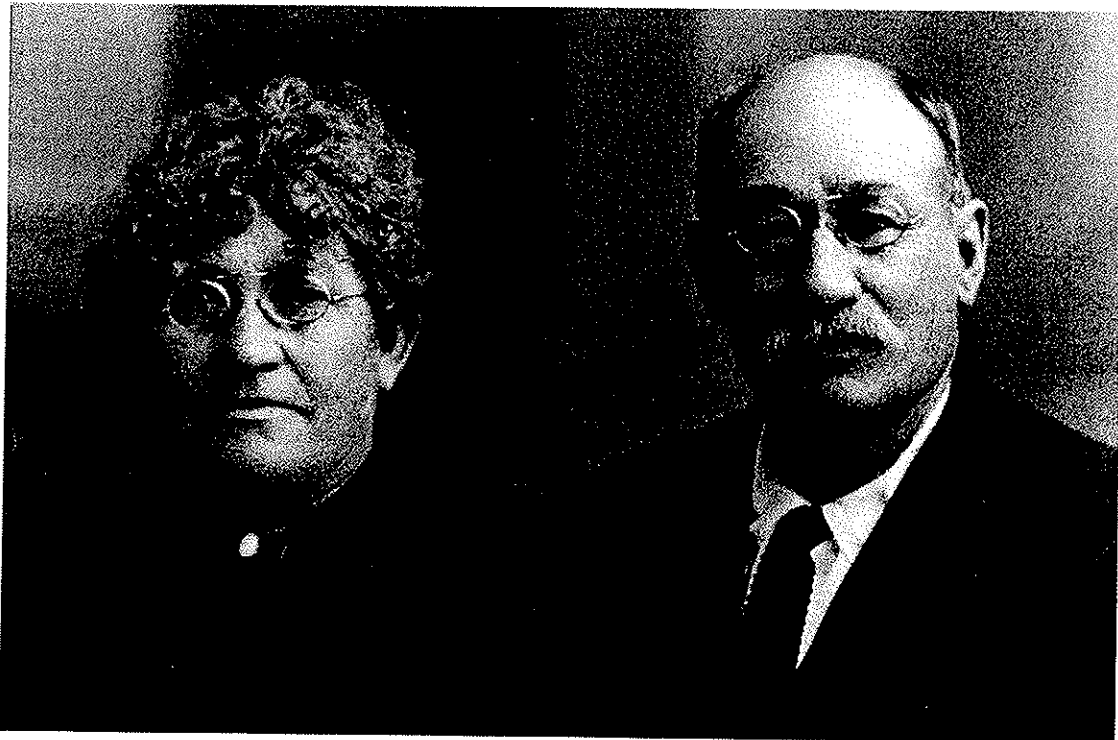


CHARLOTTE SOMERFIELD (née JUNG) 1870-1946

HERSTORY: Wife of former Strezlecki Track teamster and Arltunga goldminer, William Ephraim Somerfield, together they had the mail contract for deliveries by camel between the railhead at Oodnadatta and Alice Springs between 1921 and 1926. Based at Old Crown Point, they also ran a general store supplying provisions to surrounding cattle stations, Hermannsburg Mission and passersby. Married to William late in life, she had 10 children by her first husband John, William's younger brother and also brought up William's two children by an Arunta woman after her death. In 1925 Charlotte's daughter Nellie died aged 13 from congenital heart disease and was buried at Old Crown Well. A kitchen table was reputedly used for making the coffin as there was no other wood available. The family returned to Mount Gambier soon after.

NOMINATED BY

*Mrs Lynn Lowe of Mount Gambier, SA
(Charlotte's great granddaughter)
2002*



Charlotte (1870-1946) and her second husband Eph Somerfield (1864-1943)
Married 14 May 1921 Oodnadatta, SA

CHARLOTTE SOMERFIELD (née JUNG) 1870-1946

Charlotte Bridget Jung was born on 28 November 1870 to Bridget, an Irish Catholic immigrant from Country Clare and Carl, a German-Prussian immigrant. They lived at Blackwood Flat in the Hundred of Caroline via Mount Gambier in southeast South Australia, near the Victorian border. Carl was a shoemaker and wine merchant. Bridget and Carl had married in 1865 and together they had three girls – Alice, Agnes and the youngest Charlotte. However, Bridget also had 3 children from a former marriage to John Hennessy in 1858 – Mary, John and Ellen. She had been widowed after only 6 years of marriage when John drowned in Lake Wallace at Edenhope in the West Wimmera district of Western Victoria. Her marriage to Charlotte's father also ended tragically after another 6 years. Carl was the first man hanged in the Mount Gambier gaol on 10 November 1871 for the murder of a bailiff, Thomas Garroway. His body is interred in the walls. Charlotte was only a year old.

By the 1890s, in her early 20s, Charlotte was working as a domestic servant at Farina, a small township between Beltana and Hergott Springs (now Marree) on the northern railway line in Far North South Australia. Now a ghost town, it had been established in 1882 as a farming centre and railhead for wool and cattle. It grew quickly and at its peak had two hotels, an Anglican and Catholic Church, a hospital and school as well as 5 blacksmiths, 2 breweries and several stores. It was here she met her future husband John Somerfield, a labourer. They were married on 23 June 1895.

In around 1901 they moved down to Mount Gambier. Like her mother before her, Charlotte's marriage was to have tragic consequences. In 1915, John was kicked in the chest by a horse and died eventually two years later from an Aortic Aneurism. Charlotte was left widowed with 9 children, the youngest only 3 years old (she had also had another child that had died only 6 days old).

At 51, Charlotte made a courageous sea change. She packed up and left Mount Gambier with some of her 10 children and journeyed to Old Crown Point just over the South Australian border into the Northern Territory. Here she joined her former brother in law, William Somerfield, the older brother of her dead husband John. They were married on 14 May 1921 at the Police Residence at Oodnadatta, the end of the railway line from Adelaide.

William Ephraim Somerfield was known as "Eph" or "Unk", short for Uncle as he was certainly uncle to Charlotte's children. In the past he had been a teamster, carting wool and supplies along the famous Strezlecki Track and had also tried his luck as a miner and drover at the Arltunga goldfields in the Northern Territory. It may have been a marriage of convenience as Charlotte needed a father for her children; William needed a mother for his two young children, Elsie Bridget (Toolie) and Harold Paul (Sikki). Their dead mother had been an Arunta woman known as Annie.

The family worked on the mail contract for deliveries between the railhead, Oodnadatta and the Telegraph Station and post office at Alice Springs. Old Crown Point was the halfway stopover point. Using camels, the trip would take three weeks each way. They also ran a general store at Old Crown Point supplying the surrounding cattle stations, the Lutheran mission at Hermannsburg and passersby with stores and provisions.

Life was harsh and isolated in this far off outback region during the early 1920s and is illustrated best by the circumstances surrounding the tragic death of Charlotte's 13 year old daughter Mary Ellen known as Nellie. On 1 March 1925 the young girl died of a hole in the heart. She was no doubt a sickly child from this congenital disease and for a mother to watch her child's health fail in such isolated surroundings with no medical help close at hand was naturally heartbreaking. A family story tells that a table was cut up to make the coffin because there was no other wood available. She was buried at Old Crown Well and her grave is on the Northern Territory Register of Isolated or Lone Graves. Two poignant letters exist which were written at the time by Charlotte to Mary, her elder daughter, then married to a farmer in the Mt Gambier area. Not only do they describe Nell's death and burial but also give hindsight to the loneliness and despair of an isolated outback mother in such a situation.

The family moved back to Mount Gambier approximately a year after Nellie's death, perhaps motivated by the isolation and recent tragedy as well as realizing the writing on the wall – the growing use of motor vehicles and the extension of the railway to Alice Springs would put an end to the need for deliveries by camels and donkey. Charlotte's son Joseph Phillip (Joe) was missing when they mustered up and was the only member of the family to stay in the Northern Territory. He is known to have spent his last days in a hostel at Wyndham in Western Australia and died in 1998. He never married and was the last surviving child of Charlotte and John Somerfield.

In 1943 Charlotte moved in with her son John and his wife Gladys and their family in Mount Gambier following the death of husband William Ephraim. She was remembered by the family as being *"a very stern old lady who used to get up and say 'time for bed'. She would then go out the back and get a dipper full of water which she would throw on the fire, even if it was still daylight. She always wore black"*. She died 3 years later in 1946 and is buried at Lake Terrace Cemetery with her first husband John.

Charlotte and John Somerfield's 10 children

Mary Catherine b 30 September 1896 at Mt Schanck, via Mt Gambier
Agnes b 11 May 1898 at Farina, SA
William Ephraim (Bill) b 30 March 1900 at Compton, via Mt Gambier
Jane (or Jean) b 16 April 1901 at Williamstown, Mt Gambier
John James b 20 October 1903 at Williamstown, Mt Gambier
Michael Cydril (Syd) b 23 June 1905 at Williamstown, Mt Gambier
Joseph Phillip (Joe) b 14 August 1909 at Williamstown, Mt Gambier
Phyllis b 14 October 1910 at Williamstown, Mt Gambier (died 6 days old)
Mary Ellen (Nellie) b 22 November 1911 at Williamstown, Mt Gambier (died aged 13)
George Edward (Mick) b 24 August 1914 at Williamstown, Mt Gambier

The 2 older girls did not go to Crown Point in 1921, they had both been married prior to this. The 4 younger children definitely went but it's not clear whether the other 3 older children went or not.

Bill, aged 21 (he was married in 1926)
Jane (Jean), aged 20 (married in 1924)
John, aged 18 (married in 1924)
Syd, aged 16
Joe, aged 12
Nellie, aged 10
Mick, aged 7