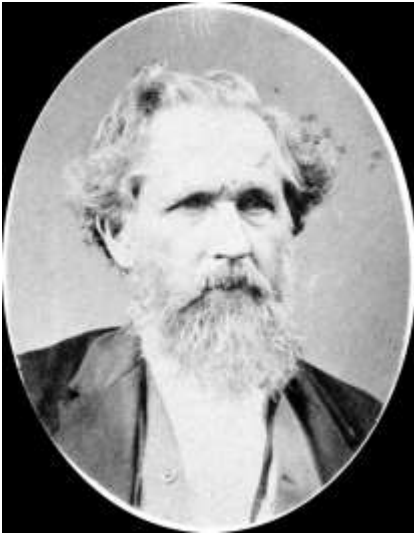


Northcote Snippets – a series of historical glimpses into Northcote's past

Nehemiah Guthridge – early Northcote Settler.



Guthridge, from Photographs of Melbourne Pioneers by Thomas Foster Chuck.

Nehemiah Guthridge (1808 - 1878) was an Irish-born early Melbourne Pioneer and councilor. A busy man with many children, Guthridge was a Parliamentarian in the Legislative Council, railway promoter, active Wesleyan and the first mayor of Sale in 1863.

With his nephew, Richard Guthridge, they arrived in Melbourne in 1841 having been successful business men in Sydney. They eventually settled in Northcote, building substantial residences on large estates in the 1850s, reflecting their status and wealth. Nehemiah built **Turret House**, Richard built what would later be known as **Wardrop House** in Bastings St. Unfortunately both have long been demolished.

Nehemiah had been actively purchasing land around Melbourne since the late 1840s. He settled on the eastern side of Northcote Hill where he constructed a 'mini mansion' on a large block south of Westbourne Grove, stretching between Park St and the railway.

The house and its extensive grounds pre-date the railway cutting by three decades. With a lookout turret, the stone built house commanded views across the Merri Creek plain. When sold in the 1860s, the house and grounds were described thus:

Beautifully situated miniature mansion. Contains on ground floor – entrance hall, dining room, drawing room, library, and ample domestic arrangements. Bedroom floor contains six large and commodious bedrooms, leading into the balcony. The turret has two rooms, overlooking extensive green pasturage. Conservatory plus a kitchen garden of three acres planted with 250 choice fruit trees and grape vines. Three-stall stable, coach house, loft and men's room... beautiful pleasure grounds, lakes, grottoes and bridges. Total of 9 acres extending to the Pipe Track (St Georges Rd) and back to Clarke Street. A sweeping drive leads to the house; an artificial lake, with willows surrounding, on the flat at the foot of the hill.



Picture of Turret House c1880s, from Swift's 1926 History of Northcote.

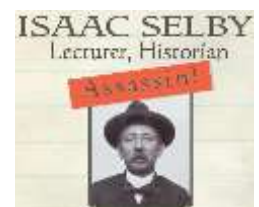
By the mid-1850s Nehemiah Guthridge was a director of Colonial Insurance Company. Richard, of course, was the chairman. They jointly ran the very successful **R & N Guthridge & Co - Saddlers, Ironmongers & Importers** in Flinders Lane.

Nehemiah's interest in Northcote seems limited to the then (1854) newly built Wesleyan church and schoolroom on the east side of High St, as school superintendent for six years. (The buildings now house the Wesley Anne restaurant, bar and live music venue at 250 High St.)

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Nehemiah is credited for building Temple Court, soon to be the centre of legal practice in Melbourne. A satirical cartoon portrays him as the 'Peer' of Temple Court. (Temple Court today is a 1924 building on the same site, 422 Collins St, containing a significant 1963 mosaic mural - *The "Eight" Aboriginal Tribal Headmen* by Napier Waller.)

One of his 'side interests' was a newfangled invention – the railway, and Nehemiah actively promoted two future lines. He was an early instigator of the Hobson's Bay Railway Co. which built the first public railway in Australia - Melbourne to Sandridge (Port Melbourne). This line opened in September 1854 with Australia's first steam locomotive, impressively built locally in ten weeks for £2700.

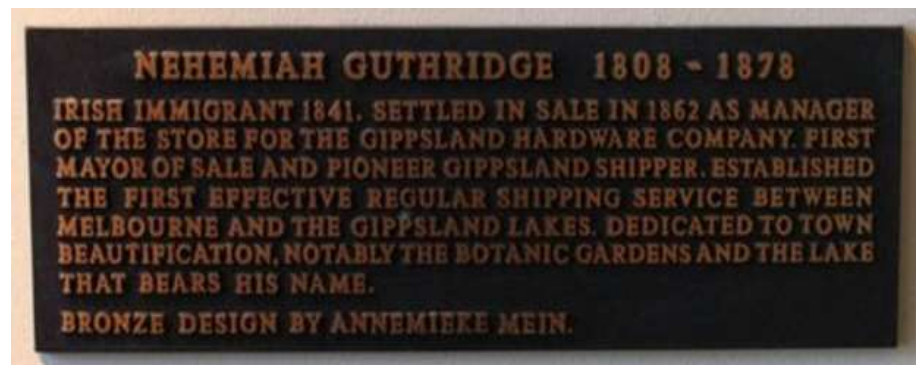
Nehemiah also heavily backed the Ballarat & Geelong Railway, on which he lost a considerable sum of money, possibly prompting his departure to Sale.



In 1861 Nehemiah left Northcote and began a new life in Sale (Gippsland), taking over a local ironmongery business there. Never one to take life easy, he established the first regular shipping service between the Gippsland Lakes and Melbourne. He also campaigned actively for businesses in the area and for self-governance, becoming the first Mayor of Sale then re-elected three times.



Nehemiah's many contributions to the development of Sale and its surrounds are reflected in the number of landmarks named after him including Guthridge Lake, which he established. A bronze plaque installed in the Sale Esso/BHP building, reflects his importance there.



In poor health Nehemiah returned to Melbourne and died in 1878 at his nephew's house.

P. Michell, 2019