

## The Northcote District

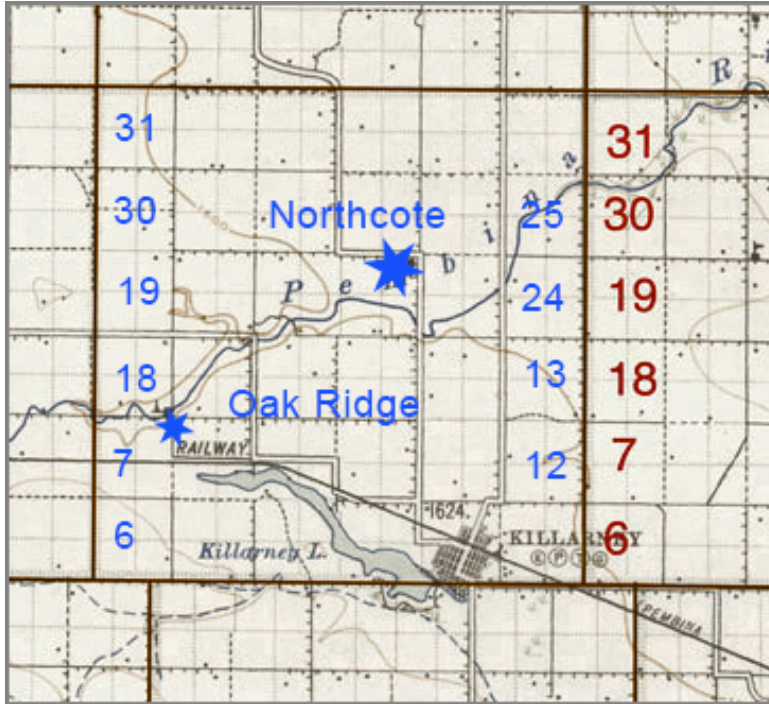
Adapted from, "Pioneering in Northcote", by W. J. Schnarr



The Schnarr family, about 1925. Standing: Wilfrid, Raymond, Margaret and Herman; Seated: Kathleen, W.J. Sgnarr, Mrs. Shnarr.

On May 29th, 1882, a party consisting of James Dempsey, Fred Finkbeiner, J. W. Atkinson, Henry Gann, Andrew McNamee and myself left Crystal City to locate homesteads. We had a yoke of oxen, a plow, stove and provisions for a few days. Our destination was Moose Mountain.

The spring of '82 was very wet, what bridges had been constructed previously had in many cases been washed out by the floods that spring. Getting stuck in sloughs was a frequent occurrence. The streams had to be forded. I remember crossing the Badger at Cartwright. The water was quite high and when in the middle of the stream the drawbolt broke, all hands had to get down and push. Needless to say, we all got soaking wet. We arrived at A. J. Rollins, at the east end of the bay on June 1st. After looking around at some vacant lands we headed for Deloraine the next day. We got a list of lands in 4-20, north west of where Boissevain is now. The land did not suit us, so we came back to Oak Lake, as Killarney Lake was then named. After tramping over many miles of country, Mr. Dempsey and Fred Finkbeiner located on Sec, 24-3-17. The first settlers in this district came in in 1881.



*Township 2, Range 17*

The nucleus of what is now the town of Killarney was formed when Mr. A. J. Rollins opened a store in an addition to his house on his farm across from the end of the bay early in March 1883. The goods were freighted in by ox teams from Brandon. It took six days to make the round trip. In 1884, A. J. and Frank Rollins built a store just across the road on the north bank of the bay. The same year John McLeod opened up a blacksmith shop and Mrs. Dufty built a boarding house. After the school was built in 1886 it was made the centre of entertainments, etc.

#### Northcote School

The name originally intended for the school district was "Maple Lea ". This was rejected by the Board of Education as there was already a district by that name. They suggested "Northcote".



*Northcote School*

This was the year of the Riel Rebellion in the Northwest. When spring opened on the Saskatchewan River the military authorities equipped the small steamer "Northcote" as a miniature battleship to steam up the river and relieve some of the northern posts, hence-the name.

The contract for building the school was let in the spring of 1883.

## *Peddlers*

*Before Amazon and Purolator, before Sears and Eaton's, home delivery to lonely farm sites was provided by independent peddlers. These were seen by some as a welcome service, by others as a nuisance, and by a few as a danger.*

*Beth Priestley provided us with one story....*

*Although Killarney town had telephone service since 1903, it was not extended north to our district till about 1910. It was hailed with delight, ending isolation for womenfolk. Before this they always dreaded peddlers or strangers on foot, or on horse, when the men were away. Stories were told of atrocities and assaults. After the phone came the women called a warning to each other in time to summon husband or neighbours. The peddling business became unprofitable.*

*On one occasion, before the phone, a pedder (mother always called them Syrian peddlers) came to our door about supper time. The men had been away all day and were late coming home. Mother was frightened and kept us children behind her. The peddler offered his wares and she said, "No, thank you". Then he said, "Me come in me very tired Missus". Mother replied firmly, "No I cannot let you come in, very conscious that he probably knew she was alone. Then, "Me very tired Missus, me stay all night". Mother said, "No, I'm sorry, we have no room". Finally he asked, "You Christian lady?" She replied, "I hope so". Then "Me Christian too, me stay all night", he said, but Mother was firm, and he left, walking slowly. She watched him out of sight, then barricaded the door. Almost dark and we heard the wagon coming. Father and Uncle were returning. When they came into the yard the peddler was with them. They had picked him up on the road. He had a good supper and was given a roll of blankets to sleep in the granary all night.*

*The Cluff family had a different perspective...*

*Perhaps one of the more or less forgotten incidents in the life of the early settler is the peddler. Of these there were various types. The more common is the far eastern fellow, usually a Syrian, who tramped from farm to farm carrying two heavy cases. These contained a variety of articles – needles, pins, cheap jewelry, staples such as tablecloths, scarves, towels, etc. He would stay overnight and pay with a few baubles for the children*

*Another type was the man with horse and covered cart. His wares were in grater demand as he had an assortment of kitchen utensils, farm tools, etc. His visit was often opportune and save a long journey to buy them.*

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