

A MEMO ON THE JACOB WEIDENBACH FAMILY

(By Robert Weidenbach)

I recall talking to my father, Jacob Weidenbach, about his father (Konrad) and grandparent (George). He said his grandfather (George) told him he was about his age when his father left Germany for Bessarabia, South Russia, with his father. That was when Konrad Weidenbach left Russia with his family for America. I am quite sure Konrad brought his children, his wife and his father. They settled near Lesterville, South Dakota, and homesteaded there.

There was a little church near the farm of Christ Weidenbach where I feel certain dad's mother and dad's grandfather are buried. My grandfather, Konrad, is buried at a little cemetery 4 miles south of Parkston, South Dakota. I had my brother, John, place a marker upon his grave, or at least near it.

My father, Jacob, also mentioned to me that his great grandfather had the first horse drawn grist mill in Worms, South Russia; at that time it was known as Bessarabia, a rich farming country, but no farmers.

As I understood it, Katherine the Great, who was a German princess, married the Czar of Russia when she was very young. The Czar and wife, Katherine, were the rulers for many years. She came to the German people and offered them free land and that they and their children would not be required ever to serve in the Russian Army, and that if they would come they could have their own little communities, schools and German churches. She wanted them to teach the Russians how to farm the land.

A great mass of German families took the bait and emigrated to Russia as colonists, not as Russian citizens. They later learned that any of their children born in Russia and became of age were Russian citizens and must serve in the Russian Army like any other Russian. When they discovered this, a great many of the colonists, including my grandparents, left Russia.