



Home of James C. C. Bremner, Clover Bar, Alberta, circa 1913.  
Photographer: Byron-May Company Ltd.  
Glenbow Archives: **NA-1328-64708**

## **Bremner House: Overview**

### **A distinctive link to Strathcona County history**

*53452 Range Road 225, 2.25 miles north of the Yellowhead Highway 16*

Bremner House was built by J.C.C. (James Charles Chatterton) Bremner, one of the early homesteaders to farm in what is now Strathcona County, Alberta, Canada. Born in Glasgow in 1867, Charlie emigrated from Scotland in 1885 and staked a claim at Clover Bar, then part of the North-West Territories. Aided by a substantial inheritance, he first built a log shack, then a larger clapboard home, and finally this expansive dwelling.

Bremner House is believed to have been completed in 1913, eight years after the Province of Alberta was carved out of the North-West Territories and just as representative governance was beginning to take shape as Local Improvement District No. 517. Influenced by the Edwardian sense of sober practicality, the house is one of the area's most distinctive examples of early Craftsman style in a rural setting. The residence is unusually grand for a country home of the time, with a bell cast hip roof, handsome wrap-around veranda, spacious interior spaces and hilltop view. From the first, it boasted numerous amenities one might expect in a fine town home, including a telephone, electricity (thanks to an onsite generator), coal-fired steam heat, indoor plumbing and running water, and even a maid's calling system.

Charlie and his wife, Edith, were the main occupants of the house for the first 15 years. Completed just before the boom times gave way to the First World War, the house soon became a community social hub. With its impressive greeting hall, sunny conservatory and expansive third floor entertainment area, it hosted everyone from relatives, hired help and neighbours to dignitaries from afar.

Charlie prospered in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century but then was hard hit by plunging stock values, particularly in the infant oil industry. Caught in the downswing as the 1930s Depression loomed, he took his life in March 1928. Edith sold the property in 1929 and eventually returned east to her place of birth, Fredericton, New Brunswick. She died there in 1963, at age 97.

William and Nellie Schroter purchased Bremner House in 1929. They made various changes to suit their lifestyle, accommodate their growing family and keep up with the times; those changes involved natural gas, city water and aluminum windows. They also did repairs in the early 1970s to fix damage caused by a lightning strike, when they had to chop a hole in the roof to put out a fire. Other homes were built on the property to accommodate the next generation of Schroters. In 1976, the Schroters rented the big house to renters, who made further changes. Then through much of the 1980s there were other renters.

In 1988, Sten and Kirsten Nielsen purchased the house and surrounding 80 acres, while Rita and Dick Jackson purchased the remaining 240 acres. The two families began a tree farm and the Niensens ran a mixed farm. The Niensens made various changes to the house, including gas inserts in all fireplaces.

Through booms and busts, war and peace, Bremner House has proven a constant, evolving with the times yet retaining its historic character. Recognizing its architectural value and place in local history, Strathcona County purchased the house and the 80 acres immediately around it in 2004 and declared the house a municipal historic resource five years later. Restoration efforts began in 2009. The home is also listed in the Alberta Register of Historic Resources and thus protected by the provincial Historic Resources Act.

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