

<b>Building:</b>	Schwerkolt's Cottage	<b>Significance:</b>	A
<b>Address:</b>	2-10 Deep Creek Road, Mitcham	<b>Melway Map Ref:</b>	49 D7
<b>Building Type:</b>	Residence	<b>Construction Date:</b>	1886
<b>Architect:</b>	Unknown	<b>Builder:</b>	Unknown



<b>Intactness:</b>		<b>Condition:</b>	
G[ ] F[x] P[ ]		G[x] F[ ] P[ ]	
<b>Existing Heritage Listings:</b>		<b>Recommended Heritage Listings:</b>	
Victorian Heritage Register	[ ]	Victorian Heritage Register	[x]
Register of the National Estate	[x]	Register of the National Estate	[x]
National Trust	[x]	Heritage Overlay Controls	[x]

## **History**

Johann August Schwerkolt (1822-1887), a brickmaker by trade, married Paulina Richter in Hamburg in 1849. They arrived in Australia in December, where they settled in Northcote. Schwerkolt purchased land in Mitcham in 1861, where he established a farm with fruit trees, vines, apiary and livestock. Three years later, he built a house there for himself and his growing family, which by that time comprised five children. For many years, it was assumed that this house was the same one which now stands on the site. However, more recent research has established that the present house was erected in 1886, and is in fact the third to be built in the site.<sup>1</sup> Schwerkolt's wife, Paulina, had died in 1884 and he married a German widow, Wilhemina, who had three children by her previous marriage, and went on to have three more with Schwerkolt. One died in infancy, and the last child, Mary, was born four months after Schwerkolt's death in January 1887. Schwerkolt's properties in Mitcham and Northcote passed on to his widow, and she remained living in the former with her elderly mother and two youngest children. After her mother died in 1899, Wilhemina and the two children went to live in America. The son died of meningitis in 1903, and Wilhemina herself died five months later. The remaining daughter, Mary, returned to Australia in 1909 to claim her inheritance. She later married and eventually settled permanently in America, appointing one of her nephews to act as her Power of Attorney in Melbourne.

After the Schwerkolt family vacated their stone cottage in 1900, it had a succession of tenants. Lack of maintenance caused the house to deteriorate, and it was condemned for demolition in the early 1960s. This came to the attention of the Nunawading Council, who recognised that, despite its condition, the building was important to the history of the municipality. Being a stone building, it had survived when many comparable early settlers' dwellings, built of timber, mud or wattle-and-daub, had not.<sup>2</sup> Intending to purchase the cottage, the council contacted the elderly Mary Schwerkolt (then Mrs Jackschowsky) in California, who agreed to sell it for £8,000. The house was then restored by architects John and Phyllis Murphy, which involved a substantial amount of reconstruction, and it was officially opened to the public on 17 November 1965.<sup>3</sup> Since that time, various outbuildings, including a barn, blacksmith's hut and smokehouse, have been reconstructed around the cottage to recreate the effect of an early settler's farm.

## **Description**

Schwerkolt's Cottage is a small single-storey dwelling built of rubble-coarsed local stone, with two brick chimneys projecting above a gabled corrugated iron roof, with a matching timber-framed verandah around all four sides. There are deep reveals, painted white, around windows and doors, and the window openings contain multi-paned double-hung timber-framed sashes.

## **Comparative Examples**

Bennett's mud cottage, near Damper (Gardiner's) Creek, Burwood (c 1850s; demolished 1960)  
Schramm's Cottage, Victoria Street, Doncaster (also built by German settlers in the 19th century)

## **Significance**

Schwerkolt's Cottage of outstanding historical significance. It is a rare surviving example of an early settler's simple dwelling, and as such it is unique within the municipality. Although considerable reconstruction has taken place, the house remains a good example of a typical vernacular house of the nineteenth century. The cottage's long association with the pioneering Schwerkolt family, who owned the land from 1861 to 1963, is also of considerable significance.

## **Source**

Context Pty Ltd. *City of Nunawading Heritage Survey Project*. 1994. (Graded B)

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1 Rosalie Whalen. 'Schwerkolt Family History'. typescript, dated 1998. Nunawading Historical Society.

2 Niall Brennan. *The History of Nunawading*. Melbourne. 1972. p 18.

3 Diane Sydenham. *Windows on Nunawading*. Nunawading, 1990.. pp 47-49.