

The Schroters and their time in Bremner House: Schroter family ties

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

William and Nellie Schroter both came to the Bremner area as youngsters and grew up knowing pioneer farm life. For nearly 60 years, they and their children carried the farming tradition forward from their base at Bremner House.

Topics covered:

John Schroter. Born in Trenton, Ontario in 1859, John Schroter set up farming in the Clover Bar area and by 1910 had built a fully modern home with running water, sewer and lighting. He died suddenly in 1937 following a traffic accident, and his farm was equally divided among all eight of his children, including William.

William Schroter. Born in Ontario in 1894, William Schroter moved with his family to Alberta in 1898, at age 4. He married Nellie Hutton of Clover Bar in 1919 and started farming two miles north of Bremner, on land rented by his father. A decade later he purchased the Bremner farm and moved the family there. Hardworking, honest, quiet and astute, he was a member and leader in Bremner United Church and other local organizations. William died in 1972 and was buried in the Clover Bar cemetery. He was 79.

Helen (Nellie) Schroter née Hutton. Born in Carnoustie, Scotland in 1898, Nellie Hutton immigrated with her parents in 1907. Her father farmed in the Clover Bar area and did real estate. Like the Schroters, the family was active in the United Church, although they attended at Clover Bar rather than Bremner. Nellie married William Schroter in 1919, and they had 10 children. Outgoing and forceful, she held leadership roles in women's farm organizations that sent her travelling the province. She died in 1992, two decades after her husband, and was buried alongside him in the Clover Bar cemetery.

William and Nellie's children. William and Nellie Schroter had 10 children, including two sets of twins. Their second eldest, Phyllis, died at age 15. As the siblings reached adulthood, some returned to the farm for a time to live and/or work. Several settled in the area and operated their own farms.

The Schroters' home life. From an early age, Schroter children were very involved in the life of the farm. Chores were a fact of life, but it wasn't all work. They played ball and hide'n'seek, climbed trees, cooled off in a swimming hole, built snow houses, skated, took cutter rides, played cards and more. They had Sunday piano recitals around the grand piano. They attended school on foot or by horse-drawn democrat or cutter—and in later years by bus.

Community involvement. Both William and Nellie Schroter played leadership roles in local organizations. William was a member of the school board and kept the board's papers in the Big House foyer. Nellie frequently spoke at farm women's meetings in and beyond the region. Also active in Bremner United Church, the family attended and helped organize events and hosted choir practices in their home.



Interesting tidbit—

Believing he should begin the new year debt free, John Schroter hitched a ride to his bank on the last day of 1936. The milk truck in which he was riding was hit broadside, and he died two days later. As he wished, his three sons and five daughters each received 80 acres of the family's farmland.

John Schroter		
Date	Details	Source
1859-1898	John Schroter was born in Trenton, Ontario in 1859. He worked in a factory and later on a railway. In 1886 he married Dora Geeza. They moved in May 1898 to the Edmonton area. They had five girls and three boys, including son William who purchased the Bremner house and farm.	<i>Edmonton Journal</i> , 30 September 1972. Also, Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection <small>(*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)</small>
No date	There is no listing for John Schroter in the homestead list. Question: Did he buy a farm instead? From the Edmonton and Saskatchewan Land Company?	Redekop, <i>Strathcona County – A Brief History</i> , pp. 94-120
1908	J. Schroter attended a Liberal meeting of the Clover Bar Liberal Association to hear Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior.	<i>Le Courier de l'ouest</i> 24 September 1908, p.8
1910	John Schroter built a new house in the Clover Bar area, fully modern with running water, sewer and Delco lights.	<i>Cherished Memories</i> , p. 614
1915	J. Schroter of Bremner exhibited a Percheron at an unnamed fair.	<i>Grain Growers Guide</i> , 8 September 1915
1916	Mrs. John Schroter and her daughter Ella were thrown from their buggy and were badly hurt.	(Fort Saskatchewan) <i>The Conservator</i> , 28 September 1916, p. 5 from https://librarysearch.assembly.ab.ca
No date	John Schroter was known for his honesty in any deals.	<i>Cherished Memories</i> , p. 604
1937	John Schroter, father of William, died as a result of injuries incurred during a car accident. John Schroter divided his property evenly among all his children, including his daughters, rare in those days. Each child got 80 acres.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection <small>(*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)</small>
1955	Dora, wife of John Schroter, died in 1955.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection <small>(*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)</small>

William Schroter		
Date	Details	Source
1894	William Schroter was born in Haliburton, Ontario in 1894 and with his parents arrived in Alberta in 1898. He attended Clover Bar school 1902 to 1904 after which he attended East Clover Bar School 1904 to 1908. Then he attended Edmonton High School (Victoria Composite).	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection (*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)
1919	William Schroter married Nellie Hutton of Clover Bar.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1919-1929	William and Nellie Schroter lived and worked on a farm rented by John Schroter that was located two miles north of Bremner. Later, Bill bought that land. They became involved in the Bremner United Church.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection (*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)
1929	William Schroter bought the Bremner farm in 1929.	<i>Edmonton Journal</i> , 30 September 1972
1930	The Schroter family moved into the house.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
No date	William Schroter was a hard-working man. "Not too many men in the community could keep up to Dad."	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	William Schroter was known as a man of his word. He was known to be very honest.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter 25 June 2011
No date	William Schroter was hard working and very kind hearted. He was quiet "but when he spoke it was worth listening to."	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
No date	William Schroter sponsored the Bremner softball team.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	William Schroter visited and played with his grandchildren (Alex and Dick's children) who lived on the property.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1972	William Schroter died at age 79.	<i>Edmonton Journal</i> 30 September 1972. Also, interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 6 June 2011



Interesting tidbit—

Nellie loved music. (It ran in the family; one sister was an opera singer.) She urged all her children to learn an instrument, and daughter Helen became a pianist and music teacher. Others have less fond memories of enforced practice.

Helen (Nellie) Schroter née Hutton		
Date	Details	Source
1898	Nellie Hutton was born in Carnoustie, Scotland in 1898 and immigrated with her parents in 1907. There were eight or nine in Nellie’s family. Her father was in real estate and had a farm at Clover Bar. The Hutton family enjoyed longevity. They attended the Clover Bar United Church.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1919	Nellie Hutton married William Schroter.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1945	Nellie was a Director in the Farm Women’s Union of Alberta for several years. She travelled around the province quite a bit.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
No date	Nellie was also involved in the United Farmers of Alberta’s Master Farmer programme that saw her travel around the province nominating farmers for certain awards.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1947	Nellie was still a Director with the Farm Women’s Union of Alberta. She often entertained the Farm Women’s Union of Alberta in her home.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
No date	Nellie was quite outgoing.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	Nellie was involved in music. Her sister, Maggie, was an opera singer. Nellie went to the symphonies and other music shows. William and Nellie wanted all their children to take music. They tried to get Robert to take violin “but that didn’t work out very good.” They bought him a violin and Robert took lessons from the school principal, Mr. Cook, at East Clover Bar School. “The violin probably got demolished.” Nellie sent the rest of the children to piano lessons, “all the opportunities to be had.”	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1970-1990	Nellie got a lot of help from Dick, Bob and Alex after William died.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 6 June 2011
1992	Helen (Nellie) died in 1992. Both she and William were buried in the Clover Bar cemetery.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection (*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)



Interesting tidbit—

Helen Schroter studied piano and voice at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto for several years and later taught many area youth to play piano.

William and Nellie's children		
Date	Details	Source
	William and Nellie had 10 children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William (Lawrence) born 1920, died 1996 • Phyllis born 1921, died 1936 • Doris born 1922, died 2011 • Albert and Robert, twins, born 1926. Bert died 1990 • John (Jack) born 1928 • Helen born 1932 • Allan and Alexander, twins, born 1934 • Richard (Dick) born 1936, died 1986 	Information has been compiled from various Schroter oral history transcripts, as well as findagrave.com.
1936	Helen Schroter, age four, was not allowed to go to Phyllis's funeral and spent the day at the Checklies, who had a garage in Bremner.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1940-1944	Twins Robert and Albert moved into Edmonton to attend high school. They stayed with unnamed relatives.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1941	Lawrence Schroter married Margaret Glover.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection (*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)
1944	Doris Schroter married Wilf Hirsekorn in the living room of the Big House.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection. (*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.) Also, interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
1944	Helen, then 12 years old, sang at Doris's wedding.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
Circa 1946	After completing two years at university (possibly Vermilion College), Robert Schroter worked for BA Oil.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011

William and Nellie's children		
Date	Details	Source
1946	Albert Schroter married Vera Thompson.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection (*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)
1949	Jack Schroter married Pauline Pelletier.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection (*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)
1950	Robert Schroter moved back home to work on the family farm.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1956	Robert Schroter married Lois Schroter.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection (*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)
1956-1959	Robert and Lois Schroter lived in a three-room suite on the second floor of the Big House for two and one-half years. Their suite consisted of the master bedroom, a kitchen next door that had an electric stove, and a bathroom. The master bedroom was painted a peach-dusty rose colour. There was an "Axminster" area carpet on the floor.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1957	Alex and Joan Schroter lived in Drayton Valley for several years where he worked in the oil patch.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1958	Helen Schroter married Don Jackson. After they married, she taught singing and piano. The Jacksons had a registered dairy farm along Clover Bar Road. The herd was registered with the Holstein Friesian Association. At some point, Nellie Schroter arranged for Helen to get the baby grand piano that had been sitting in the John Schroter house for a number of years. Helen Schroter had it refinished.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Robert Briggs 14 August 1985, p. 10, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
No date	The baby grand piano that Nellie Schroter arranged for Helen to have come from her "Aunt Elma."	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
Post - 1958	Helen taught piano to Doris's daughter, Linda. "She taught us all how to play the piano."	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives

William and Nellie's children

Date	Details	Source
1958	Allan Schroter (one of the twins) married June Prather.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection (*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)
1958	Dick Schroter and Maurine Robinson met at a party at the Big House in 1958. Maurine had been invited by her student-nursing friend Joan Banks.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1959	Robert and Lois Schroter moved out of the Big House onto their own dairy farm at NW 20-53-22 W4	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
No date	Helen (Schroter) Jackson's girls were involved in horse clubs of 4-H.	Interview, Don and Helen Jackson by Robert Briggs 14 August 1985, p. 11, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
1960	Richard (Dick) married Maurine Robinson.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1976	Dick and Maurine Schroter began to build a new house on their own quarter one-half mile north of the Big House.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1978	Dick and Maurine Schroter moved into their new house.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1986	Dick Schroter died in 1986 and was interred at Clover Bar cemetery.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection (*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)
1986-2003	Maurine Schroter and son Randy farmed for two years afterwards. Then she rented the land to her brother-in-law Alex Schroter for many years and then to Robert Schroter. She continued to live on the farm until 2003.	Interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1990	Albert Schroter died in 1990.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection (*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)
1993	Margaret, wife of Lawrence Schroter, died in 1993.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection (*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)

William and Nellie's children

Date	Details	Source
1996	Lawrence Schroter died in 1996. Both he and Margaret were interred at Clover Bar cemetery. Wilf Hirsekorn (Doris's husband) died this year also.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection (*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.) Also, interview, Maurine and Randy Schroter by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1998	Joan, wife of Alex Schroter, died in 1998.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection (*Note: Strathcona County does not have access to the collection and cannot verify the source document.)
2011	Doris Hirsekorn died in 2011.	Schroter family history, Maurine Schroter Collection



Interesting tidbit—

In winter, Nellie Schroter heated bricks to put on the floor of the cutter so the children could keep their feet warm while travelling to school, church or other outings.

The Schroters' home life

Date	Details	Source
1920-1930s	When Nellie Schroter had to help milk the cows, she bundled the children and took them to the barn where they played in the empty stalls.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
No date	Nellie Schroter had a hired woman to help with the household chores.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
No date	William Schroter often made breakfast while the boys did the morning chores.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011

The Schroters' home life

Date	Details	Source
1930-1950	Children played after the chores were done. In summer they played scrub ball and climbed trees. They also swam in a swimming hole. They snared gophers and drowned moles since they were a real nuisance in the garden and fields. In winter they built snow houses. Inside, they played the card game fish, hearts and gin rummy. When they were older, they hitched up the horse and cutter and skated on Hanlan's rink or the one in the hamlet of Bremner.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 2 June 2011
1930-1940s	The children played hide 'n' seek in the house and 'anti I over', throwing a ball over the roof of the house. Helen Schroter and her girlfriends climbed out of her bedroom (the master bedroom) window onto the veranda roof to sunbathe.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
No date	On Sundays, the family had "piano recitals and people sat in chairs on the west half in front of the [living room] fireplace and watched. The first piano they had was an upright that Nellie gave to Doris.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
1930s-1960s	The Christmas tree was in front of the bow window in the living room.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1930-1950	The children attended the two-room East Clover Bar School. The school was four miles away.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
1940s	Helen Schroter attended East Clover Bar School for Grades 1 to 6, and North Clover Bar school for Grades 7 to 9. She was bused into Fort Saskatchewan for Grades 10-12.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1930s-1950s	Lawrence, Robert, Albert and Doris Schroter went to school by democrat in the summer and by cutter in the winter. Mother Nellie Schroter heated bricks to put on the floor of the cutter so the children could keep their feet warm.	Interview, Robert and Lois Schroter by Jane Ross, 25 June 2011
1940s-1950s	Allan and Alex Schroter started their schooling at East Clover Bar School in 1940-41, and then went to North Clover Bar School in 1947 and then into Clover Bar Village School for one year (Grade 6) in 1948. The boys were bused into Fort Saskatchewan for Grades 7 to 12. They graduated from high school in 1953.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 6 June 2011

The Schroters' home life

Date	Details	Source
1940s	At one time, most of the country schools went almost up to Grade 12 and then the children were bused into Edmonton for Grades 10 to 12. If the school's attendance was too low, it was merged with another. Before Salisbury had a high school, all the children from Bremner and elsewhere were bused into Edmonton for their high school. Bob and Doris Schroter went to high school in Edmonton.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 6 June 2011
1930-1950	The Big House was only ½ mile south of the Canadian National Railway and hobos sometimes came. Nellie Schroter always fed them but did not allow them in the house.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives

Community involvement

Date	Details	Source
1914	W. Schroter was elected as a Director of the new Loyal Order of the Orange Lodge No. 112 in Clover Bar.	<i>The Edmonton Capital</i> 28 January 1914, p. 6 from http://peel.library.ualberta.ca
Circa 1930s	William Schroter was on East Clover Bar school board. "We had the exam papers once, and we had to guard them." William Schroter kept school board papers in the foyer of the Big House.	Interview, Doris Hirsekorn by Judy Fehr 13 April 2010, Strathcona County Museum and Archives
1930-1950s	The Schroter family attended the Bremner United Church. Helen Schroter sang in the choir. The choir practised in the Bremner manse.	Interview, Helen and Don Jackson by Jane Ross, 13 June 2011
1939-1945	During the Second World War the Schroters had no trouble in getting hired help.	Interview, Allan and June Schroter by Jane Ross, 6 June 2011
1945	Mrs. W. Schroter was elected to the Farm Women's Union of Alberta executive as a director. She was also the guest speaker at the Spring Valley (Lacombe, Alberta) Farm Women's Union of Alberta meeting.	<i>The Western Farm Leader</i> 2 February 1945, p 10, 1 June 1945 from http://peel.library.ualberta.ca . Also, <i>Farm & Ranch Review</i> 1 February 1945 from http://peel.library.ualberta.ca
1946	William Schroter was re-elected to the board of the Edmonton District Milk Producers Association.	<i>The Farm & Ranch Review</i> 1 March 1945, p. 18 from http://peel.library.ualberta.ca

Community involvement

Date	Details	Source
1947	Mrs. Schroter presented a paper on musical composers at a meeting of the Clover Bar Farm Women's Union of Alberta.	<i>Western Farm Leader</i> 15 March 1946, p. 13 from http://peel.library.ualberta.ca
1947	Mrs. W. Schroter, director, spoke at the Farm Women's Union of Alberta conference.	<i>The Western Farm Leader</i> 18 July 1947, p. 11 from http://peel.library.ualberta.ca
1948	There was no Farm Women's Union of Alberta local at Ardrossan so "Mrs. Wm. Schroter of Bremner was invited to a meeting where a local was formed."	<i>Cherished Memories</i> , p. 321
1970	Clover Bar church closed.	<i>Cherished Memories</i> , p. 345