

WILLIAM HENRY NORTHUP

1863 - 1940

1899 - Fife Lake, Michigan, U.S.A. to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. To the land of William Henry Northup, a son of William James Northup, a grain and fruit farmer of the State of Michigan, U.S.A. and a decendent of Stephen Northup that settled in Rhode Island in 1645.

A journey by train from the State of Michigan, where he was born June 9th, 1863, William Henry Northup and Marvin Ramsen stepped off the train in Calgary, Alberta, and after a few days in Calgary they both decided to go to Edmonton. Between the two of them they had one bicycle and after riding in relays some 200 miles over the old wagon trail from Calgary to Edmonton, tired and weary, they crossed the Saskatchewan River by ferry. They had dinner at the hotel.

After a few days Billy Northup, as he was known to his friends, who had experience in logging and sawmill work back in Michigan, got a job in John Walters sawmill just south of the Saskatchewan River and west of the ferry.

One day Mr. Walters said he was going to install lights in the mill. The light cable had to be brought across the river; it was the first light wire to cross the Saskatchewan River in Edmonton and it would have to be taken across by boat. Billy Northup was asked if he would row the boat and he said, he would, and so he towed the light cable across the river.

Marvin Ransen homesteaded the quarter of land just across the road to the west of an old time pioneer of Edmonton, Zek Fleming who later farmed at Woodbend, Alberta.

William Henry Northup homesteaded the quarter of land to the west of Marvin Ransen. This land lay along the south-side of the Winterburn Indian Reserve. In those days it was a day trip to ride a horse from the homestead to Rabbit Hills via Edmonton and cross the river by ferry, to see his friends. Billy Northup would ride his horse and swim the horse across the river just above Big Island where the old Winter road crossed the river, and return home the same way.

Billy Northup hauled coal from the old Humberstone coal mine and from the old mine just below the Macdonald Hotel. He also panned for gold in the Saskatchewan River. He worked for Johnny Cropley who had a logging camp up the river and in the spring of the year instead of walking back to Edmonton, Billy and Marvin would build a raft and float down the Saskatchewan River to Edmonton.

Billy did some freight hauling for the bush camps out west and Spruce Grove was one stopping place, as was Stony Plain and Coal Oil Creek. Coal Oil Creek was named by the Indians because the creek did not freeze over in the winter. You could always stop and water your team of horses.

In those days the old trail from Edmonton to the homestead was very wet and muddy and very soft. Billy would have to jump off the pony to give it a chance to get out of the mud holes. Billy finally decided to abandon the homestead and go to Warwick, just north of Vegreville. He filed on another homestead S.E.-4-54-14-4. There were a few creeks to cross between Warwick and Edmonton. In the spring the water was very deep. All the old timers had to cross these creeks by tying the wagon-box to the wagon and swim the horses across. His eldest son, Gary, was also homesteading at Warwick by this time.

Billy hauled freight from Edmonton to Warwick and he would camp wherever he could. There was a stopping place at Starr, Alberta, also at Fort Saskatchewan and the half-way house which is now Oliver.

William Henry Northup was naturalized June 15th, 1904. He proved up on his homestead and sold it in 1905. While homesteading at Warwick he met and married Elizabeth Elliott of Gilby, North Dakota, U.S.A. They moved back to Michigan where Clarence Raymond was born. He then took his mother and father and proceeded to Florida. In 1907 his father died and was buried at Bermont, Florida. In 1915 his mother died and was buried in Arcadia, Florida. Another son, Ralph Gordon, and a daughter Lilah Vivian, were born in Bermont. He then moved to Arcadia, Florida, where another daughter, Helen Marion, was born. A few months later in 1916, Billy and family moved back to Warwick, Alberta. He farmed at Cork, Alberta and Cash Lake. In 1922 he moved back to the Edmonton district and farmed a few miles west of the city.

For the next six years he and the family spent part of the time on the farm and part in Edmonton. In 1928 he moved to the city and never went back to farming.

He hauled coal in Edmonton with a team of horses, and mine props from the country to the Premier Coal Mine which was owned by Tom Brown. The mine was located in the highlands where the Highland Golf Course is now situated.

Billy Northup's youngest daughter, Helen, attended McDougall Commercial High School and later became a member of the World's Famous "Grad" Basketball Team from 1934 to 1940 when the team disbanded, after 25 years of basketball supremacy.

Written by Clarence Raymond Northup, 14544 - 104 Avenue, Edmonton.
October 14, 1968

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