

The Schultz Barn Bashaw, Alberta

In some families a pair of silver candlesticks or jewelry is passed down from one generation to the next as an heirloom and reminder of the family's personal history. For the Schultz family of Bashaw, Alberta, the prized heirloom is a building—a fabulous stone barn. As Corey Schultz and his mother Dolores explained, the barn was built by Grandfather Frederick Schultz (Dolores' father-in-law) in 1926-27.



The Schultzes were German-speaking immigrants from the Ukraine who had come to Canada in 1893 to homestead. They lived for a while in the Mennonite community of Steinbach, Manitoba before moving on to Bashaw, Alberta.

Even on the prairies, stone was often used as a building material for important town buildings. But a stone barn was something else.

Family legend has it that Grandfather Schultz set to work digging up his own property for field stone. When he had exhausted that supply, he dug up his brothers' fields and hauled the stone by horse and wagon. Neighbours and relatives were probably shocked when they saw what he was up to.

Grandfather Schultz enlisted the help of an itinerant stone mason, Ed Gunch. Together they built a two level barn with the lower stone level banked into the hillside; this gave easy access to the upper level, built of thick timbers. It is a style that is called North German in some places, Ontario or Pennsylvania elsewhere. The gambrel roof



Schultz family (from left to right)
Corey Schultz, Dolores Schultz,
Sheena Schultz Johnston, Kira
Johnston, Etta Johnston.

Photo: Dolores Schultz

and cupolas for ventilation are functional and attractive.

Dolores developed a warm friendship with her mother-in-law, Agatha, who was a great storyteller. According to Agatha, Frederick wanted to provide a farm for each of the couple's five sons and so he put every spare dime into buying land. Meanwhile there was hardly any furniture in the house. One day Agatha had had enough, and she read her husband the riot act. "Here we are sitting on apple boxes! When you take that load of wheat to be sold, I want some chairs," she told him. That night Frederick returned home with two new chairs.

Over the years the Schultz farm has seen many family gatherings, picnics and occasional barn dances in the loft. Sometimes people come just to look at the unusual stone barn Grandfather Schultz built. For Corey and Dolores, the barn is a precious heirloom they intend to safeguard for future generations.