

# The Schroters and their time in Bremner House: The evolving face of Bremner House and farm under Schroter ownership

Research conducted by J. Ross and Associates in 2011

## Introduction

William Schroter and his wife, Nellie, purchased the Bremner house and farm after Charlie Bremner died. William had lived in the area since age four, when his parents John and Dora (Geeza) came west from Ontario to farm. Nellie’s family had emigrated here from Scotland when she was about nine. The Schroter family worked together across generations to run their farms, which evolved in synch with the times.

<u><i>Schroter family ties</i></u> John Schroter William Schroter Helen (Nellie) Schroter née Hutton William and Nellie’s children The Schroters’ home life Community involvement	<u><i>The evolving face of Bremner House and farm under Schroter ownership</i></u> The “Big House” The farmyard The farm Dealings with oil companies Sale of the farm
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## The evolving face of Bremner House and farm under Schroter ownership

During nearly six decades of ownership, the Schroter family created many memories in what some of them called the “Big House.” The house, the surrounding farmyard and the farming enterprise underwent notable changes over that time.

Topics covered:

**The “Big House.”** Some Schroter family members called Bremner House the “Big House,” and it was exactly that with 13 rooms, including five bedrooms. It was a house that invited play, with its expansive third floor and slick banister for sliding down. Over time, the home did demand upkeep and upgrade, whether to stop leaks or to take advantage of modern conveniences and meet the needs of an expanding family. In 1976, the house was rented to Robert and Carolyn Zimmerman, who did extensive renovations before moving in. Beginning in 1980, various members of the third generation of Schroters lived there, until the house was sold in 1988.

**The farmyard.** The Schroters added several buildings around Bremner House. They drilled at least two wells in the early years and others later, in a search for good water. In 1932, they replaced a horse barn that burned down with a barn for not only horses but dairy, with a pit below to catch manure. Other new buildings included homes for second-generation Schroters, a shop/garage, a Quonset for storing machines and a gasoline pump.

**The Schroters’ farm.** William Schroter ran a mixed farm that soon incorporated dairy, thanks to wife Nellie’s insistence. He adopted new approaches as they emerged, including perhaps the area’s first combine and new dairy barn designs. He set up a dairy hauling route and employed hired help as well as sons as drivers. The family enjoyed the fruits of their labour, including their own vegetables, pork and chicken.

**Schroter properties.** In 1944, William Schroter owned about 625 acres of land in three parcels. The family’s holdings more than tripled over time as his children grew into the business. William was generous in willing land to his children and helping them launch in farming.

**Dealings with oil companies.** Oil companies put caveats on parts of the Schroter land in the 1960s and 1970s to make way for a pipeline.

**Sale of the farm.** In 1988, the Schroters sold 240 acres near Bremner House to Rita and Dick Jackson, who also farmed in Strathcona County. Bremner House and the surrounding 80 acres and buildings went to Sten and Kirsten Nielsen, who had run a hog farm in Denmark. The two couples ran a tree farm on the property; initially, the Niensens also raised some livestock. They made numerous changes to the house, which Kirsten Nielsen especially appreciated for its European feel. In 2004, they sold the house to Strathcona County.



### *Interesting tidbit—*

The Schroter children blamed anything odd that happened in the house on “Bremner’s ghost.”

## The “Big House”

Date	Details	Source
1940-1950s	The children liked to slide down the banister. At the top of the stairs, there was a taxidermied pheasant at one time. A grandfather clock sat in a space in the plate ledge on the wall opposite the staircase on the main floor. The nook behind the stairs was used for coats and umbrellas. In the living room, the grand piano sat in the south half of the room. The first room the Schroter family moved into was the cold room. Later, they stored eggs there and hired help slept there. The ceiling was water-stained because the balcony above was made of tin and the gutters leaked once in a while. A wringer washer was in the bathroom. The kitchen was originally three rooms. They had a coal and a wood stove in the kitchen. Part of the kitchen was an icehouse. This room was renovated into a room for the hired man after they bought a refrigerator. A spittoon may have graced the arched space under the built-in cupboard in the dining room. A plate ledge held decorative dinner plates that were used for company. The master bedroom upstairs had an ensuite. Coal was stored in the basement.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
No date	The house was steam heated. A coal furnace was in the basement. The Schroters bought their coal from Egg Lake, Black Diamond and other mines in the area. Bert used to haul three or four tons of coal at a time and shovelled it into the basement through a window on the east side of the house.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
No date	The coal for heating was purchased from the Marcus, the Black Diamond and other coal mines in the area.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	At some point, the water reservoir in the boiler got too low and it cracked. After that William Schroter stopped using coal and had a propane tank put in at the boundary between the house and farmyards.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
Post-1930	The conservatory was sometimes used as a place to dry diapers.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
No date	William and Nellie Schroter slept in the main floor bedroom. Helen had the master bedroom on the second floor. The other second floor bedrooms had bunk beds.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1940s-1950s	At some point, some unspecified renovations were done to the kitchen, main floor bath and William and Nellie’s main floor bedroom. This may be the same time as Robert Schroter put in a swing door from the main floor hall into the kitchen. The kitchen was renovated by Mr. Hirsekorn, a carpenter. Hirsekorn installed cupboards along the east wall.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011

## The “Big House”

Date	Details	Source
1940s-1950s	The grand piano sat in the bow window in the living room. The living room walls were painted a light mauve colour.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
Late 1950s-1960s	At some point, possibly after Helen Schroter left for Toronto or after Helen’s marriage in 1958, Nellie Schroter sold the baby grand piano.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1940-1950s	There was a door on the second floor that led to the balcony and the third floor stairway.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1950s-1960s	The veranda did not have a railing. Nellie Schroter had flowerbeds at the base of the veranda.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	The small room to the left of the side door was the hired hand’s bedroom. At some point, Allan Schroter used this as his bedroom.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1940s-1950s	The hired hands slept in the small bedroom by the side door.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1950-1960s	The upper floor shingles were painted dark brown.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	The kitchen area was divided into two rooms. Immediately to the right of the side door entrance was the food preparation area and the stove. Later, the stove was removed and Nellie Schroter had her washer and dryer there. Meals were taken in the room next to the dining room that is now part of the kitchen. There was a large table here where everyone including the threshing crew ate.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	The Schroters used Bremner’s maid’s room as an ice house. It had sawdust. Later, when they bought a refrigerator, they changed the room into a bedroom for the hired help. (This seems odd; the maid’s bedroom has a large window in it that would have made the room unsuitable for an ice room.)	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
No date	At one time, the den was a library. When Jack returned home from Drayton Valley post-1954, he used this room as his bedroom for a short while. The room was used mostly for egg storage during the week before Bert Schroter trucked them into Woodward’s store in Edmonton with whom the Schroters had a contract.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1940-1950s	The den was not used for much and the ceiling leaked from the then uncovered porch above. The wainscoting in the den had a greenish stain.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011

## The “Big House”

Date	Details	Source
1930-1960s	William and Nellie Schroter did not change much in the house except to put doors between the master bedroom and the upstairs bathroom, and between the downstairs bath and the downstairs bedroom. Nellie displayed plates on the plate rail in the dining room. At Christmas she displayed Christmas cards here.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
Circa 1930-1940	Nellie Schroter kept her wringer washing machine in the main floor bathroom. The bathroom had a sink, toilet and a bath tub.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
1930-1960s	The Schroters had a large maple dining room table that seated up to 20 people. There may have been a wine-coloured area carpet on the floor.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
No date	The Schroters had a large, bevelled framed mirror that hung above the living room fireplace.	Interview, Carolyn Zimmerman by Jane Ross, 22 July 2011. Also, personal communication, Robert Schroter to Jane Ross 28 July 2011
No date	In the living room, the chesterfield was centred around the fireplace. Nellie Schroter had cushions on the bench under the bow window in the living room. Nellie had two wine-coloured area carpets, “Axminster” carpets, in the living room.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
No date	Nellie Schroter had “Persian” carpets on the living room floor. There was a grand piano in the bow window that Helen played. The bench under the bow window was a hiding place for children playing hide ‘n’ seek.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1940s	When Nellie Schroter was a Director in the Farm Women’s Union of Alberta she had her desk in the main floor hallway.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1940s - 1960s	The Schroter children used the third floor for dances with their friends.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1950-1970	Nellie Schroter had a washer and dryer installed in the back kitchen where the wood stove had once been.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1940s-1960s	Nellie Schroter did not use the conservatory very much. Plants dried out too quickly.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1950s	At some point, natural gas was hooked up at the Big House.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011

## The “Big House”

Date	Details	Source
1958	Dick Schroter stayed in the third bedroom on the second floor, next to Helen’s bedroom. Helen was in Toronto taking piano and voice at the Royal Conservatory of Music. When she returned home, she slept in the bedroom at the top of the stairs. Allan slept downstairs in the bedroom immediately to the left of the side door.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
Post-1959	William and Nellie Schroter moved into the master bedroom on the second floor after Helen married.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1959	Robert and Lois Schroter moved out of the Big House in the spring to live on their own farm at NW20-53-22 W4. They removed the kitchen cabinets from their second floor suite and re-installed them in their new house. Meanwhile, just before they moved, Alex and Joan Schroter returned from Drayton Valley to stay in the bedroom next to Helen’s bedroom.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
Circa 1960s?	At some point, the second floor kitchen was completely dismantled.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter to Jane Ross 13 June 2011
Circa 1970	During a storm, lightning started a fire on the roof of the Big House. Dick and Alex Schroter chopped a hole in the roof and put out the fire.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter to Jane Ross 13 June 2011
1970s	Maurine and Dick Schroter’s two children, Susan and Randy, played roller derby with their cousins, the five children of Alex and Joan, on the third floor. The third floor was an open area where there were still marks on the floor where Bremner’s pool table had reputedly been. Randy remembers a small closet on the third floor. The children blamed anything odd that happened in the house on “Bremner’s ghost”.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1970s	Vines covered the east side of the house.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1975	Alex and Joan Schroter, who had been living in the Big House, built a small white bungalow southeast of the Big House. Joan disliked the housework that the Big House entailed.	Interview, Carolyn Zimmerman by Jane Ross, 22 July 2011
1976	Alex Schroter rented the house to chiropractors Robert and Carolyn Zimmerman.	Interview, Carolyn Zimmerman by Jane Ross, 22 July 2011

## The “Big House”

Date	Details	Source
1976	The Zimmermans spent this year renovating the house, laying carpets downstairs, the main stairway, the upstairs landing and master bedroom. They removed layers of old wallpaper and painted the plain plaster walls. They wallpapered the northwest bedroom on the main floor. They installed new appliances in the kitchen and installed new bath fixtures in main floor and master bedroom ensuite bathrooms. They hired a carpenter to build a dressing counter in the master bedroom ensuite and a cedar wall around the new tub. The carpenter also built a butcher block with an attached eating table in the small kitchen next to the dining room. They covered the brick wall separating the den from the laundry area with cedar. They laid lino on the bathroom, kitchen, back bedroom off the side door and laundry areas.	Interview, Carolyn Zimmerman by Jane Ross, 22 July 2011
1977	Drs. Robert and Carolyn Zimmerman moved into the Big House 1 August. Their lease agreement with Alex Schroter was for three years. The amount of their rent during that time was reduced by the amount of money they invested in the renovations.	Interview, Carolyn Zimmerman by Jane Ross, 22 July 2011
1978	The Zimmermans installed a cedar hot tub, a new luxury item on the market, in the north end of the veranda.	Interview, Carolyn Zimmerman by Jane Ross, 22 July 2011
1980	Carolyn Zimmerman moved out 1 August.	Interview, Carolyn Zimmerman by Jane Ross, 22 July 2011
1988	Alex Schroter sold the property including the Big House.	Interview, Sten and Kirsten Nielsen by Jane Ross, 9 June 2011



*Interesting tidbit—*

*The family kept a vegetable garden so expansive that they could fallow half of it each year.*



*Interesting tidbit—*

*A large willow stood so close to the northwest corner of the house that the children could climb out of the bedroom windows onto the veranda roof and from there to the tree and down to the lawn for any shenanigans they might want to get up to.*

The farmyard		
Date	Details	Source
No date	William Schroter had a well drilled outside the kitchen window. The water was hard with high iron content.	Source unknown
1929	William Schroter had a 400-foot well drilled for domestic and livestock use, by an unknown driller.	Government of Alberta. Water Well Drilling Report. Also, <a href="http://environment.alberta.ca/01314.html">http://environment.alberta.ca/01314.html</a>
No date	There was a well in the dairy barn. It was hard water but nice and cool.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1932	Bremner’s big horse barn burned.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
Circa 1932	William Schroter built another barn further north, the front half of which was for cows, the back for horses. Jim McGhan helped to build the new barn. The old Bremner barn had a well in it.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
Circa 1932	William Schroter’s new dairy barn had a manure pit beneath. The grate ran down the middle of the barn, behind the two rows of cows. The manure was scraped into the pit below. From there it was pumped out.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	William Schroter had a well drilled on the east side of the house but it failed so he had one dug one on the north side of the house. The pressure was low and there was a fair bit of sand in the water.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
No date	Over the years, a second 1,200 sq. ft. home was built, along with a third 670 sq. ft. house, a 4,100 sq. ft. shop/garage and a 4,200 sq. ft. Quonset.	<i>Sherwood Park News</i> 1 September 2004
No date	William Schroter installed a gasoline pump next to the Bremner garage.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011



## The farmyard

Date	Details	Source
1950s	An aerial photo showed a small white house with summer kitchen east of the Big House. Jack and Pauline Schroter lived there. Before them, a hired hand lived there. This house was moved to Latam's by East Clover Bar School. Bert and Vera Schroter lived in a small house on the west side of the property. The Bremner garage is not in the photo. A large metal shed is in the farmyard.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
No date	William Schroter stored his binder in a lean-to attached to an old shed in the farmyard. The big Rumley tractor was stored in another shed in the farmyard.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
No date	One of the workshops was wide enough to drive a truck in if it needed repair. It was open at both ends. William had a forge in there and could do blacksmithing.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 6 June 2011
1940s-1970s	The Schroters had a very large vegetable garden north of the caragana hedge on the north side of the house. It was bisected by the driveway. It was so large that they summer fallowed half of it each year. There were four rows of raspberries.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1940s-1950s	There were irises along the east side of the house and a rock garden on the east side of the house between the road and the driveway.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1940s	William Schroter built a double decker chicken house, a horse barn and the dairy barn. Jim McGhan helped to build the horse barn. The dairy barn housed 40 cows.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
Late 1940s	Bert and Vera Schroter lived in a small house that was moved from its location behind the chicken house to closer to the Big House. Hired help used to live there during the summer before Bert and Vera lived in it. It had a front porch with a heater in it and a couple of bedrooms.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 6 June 2011
1946-?	Bert and Vera Schroter lived in the small house on the property for a number of years.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
Post-1949	After Jack Schroter married, they lived in a small house in the northwest corner of the yard and dug a well.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1930s-1988	The driveway split near the southeast corner of the Big House, one part continued west to the front door and the other branched off to the north farmyard.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011

## The farmyard

Date	Details	Source
1930s-1988	There was a lilac hedge along the west and south side of the house yard and caragana hedges delineating the north boundary of the house yard. There was a 10-foot circular peony bed in the middle of the south part of this lawn. There was a spruce tree closer to the southwest corner of the house and a large laurel leaf willow close enough to the northwest corner of the house that the children could climb out of the bedroom windows, onto the veranda roof and onto the tree branches to get to the lawn.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011. Also, interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1930s-1988	There was a row of crab apple trees on the south side of the Big House. There was a clump of spruce trees on the north side of the house. There was a row of lilacs along the sweep of the driveway.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1930s-1988	Saskatoon bushes and caragana grew between the driveway and the range road. Canaries used to nest there. There was a rock garden between the east side of the house and the driveway.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1960	Dick and Maurine Schroter built a small brown house northeast of the Big House after their marriage in July.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011.
1960	Dick and Maurine Schroter lived in the Big House for three months until their 700 sq. ft. Muttart pre-fab house was finished. It had two bedrooms on the main floor. Later, they built a third bedroom in the basement.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1965	R.J. (Bob) Schroter had a new 85-foot well drilled by Elliott Drilling for the livestock.	Gov't of Alberta. Water Well Drilling Report, <a href="http://environment.alberta.ca/01314.html">http://environment.alberta.ca/01314.html</a>
1965	William Schroter had a new 85-foot well drilled by Elliott Drilling for domestic use.	Gov't of Alberta. Water Well Drilling Report, <a href="http://environment.alberta.ca/01314.html">http://environment.alberta.ca/01314.html</a>
Late 1960s-1970	Joan and Alex Schroter, who had been living in the Big House with their five children, built a modern white bungalow southeast of the Big House. Joan disliked the Big House.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
Circa 1976	Alex and Joan Schroter built their new bungalow while Maurine and Dick were building their new home.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1970s	Dick and Alex Schroter built a Quonset hut in the farmyard where they stored machinery.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011

The farmyard		
Date	Details	Source
No date	Dick and Alex Schroter began to build a Quonset hut but did not complete it.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
Circa 1970s	At some point, Dick and Alex Schroter tore down the chicken house.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
Circa 1970	At some point, Dick and Alex Schroter built a large addition onto the dairy barn.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
Circa 1970s-mid 1980s	Dick Schroter used the well by Jack's old house, which had been in the northwest corner of the yard, to store root vegetables.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011



*Interesting tidbit—*

*Although he was a teetotaler, William Schroter grew malt barley because the price was good.*

The farm		
Date	Details	Source
1929	William Schroter bought the three Bremner quarter sections from the Royal Trust Company.	Interview, Reg Marler by Jane Ross, 5 April 2011
No date	William Schroter first used horses and steam threshers but he adopted new technological machinery as they came on-stream.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
1929	John Schroter and Nellie's father helped William financially in the purchase of the Bremner estate.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection
1930s	Despite the onset of the Depression, the Schroters managed to hang onto the land, starting a dairy herd even though William was against it at first. Nellie Schroter did the milking in the beginning.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection
No date	William Schroter had a mixed farm, raising Yorkshire hogs on the quarter that he first owned, grain farming, dairy cows and chicken for hatching eggs. He also had a milk hauling business.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011

## The farm

Date	Details	Source
1930s-1960s	The Schroters butchered one hog in the autumn for a winter supply of pork. They had no beef cattle so they probably purchased their beef from a store. When the chickens stopped laying, they were killed for home consumption. Doris (Schroter) Hirsekorn knew how to clean a chicken. Allan Schroter remembers killing chickens in the horse barn where they were scalded to get rid of the feathers.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 6 June 2011
1930s	William started his milk hauling business with a 1928 milk truck. William established a milk route with the dairymen south of him along Range Road 225 – Fred McCalla, Allan Parkins, Alex Bailness, the Rices, Frank Latam, the Checklies. Later, he hauled milk further north along Range Road 225, from the Stetsons and the Myers.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1932	William Schroter was a teetotaler but grew malt barley because the price was good.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives.
No date	William Schroter always had hired help.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011. Also, interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	William Schroter had hired hands to help with the hogs and to haul the milk into the city dairies. The hired help stayed in an old small house that might have been there since Bremner's time. It was located north of the Big House.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	William started a milk route, bought a truck and hired a driver to pick up milk from neighbouring farms.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection
1930s	The milk routes were not government assigned or regulated in any way.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1930s	William started his milk hauling business with a 1928 milk truck. William established a milk route with the dairymen south of him along Range Road 225 – Fred McCalla, Allan Parkins, Alex Bailness, the Rices, Frank Latam, the Checklies. Later, he hauled milk further north along Range Road 225, from the Stetsons and the Myers.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1932	The Bremner horse barn burned in about 1932. The fire spread to the hayloft, recently filled, and all hands were needed to keep the animals from re-entering the barn once they were outside.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives.

The farm		
Date	Details	Source
1932	The front half of the new barn was for cows, back for horses. William was still using horses for the binder and the hayrack.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives.
No date	William's dairy herd was commercial stock, not registered, and he was not involved in any government program to upgrade the herd.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011. Also, interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
No date	The older boys milked 50 cows by hand before and after school.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	It was the boys' job to clean out the chicken house every Saturday, a job they loathed.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1935	William Schroter was the Secretary of the Clover Bar Co-Operative Purchasing Plan for purebred Clydesdale stallions. This plan was a joint federal-provincial plan to upgrade the standard of horses in the province; the federal government backed out in the early 1930s due to problems financing the program.	Alberta, Department of Agriculture, PAA 73.307, file 165, Groups formed under the Co-operative Purchasing Plan for pure-bred Stallions
1936	William Schroter purchased an International truck for his milk hauling business.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
Circa 1936	Robert Schroter, age 10, drove a team of horses on a John Deere binder.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
Circa 1936-1937	William Schroter removed the rubber tires from his new Minneapolis tractor and put on steel tires from an older tractor. He broke a lot of land using this configuration. All the fences had to be removed first.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
Circa 1936-1937	When William Schroter was converting his binder into a swather, he accidentally drove a rusty file into the palm of his hand. That year, Nellie drove the team of horses pulling the binder, and Bob and Bert brought in the harvest.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1936	William Schroter removed the horse stalls in the barn, put in concrete floors and stanchions to accommodate his dairy herd. When the barn burned Circa 1932, the stanchions and floor did not, so he removed the burnt debris and used the barn for milking again, though the cows had to shelter in the bush that winter.	Bocock, "A Tale for the Telling," p. 82

## The farm

Date	Details	Source
No date	Jack Schroter looked after the dairy for a few years before buying a half section east in the Brookville area, eight or 10 miles east of Bremner.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 6 June 2011
Pre-1937	William took over his father's milk hauling business when John Schroter was killed in a car accident early 1937.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
No date	William Schroter bought a tractor. Then he extended the barn for his cows. How many cows a farmer had depended on the quota of milk you were allowed to ship.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
1941	William Schroter turned over his hog business to Lawrence after he married.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	William Schroter built a two-storey, four-room chicken house. He raised Leghorn chickens for their hatching eggs. He sold the eggs to a hatchery near Edmonton's downtown.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1940	William Schroter hired Ray McGhan to haul milk from his milk route in the morning and anything that anyone wanted hauled into town in the afternoon. Ray McGhan worked for Schroter for about a year before he joined up during the Second World War. He earned \$15 per month. The next person Schroter had as his milk hauler was Jim Pre...	Interview, George Jenkins by Jane Ross, 8 March 2011
No date	The milk hauling business was physically demanding as one had to lift eight-gallon milk cans out of a well where they were kept cool, lift them into the back of the milk truck and double deck the cans, and then take them off at the dairy.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	Each dairy farmer had a number that was painted onto their eight-gallon milk cans.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	The farmers were paid in pounds for their milk; the price varied from year to year. The milk plants mailed the farmers a monthly cheque.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1939-1945	At some point during WWII, William Schroter bought a milking machine.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1946	William turned over his milk hauling business to son Bert. He hauled to Palm Dairies, Northern Alberta Dairy Pool and Edmonton City Dairies.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011

The farm		
Date	Details	Source
1947	William Schroter also raised 3,000 chickens that he kept in a double decker chicken house.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
1948	William Schroter bought a new Minneapolis tractor.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
No date	William Schroter had 1,000-3,000 Leghorn chickens in a double decker chicken house that has two “rooms” on each level. He cleaned the eggs before selling them to a hatchery in downtown Edmonton.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
No date	William Schroter had a contract with Woodward's to supply the department store with fresh eggs every week. They stored the eggs in the den in the Big House. It was the boys' job to clean the chicken house once a week, a job they hated. William had maybe 1,000 laying hens.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1953	Eggs were graded in Ardrossan by Vi McLean.	<i>Cherished Memories</i> , p. 63.
1940s and 1950s	William Schroter was still using eight to 10 horses to haul wagons.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1940s-1960s	William Schroter had 11 quarter-sections all located close to each other.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1950	By now William Schroter had a grain and dairy operation. He had 24 dairy cows. He hauled milk in a truck every day from the farmers along the route and took it to Woodlands Dairy, Northern Alberta Dairy Pool and Edmonton City Dairy in Edmonton.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
No date	William Schroter had a hired hand collect milk cans from an informal route that he built up. He had a one-ton truck that carried 50 milk cans. The hired hand collected the cans every morning and returned a second set of cans at the same time. It was cheaper for everyone to have a milk collector haul the milk into town every day instead of having to do the chore themselves. They paid Schroter for this service.	Interview, Reg Marler by Jane Ross, 5 April 2011
No date	A number of the farmers in the area were dairy farmers.	<i>Cherished Memories</i> , p. 70
No date	William Schroter, and then son Albert (Bert) Schroter, hauled milk in eight-gallon cans to Woodlands, Northern Alberta Dairy Pool and Edmonton City Dairies. Nellie Schroter separated the cream and made her own butter.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011

The farm		
Date	Details	Source
No date	Bert ran the milk hauling business for 15 or 20 years until milk routes were amalgamated and Bert's route was taken over by someone else. Bert then moved to Lethbridge to haul milk for Crystal Dairies. At home Bert hauled for 10 or 12 farmers. In the autumn, the cows milked heavily and Bert stacked his 8' x 16' three-ton truck three cans high at the back of the truck.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1955	The new bulk milk hauler in the vicinity of the hamlets of Bremner and Clover Bar was Bob Alexander.	Interview, Ken Boddell by Jane Ross, 7 June 2011
1955	When the switch from cans to bulk milk shipment took place, the Northern Alberta Dairy Pool decided to do its own hauling. Since most of Bert Schroter's clients shipped to the Pool, this put Bert out of business. He moved to Lethbridge to haul for Crystal Dairies.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1955	There are a number of advantages of bulk milk: the milk in the farmer's milk tank is kept at a constant temperature; the hauler does not have to man-handle the eight-gallon milk cans but simply hooked his hose to the bottom of the tank and pumps the milk into the truck. Each tank has a calibrated measurement and a chart to convert the measurement to pounds that went with that tank. The trucker has to take a sample at each farm and check for butterfat content and bacteria content.	Interview, Ken Boddell by Jane Ross, 7 June 2011
1940s-1950s	Alex, Allan and Dick Schroter looked after the milking of the cows and cleaning the dairy barn, etc. in the late summer-autumn during harvest. They used a DeLaval milking machine. It took them 1½ hours to do the milking.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
No date	William Schroter kept his dairy herd on grass until as late in the season as possible to keep up his butterfat and milk quota.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
No date	William Schroter grew green feed, barley, oats, sometimes wheat and finally canola, and had lots of hay land.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
No date	None of the Schroters signed on with the Department of Agriculture's herd improvement programs or its cow-testing program.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1940s	When Lawrence Schroter married in 1941, William Schroter turned over his hog operation to him.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1940s	Allan Schroter raised six piglets in a school programme. He raised them as wieners and got \$80-\$90 for each when he sold them.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011



## The farm

Date	Details	Source
No date	When William started out, he raised pigs southwest of Bremner house on land across the road and west of present-day nursery Greenlands. It was here that William built a house for Lawrence and turned over the quarter-section to Lawrence. Bob Schroter now has it. When the highway was built, "they took out the old house and Lawrence's new house." There used to be a big pig barn there that was moved there from the home quarter [William Schroter's first place] further south. They raised Yorkshire pigs.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1950s	William Schroter may have been one of the first in the County to purchase a self-propelled combine that became available after the Second World War.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1954	Strathcona County got power.	<i>Cherished Memories</i> , p. 85.
1956	"Something new in milking, the only Herringbone milking parlor in Alberta was viewed during a dairy loose housing tour conducted March 6 <sup>th</sup> . The tour ... consisted of 35 farmers from the Ryley, Viking and Tofield districts and some members of the 4-H Viking Calf Club. The principle of loose housing which provides cattle with freedom to eat, drink and lounge as desired was discussed... At W. Schroter's of Bremner a recently installed Herringbone milking parlour was shown, so called because the cows are parked at a 30° angle herringbone fashion. Using the principle that a group of cows moves almost as fast as a single cow, six cows enter together for milking. There are no gates between cows thereby cutting costs. Cows' udders are 30" above where operator stands enabling him to inspect, clean and milk cows without bending or squatting. With this system one operator can milk 60 cows per hour."	Christie Family fonds, box 2, file 2, William Christie dairy herd files, Dairy Herd Improvement News
1956	Robert and Lois Schroter say they had the first herringbone milking parlour on their farm at NW 20-53-22 W4, and that William had a four-cow straight in milking parlour. Since 1956 was the year Robert and Lois married and William probably still owned the quarter-section, it may explain the discrepancies in stories.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	Allan Schroter remembers the milking parlor having six stalls.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1959	Alex and Joan Schroter returned after spending a few years working in the oil patch at Drayton Valley. William Schroter wanted Alex to help Dick with the dairy farm.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane 13 June 2011

The farm		
Date	Details	Source
1959	Don Jackson, Helen's husband, helped Alex and Joan Schroter move back to the Schroter farm.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1959-1960	Alex and Joan Schroter moved into the Big House, and William and Nellie Schroter built a small house for themselves on Highway 21.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1960-1981	Dick and Alex Schroter built the dairy herd up to 50 milking cows and another 50 of young stock.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1966	The Alberta Department of Agriculture sent out an annual "Dairy Herd Improvement News" to registered dairy producers. In 1956 there were 29 herds (355 cows) in the Edmonton area. It also included an "Honour Roll" of herds on the Provincial Cow Testing Service that had an average of 300 pounds or more of butterfat. Schroter's name does not appear until 1966 when the average pounds of butterfat had been increased to 400. He had 69 cows that produced the bare minimum of butterfat to get mention on the "Honour Roll".	Christie Family fonds, box 2, file 2, William Christie dairy herd files, Dairy Herd Improvement News
1967	Alex (Wilbur) and Richard (Dick) had a \$40,000 mortgage on the farm that was discharged within two weeks. They purchased the farm from their parents.	Alberta Land Titles, Certificate of Title. Also, <i>Sherwood Park News</i> 1 Sept 2004
1969	The Edmonton and District Agricultural Society held its annual ploughing and tilling competitions on Schroter farm.	<i>Edmonton Journal</i> 15 January 1953. Also, <i>Crossfield Chronicle</i> 8 June 1953, p. 12 from <a href="http://peel.library.ualberta.ca">http://peel.library.ualberta.ca</a>
Circa 1970	During a storm, lightning struck the Big House. The ground cable for the lightning rods on the house and dairy barn came loose and the electric current ran to the dairy barn where the cows, startled, backed into the metal stanchions and were killed. To put out the fire in the barn, Dick and Alex Schroter threw "little glass balls" into the fire. They sucked the oxygen out of the air and put out the fire.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1970-1980	Bremner grain elevators closed. The Alberta Wheat Pool facilities handled more than 3 million bushels of grain over the years.	Canadian Grain Commission. <i>Grain Elevators in Canada</i> . Annual crop years, 1911-1997
1981	Alex and Dick Schroter got out of dairy farming, divided the land between them so they each had their own grain farm.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1970-1980s	Many farmers in Strathcona County got out of dairy farming and switched to grain farming because it freed up personal time.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011

## Dealings with oil companies

Date	Details	Source
1965	Great Canadian Oil Sands Ltd. had a caveat on the farm. An easement was negotiated on part of the quarter three years later.	Alberta Land Titles, Certificate of Title
1972	A caveat by Gulf Oil was put on the land for an easement.	Alberta Land Titles, Certificate of Title
1974	A caveat by Dome Petroleum was put on for an easement.	Alberta Land Titles, Certificate of Title



### Interesting tidbit—

*Sten Nielsen first came to Canada on an “exchange program” that employed Europeans on western farms to learn Canadian farming methods. Sten had worked on Rita and Dick Jackson’s farm.*

Sale of the farm		
Date	Details	Source
1988	Wilbur (Alex) and Joan sold 80 acres on which the houses stand to Sten and Kirsten Nielsen.	Alberta Land Titles, Certificate of Title
No date	Sten came to Canada on an “exchange program” where Europeans, mostly Danes and Norwegians, worked on western farms to learn Canadian farming methods. Sten had worked on Rita and Dick Jackson’s farm.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1988	Sten Nielsen had worked with Rita and Dick Jackson in the County during the mid-1970s but Kirsten had not been to Canada. They visited in January 1988 after selling their pig farm in Denmark. Dick Jackson took them to look for property and when Kirsten saw the Bremner House she was determined to live there because it had a “European” feel to it – high ceilings, brick structure. The Jacksons and Niensens formed a partnership to go into the tree farming business; Jacksons bought the full 240 acres and the Niensens bought 80 acres including the house and outbuildings from the Jacksons. They took possession 15 August 1988.	Interview, Sten and Kirsten Nielsen by Jane Ross, 9 June 2011
No date	At some point, the Niensens tore down Schroter’s garage and workshop and erect a large steel machine shop.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1988-2004	The Niensens operated a tree farm and also raised ducks, geese, and chickens for their own consumption. They also bought a herd of 50 to 75 mixed beef cattle for about five years so they grew hay. There was a bad drought in 1999 and 2000 so they sold the cattle and got a reasonable price. Two years later, the BSE crisis tanked prices, so they were lucky. At the same time, they had a flock of 30 Finnsheep for three or four years. The Niensens purchased 130 acres kitty-corner to the Bremner land that they used for pasture. They got out of cattle because they were too busy with the tree farm.	Interview, Sten and Kirsten Nielsen by Jane Ross, 9 June 2011
1989-2004	Their tree farm was west of the house and south of Alex’s house. They planted their first six acres with seedlings in 1989. They grew 3,000 trees, mostly Colorado and white spruce. They purchased their seedlings from a wholesaler, Tree Time, out of Smoky Lake. They built their own greenhouse on the one side of Sten’s shop. But seedlings are too labour intensive due to the number of transplantings.	Interview, Sten and Kirsten Nielsen by Jane Ross, 9 June 2011

## Sale of the farm

Date	Details	Source
1990s	<p>The Niensens made a number of changes to the house. The house was cold so they put gas inserts into all the fireplaces; put a roof over the second-floor balcony as it leaked into the den below which they used as an office; wallpapered the dining room; painted two bedrooms on second floor but not the Master Bedroom. In the basement, they removed walls of three small rooms on the west side; put in a wine cellar; installed the old kitchen cupboards etc. on the north wall of the basement so they could use the basement as a mud room; put in an exterior entry into the basement. Sten built a brick wall to separate the furnace from the rest of the room and put a bedroom in the basement. The roof leaked so they reshingled the roof. They removed the mix of cedar and vinyl shakes on upper floor walls, insulated with one-inch Styrofoam and installed new siding. They gutted the third floor by opening up the ceiling, insulating, dry walling and installing a kitchen, and bedroom; they modernized the third floor bathroom. Sten Nielsen sanded the hardwood floors on the third floor but could not get rid of the water stains from two rows of house pots. All windows on the second and third floors were replaced.</p> <p>Outside, the Niensens put in the circular drive; built separate driveways to two other residences, Alex's and Dick's homes, so they could have privacy; cleaned out the caragana and Saskatoon bushes in the resultant circle so they could see the road; and removed the laurel leaf willow on the northwest corner of the house because branches were damaging the roof. Sten built the machine shed, metal silos.</p>	Interview, Sten and Kirsten Nielsen by Jane Ross, 9 June 2011
Post-1991	<p>The Niensens made more changes to the house: they gutted the kitchen down to the bricks; insulated and drywalled; opened up the kitchen by removing the walls of the Bremner's maid's bedroom; enlarged the middle window to match the two flanking kitchen windows; put in wainscoting in the kitchen to match the wainscoting in the rest of the house; stripped and refinished the original hardwood floors and re-laid it; renovated the main floor bathroom; removed a closet in downstairs bedroom to put in a door to connect the bedroom and bathroom and laid carpet in the "blue room", the main floor bedroom. They removed the hot tub in the veranda because it leaked.</p>	Interview, Sten and Kirsten Nielsen by Jane Ross, 9 June 2011
2004	<p>The Niensens sold Bremner House and the surrounding 80 acres to Strathcona County for less than \$800,000.</p>	Edmonton Journal, 26 July 2009