

## **Innisfail Brick and Tile – Innisfail, 1896-1914**

In 1896, a few miles south of Red Deer, at a place later to be named Innisfail, Wm. Dickson Varty started a brickyard. Varty had been making brick in Flesherton, Ontario, before he brought his wife and seven children out west. Reta, the eighth child, was born in their frame home which would later serve as a bunkhouse for the workmen when Mr. Varty built a new brick home in 1905. Mrs. Reta Cola still (1983) lives in this brick house today. Mr. August Kremer closed up his blacksmith business and, with son David, joined Varty in partnership. He had come to Canada with his family from the unsettled Germany of 1870. His mother had dressed him as a girl to look like her four daughters, concealing his identity while they were leaving the country, because he was nearing draft age. The Free Lance for July 23, 1903 reports that “overseer Kremer (August) called a meeting of 40 people to incorporate Poplar Grove into the town of Innisfail”.

Records of 1906 show that Varty and Kremer were selling their soft-mud brick at \$10.00 per thousand. Son David put his third class steam engineer’s certificate, issued by the Government of the Northwest Territories in Regina in 1905, to practical use. He soon took over the brickyard, expanded into wire-cut brick, and added machinery to manufacture 6” and 24” diameter drainage tile.

Soon the name of this brickyard was changed to the Innisfail Brick and Tile, and their products were shipped by carload to southern Alberta and most parts of Saskatchewan. By 1914, David Kremer was running a sizeable operation in Innisfail. He set up a plant whistle which was blown every weekday at 7:00 a.m., none, 1:00, and 6:00 p.m. People as far as five miles away would set their clocks by it.

Although this yard closed down production in 1914, they had inventory on hand which they continued to sell during the war years until 1917.

From: Bricks in Alberta by Jack M. Manson. 1983.