Les Cecil in 1926 broke the Brisbane-Warwick cycling record in spite of having to carry his bicycle up the full length of the road on the eastern side of the Gap.<sup>77</sup>

Considerable argument raged from 1927 to 1937 but finally the die was cast and the Main Roads Commission commenced construction of a suitable road through Cunningham's Gap, which was trafficable by 1940.

In 1931, truck drivers were using this route and were recommending it to motorists.

One of the early projects of the National Parks Association of Queensland (formed in 1930) was an examination of Cunningham's Gap, both of the small National Park created in 1909 and of the area which was subsequently added to the National Park. The N.P.A.Q. party was at Cunningham's Gap from 18-20 July, 1930.<sup>78</sup>

The N.P.A.Q. party left Brisbane by car at 7 a.m., proceeded up Spicer's Gap, over to the Black Pinch near Craig's at 1 p.m., then up the new road to Cunningham's Gap and down the east side for a fair distance and back. They camped at Yorkstons, 3 miles on the west side and went in to Warwick where Mr. R.W. Lahey (president N.P.A.Q.) gave a lecture illustrated with lantern slides of Lamington. Mr. E.H.F. Swain (Director, Provisional Forestry Board) also spoke. The party explored Cunningham's Gap on Saturday, 19th. Some climbed Mt. Mitchell and a campfire conference was held; speakers included R.W. Lahey, C.T. White and Arthur Groom. After further exploration on Sunday, 20 July, they were to return to Brisbane through Cunningham's Gap. It is certain that the intrepid driver was either Arthur Groom or Romeo Lahey.

On 11 August the Association was given details of a N.P.A.Q. deputation to the Lands Minister.<sup>79</sup>

The discussion with the Minister and subsequent action is contained in the following official record kindly supplied by the Conservator of Forests.

"On 11th August, 1930, the Minister for Lands met a deputation from the National Parks Association introduced by Mr. G.P. Barnes, M.L.A. Mr. R.W. Lahey presented the aims and objects of the Association; Mr. H. Longman spoke in regard to reserving beauty spots in England; Mr. J.E. Young outlined what was being done in America and Mr. Groom stated what had been done in New Zealand in regard to Reservations.

Mr. Lahey presented to the Minister a map showing what they desired in connection with the enlargement of the National Park at Cunningham's Gap and on behalf of the Association made application for the area to be gazetted as National Park. This involved an area of 5,940 acres and its National Park reservation was taken up with the Land Administration Board on 19 August, 1930. An area of 4,120 acres was gazetted as National Park 705 on 6 December, 1930. (Railway Timber Reserve 321 was excluded from the proposal at the direction of the Minister)."

I only wish that the Queensland Cabinet would deal as promptly with our outstanding proposals.

In 1947, N.P.A.Q. sought a continuous though narrow National Park from Wilson's Peak northward along the Great Dividing Range, setting out in more detail the Scenic Rim proposal of the late Arthur Groom. Some portions of this proposal have been gazetted as National Park in the



1960's and 1970's and in the last year or two we have been pressing the authority to complete the proposal. I hope this talk which is dedicated to our first president, the late Mr. Romeo Lahey, is timely and will provide the spark which will generate very soon the gazettel of a substantial National Park embracing Spicer's Peak and Gap and also the crest and some slopes of the Range southward to Wilson's Peak. Over the years we have become accustomed to delays in the gazettel of our proposals for National Parks — the culprits being Mines Department and occasionally, Lands Department. In this instance however, the delay sits fairly and squarely with Forestry Department only.

I am indebted to John Oxley Library, State Public Library, Parliamentary Library, Courier-Mail Library, Warwick Daily News proprietors, Queensland Survey Office for much of the material gathered for this lecture. At the same time N.P.A.Q. files have been built up with other historical matter including Chillagoe Caves, Mt. Barney, Eungella, Bellenden Ker, and Lamington. Perhaps the most interesting is an article with photos in The Queenslander in 1911 by "Wanderer" entitled "To The Head of The Coomera." This is a detailed account of an expedition to the eastern section of Lamington before its proclamation as a National Park. As "Wanderer's" companion was named as W. Potts, Mrs. Lahey was able to confirm that the author was Romeo Lahey. With great pleasure I can now add that in a box of old photos entrusted to me some years ago by Mr. and Mrs. Lahey are several faded copies of the ones published in The Queenslander with the descriptions in the late Romeo Lahey's handwriting.



## HISTORY IN NATIONAL PARKS

## Endnotes

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Mt. Mitchell from western side of Spicers Gap, August, 1949.



Spicers Peak from the west, August, 1949.





#### AIMS AND OBJECTS

- (1) To preserve intact in their natural condition the existing National Parks of Queensland; and to secure the reservation of all suitable areas.
- (2) To educate public opinion to a fuller appreciation of the necessity and value of National Parks.
- (3) To form a link between the public and the administration dealing with the National Parks.
- (4) To co-operate with other organisations having the same or similar objects.
- (5) To assist in the enforcement of protective regulations concerning National Parks.

Membership is available to any person who is in accord with the above aims and objects.

Back copies of Romeo Watkins Lahey Memorial Lectures are available for twenty cents plus self-addressed, stamped envelope, 9" x 4".

- "National Parks Association Of Queensland"
- "The Great National Parks Movement"
- "Down The Years With National Parks in Queensland"
- "A National Parks Manifesto For Queensland"

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