

Andreef & Sideroff Families

By Fie McIntyre

My father is gone now, as are his brothers, Bill, John, Lawrence and his sister, Lucaria. Phillip was the eldest of the Andreeff sons. Our family was forced to flee Russia during the Bolshevek revolution. Canada was in the news; a land of hope, and so, after having worked in Harbin, China, for a year the Andreeff families, Sideroffs and their minister left Asia for Canada.

They settled in the Rimbey area and spent their first winter in tents. Most of the good land had been claimed and it was soon obvious a good living was impossible on the land that remained.

The Peace country was opening up and homesteads were available. Lawrence, the youngest of the boys, and Mr. Pohoboff agreed to investigate the possibility of moving to the north. They were impressed with the country and applied for homesteads for themselves and each of the boys. They lived in a shack on the reservation just north of Gage and made preparations for the rest of the family by building small homes on their homesteads.

In 1929 for the second time, land and homes were abandoned. Packing their few possessions, and enough lumber for small homes, the Andreeff and Sideroff families left Rimbey and came north to their final homes. In spite of the hardships, Canada was soon accepted as their country. During the next few years they were joined by other Russian families.

Progress was slow and money scarce. During the first years, Dad would break and seed as much land as possible, then leave for the Calgary area where harvest work was always available. Hunger was a constant companion. I remember him telling of times he'd work late to complete a job only to find supper had been served.

With the settlement of more families, it was apparent that education of the youngsters was both desirable and necessary. In 1931 a log school was built and named Ranger. Mrs. McNott was the first teacher with an enrollment of 21 students. She was faced with enormous task. Her first students included children from German, Russian and Cree Indian families who spoke little or no English. By 1936, the enrollment had reached 42. Racial prejudice was unheard of. The students soon discovered the quickest method of forming teams for games was to divide the Russians versus the Germans and Indians.

Luçaria passed away leaving a young family. Milking duties were left to her father-in-law who was forced to discover that only if he wore feminine gear would he be accepted by the cows. Death visited our family often. Ike, the eldest son died in 1933 at the age of 19. He was buried in a little cemetery on the original Grandpa Andreeff homestead where a little church still stands. He was to be joined in a few years by his grandfather and later by his father and his uncles.

My mother and Annie, John's wife now live in Fairview and Polly, Lawrence's wife lives on Vancouver Island. Ellen has remarried and also lives on the island.