

The Reineberg Houses©

by Faye Reineberg Holt



I had never really entertained the fantasy of a castle or great house in my family's past, so I was shocked to learn that in Germany there had been a Reineberg castle — though it didn't survive the late 1700s. Whether the castle had anything to do with our family, the only Reinebergs in Canada, is still a mystery. To me, Grandpa was an Alberta farmer. What a surprised to learn the role various houses had played in his life.

After he and my grandma immigrated to Canada, they lived near Botha, Alberta, but eventually, Grandpa had houses near Stettler and in British Columbia. I grew up in the farm house near Stettler, and to me, it was the "Reineberg house." My grandparents had lived there. Surely it had always been the Reineberg house and would always be the Reineberg house. For almost fifty years, my mother and father lived there or in the new house they had built close by it in 1966. The family still owns the land, but this summer, the "old" house had to be brought down.

The decision was a tearful one. In the end, the family agreed. The time had come. Part of the roof had collapsed, but the problem wasn't only the cost of renovations. Strict new environmental codes for water and sewer meant those should be addressed. Even more problematic, old houses needed someone to live in them. We had tried renters. It hadn't worked, and the house had stood empty for some years. The decision loomed.

Both my deceased father and grandparents had made difficult decisions related to homes and houses. They made those decisions and "moved on" in life. My mother, two sisters and I needed to do the same. The old Reineberg house had to be demolished, but it had a history of its own, one rooted in the very first days of the Stettler community. Still, it wasn't the first house my grandparents owned. Before he died, Grandpa owned many houses. One that he wanted to own had to be left behind.

My grandfather, Frederick William Reineberg, was born in 1878 in Barnstorf, Diepholz, Germany. More or less between Minden and Lubbecke in northwest Germany, the community was reasonably close to border with Holland. My great grandfather had a good farm. Grandpa did have a sister, Dora, but as oldest and only son, Grandpa stood to inherit the Reineberg home. An old photo shows it as an enormously long one-story house, seemingly with thatched roof. Since barns or shops were sometimes attached to the back of farm houses, that may have been the reason for its overall size.

Sadly, when Grandpa was eleven, his father died. Having a young son and daughter, Great Grandmother remarried, and immediately, everything she owned belonged to her new husband. Soon enough, Mr. Siemers decided he would will the farm to his own son, my grandfather's half brother, Henry. Grandpa's birthright would escape him and his future no longer looked promising.

For the entire article, contact the author or see *Alberta History*, Autumn 2003 pp 33-38.
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