

# From Russia to Dakota

*When there seemed little hope for advancement in Russia, the colonists of the Crimea dreamed of rich, virgin farmland in the Dakotas.*

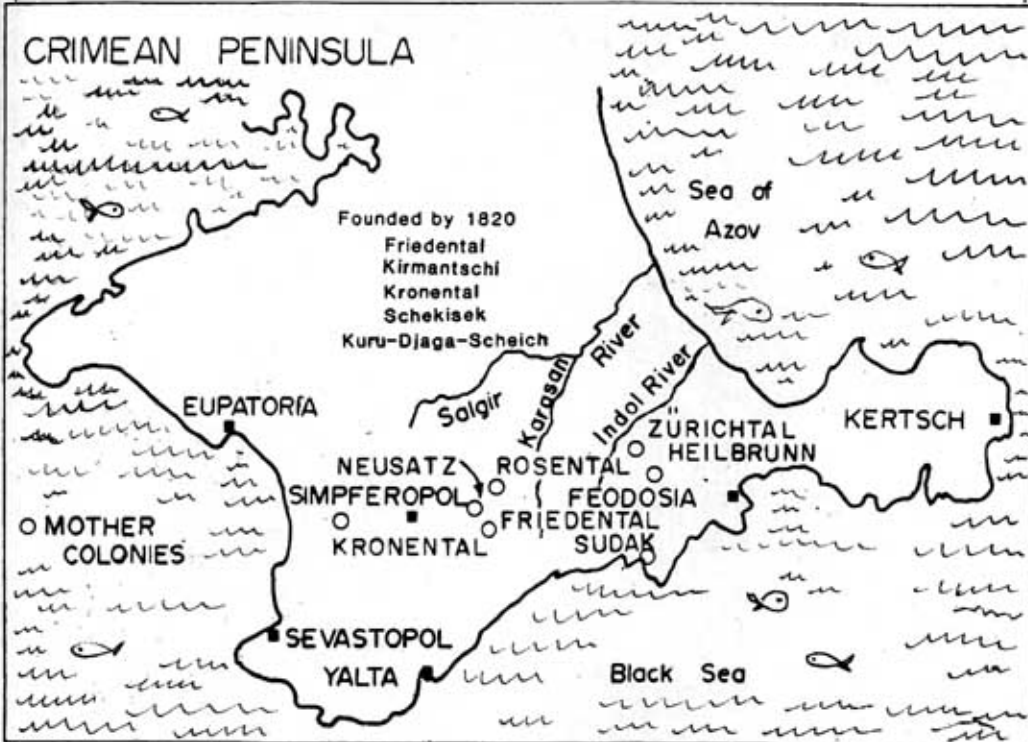


Wilhelm Huber and Katherina Buchmann's wedding photograph in 1891.



Wilhelm's brother, Phillip Huber, and their half-brother, Jacob Weber.

## CRIMEAN PENINSULA



Map of the Crimean peninsula in southern Russia when the Hubers lived in that country. The name of their village was Heilbrunn.

### By Frieda Huber Juhnke

**T**housands of German settlers trekked to the Crimean peninsula in Russia in the 1760s. They came at the invitation of Czarina Catherine, who herself was of German birth. She promoted the development of southern Russia by progressive German farmers in part because she feared the area might be overrun by Turkish settlers, who would be loyal to their own neighboring government rather than to Russia.

Surrounded by the Black Sea on the south and west sides and by the Sea of Azoff on the east side, the subtropical climate of Crimea became a haven for enterprising German pioneers who gladly ac-

cepted the challenges of developing a new land in Russia. Included in that group were the Hubers.

My great-great-great-grandfather, Johann Jacob Huber, was born in October 1726. He married Rosina Krieg, born on October 15, 1728. They emigrated from Canton Zurich in Switzerland to Wellen, Wurtemberg, Bavaria, Germany, in 1774.

In 1760, the Hubers' son, my great-great-grandfather, was born and baptized on the same day. His name was Phillip Jacob.

Johann Jacob and Phillip and his neighbors were highly impressed with the promises and offers of the Czarina Catherine and her grand-

son. Along with others from the Heilbronn village at Wellen, he immigrated in 1803 to Crimea. There they built a large church on a hill in the middle of a new village, which they named Heilbronn after the village they had left in Germany.

The Heilbronn area in Crimea was an area of hills and valleys. The lower part of the peninsula had already been settled by German immigrants before they arrived, and so the latest wave of settlers had the comfort of knowing there were fellow German neighbors close by. In Heilbronn, the Hubers and others raised fruit and grew large vineyards. It was beautiful country.



**TOP PHOTO, LEFT:** Emilie Huber was married to Phillip Huber. Phillip was born in 1840 in Heilbrunn, Crimea, Russia. He and Emilie were married in Russia, and he died in Russia. She was born in 1844, and died in 1899 at Freeman, South Dakota. Emilie married Johannes Weber on March 15, 1889 at Freeman. Johannes was the father of Heinrich Weber, and Emilie was the mother of Johanna Huber Weber. **TOP PHOTO, AT**



**RIGHT:** Johanna Huber, sister of Wilhelm Huber. She married Heinrich Weber. They had the following children: Lydia, Edward, Reinhold, Lena, William, Edwin, Arthur, and Raymond, and farmed near Ashley, North Dakota. **MIDDLE PHOTO:** Heinrich Weber. **BOTTOM PHOTO:** Threshing crew in the 1920s with horse-drawn machinery. Note the long belt at the right and the wood spokes in the wagon wheels.



## Backgrounds (continued)

The son of Phillip, Johann Georg, was my great-grandfather. He was born in Germany on October 25, 1803. He married a woman whose last name was Mayer, and they had seven children:

- Frederick, who never came to America, and who was never heard of again.

- Phillip, my grandfather, who married Emilie Huber.

- Jacob, who married Elizabeth Stern, and who would later live on the Ed Kost farm, near Freeman, South Dakota.

- Henry, who was married to the mother of Mrs. Peter Schoppert.

- Johann Georg, who married Anna Barbara Hafner.

- Katharina, who married Johannes Mettler.

- Regina, who married Mathias Schrimpf, the uncle of Katharine Huber, my mother.

Emilie Huber, my grandmother, had two brothers whose names are known, but the names of her other brothers and sisters are lost to history. The two were Conrad Huber, whose daughter married John Ellwein and was the mother of the Ellwein sons who owned a store in Freeman for many years, and Jacob Huber.

My grandfather and grandmother had eight children. He developed tuberculosis and died in 1882, shortly before his youngest son, Phillip, was born. His widow, in desperation, wrote for help to her brother-in-law, Georg, in America. Georg responded by sending money to Bremen, Germany, for a passport so that Emilie's oldest son, Wilhelm, could go to America.

Since there was no money for transportation to Bremen, Wilhelm left his home in the Crimea with a bundle on his back, relying on his feet to get him to his destination. Walking through Russia was an experience—sometimes good, sometimes bad. Because he had no money, he had to ask people for help. Sometimes folks would give him food for his labors. Other times they would send the dogs after him. Often he slept in haystacks during the day, and



The Wilhelm Huber family home at Freeman, South Dakota, in 1912: neat, well-constructed buildings, and ideal for raising a family. Photo below shows more of the farmyard. It was taken in 1900.



## Backgrounds (continued)

walked at night. The one blessing he received in plentiful numbers was head lice!

When Wilhelm arrived at Bremen, Germany, the passport was waiting for him. He had to work as a shipmate on the ship in order to pay for his meals. After four weeks at sea, he arrived in New York harbor, where he helped unload the baggage onto the docks for pay.

While he was working, a man offered him a gold watch for \$10. The offer was so enticing that he spent his only \$10 to buy it. But as he continued working, he felt a tug at his pocket. With a quick grab, he snatched the watch away from a fumbling pickpocket. In haste, the beautiful gold chain was torn apart, but the watch remained his

prized possession throughout all of his life.

After Wilhelm arrived in Yankton, Dakota Territory, in the early 1880s, he stayed in living quarters owned by a Mr. Katy, who also owned a store. Then he set out for the farm of his Uncle Georg Huber in the Heilbronn area southwest of Freeman, South Dakota. There he began working to earn money to send for the family still in Russia and to pay back his uncle. Wages were 75 cents a week for farm labor such as pitching and hauling hay and cleaning out barns.

One winter day, when Wilhelm was several miles from home, and was getting a load of hay, a heavy, dark, wall-like cloud suddenly reared up from the northwest. The horses became greatly uneasy, and so he held them with one hand while struggling to pitch the remaining hay with his other hand.

Finally, the horses lunged off, with Wilhelm running alongside, clinging to the reins and to the pitchfork. The blizzard hit so quickly that by the time the horses and Wilhelm reached home, his fingers were frozen and his hearing was permanently impaired. But he was thankful to the Lord, for many people perished. Sheep were found where they stood. Cattle had suffocated. Death was everywhere, all as a result of that terrible storm.

Wilhelm described other



**Mary Huber Reiner of Zeeland, N.D. She was the daughter of Jacob and Katharina Huber.**



**Wilhelm Huber stands beside the drayline, resting his arm on the side of it. The other man on the left side is Emil Blum, brother-in-law of Wilhelm Huber. Emil Blum married Emilie Huber.**

pioneer experiences of those days.

Lumber was usually hauled by oxen from Yankton across the prairie. It was hard work controlling the oxen. They had minds of their own. If they were thirsty, they would head for the closest waterhole, regardless of how much opposition came from the driver's seat! Much to the horror of everyone else, they would pull the load into the water and drink themselves full. Then they would decide that the load was too heavy to pull out of the water and mud. There was nothing the angry men could do except unload the lumber, through the mire, to dry land. Only when the wagon became light enough again would the stubborn oxen pull it out of the water.

When Wilhelm had repaid his Uncle Georg for his passport, he was able to send enough money to his mother, Emilie. She and five-year-old Phillip Jr. and Wilhelm's sisters came to America on September 19, 1887. Emilie then married Johannas Weber of Freeman on March 15, 1889. (Johannas had previously been married to Elizabeth Metz.)

Emilie and Johannes Weber had a son, named Jacob Weber. Jacob became an elementary school teacher at Wittenberg, South Dakota, and married a young woman there. She died soon after the marriage, and Jacob enlisted to fight in World War I. He was killed in Belleau Woods, France, in that war. Weber Post in Freeman is named in his honor by the American Legion.

Wilhelm Huber homesteaded near Lesterville, South Dakota, and later at Artas, South Dakota, but he did not like either location. He returned to Freeman and went into the furniture business with Christoph Guentner. At that time, Freeman was still in its infancy. He told how he and Guentner enjoyed watching the first sparrows that came into town huddle and fight in the trees and roofs. Later, Wilhelm started a dray service with the stable behind the Schamber store. He rented out horses and vehicles and delivered merchandise throughout the town.

Many times wealthy men came



All dressed up in their Sunday-best clothes: Anton Langle, William Huber Jr., and Ed Huber.

## *Saving money for transport in order to bring relatives from Russia to the Dakota prairies.*

Wilhelm and Katherina Huber by their home.



Young Bill Jr. with Katherina Huber and oriental rug.



## Backgrounds (continued)

**TOP PHOTO:** Emilie Kaul, sister of Wilhelm Huber, is seated at right with her daughter, Hulda Kundert. **MIDDLE PHOTO:** Mr. and Mrs. Albert Huber (Albert is the oldest son of Wilhelm Huber). **BOTTOM PHOTO:** Homestead home of William Huber, Jr., shown in early 1920s.



from Chicago and other eastern states to hunt quail and other wild fowl. They rented buggies and teams from Wilhelm. The easterners were often a strange lot. They brought along their hunting dogs, for which they bought the choicest beefsteaks at Phillip Mensch's butcher shop. Often the hunters imbibed so heavily that they had to hire young boys to go along simply to help steady them against the wagons so that they could shoot. Surprisingly, many were amazingly accurate shots for the condition they were in!

My father, Wilhelm Huber, married a woman named Marie. She died from pneumonia within a year of their marriage. On June 7, 1901, he married Katherina Buchmann at her home near Wolf Creek, South Dakota. Reverend Boescher officiated. Their attendants were her brother, Jacob Buchmann, and his wife Marie.

Wilhelm and Katherina lived in Freeman several years while he continued to work as a drayman. They bought a farm near Clayton, South Dakota, and moved onto it.



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**Gustav Huber family of Zeeland, North Dakota: Front row, left to right: Norbert Huber; the mother, Elizabeth Huber; the father, Gustav Huber; and Myron Huber. Middle row: Ruth Foley; Bernese Levi; Ella Guttormson; Esther Bauer; and Claudia Nelson. Back row: Violet Reede; Leo Huber; and Phyllis White.**

One day, when they came home from town in their horse-drawn buggy, they found the barn blown away and a milk cow killed by a tornado. Since Wilhelm did not like farm life, the loss made him decide to move to Emery, South Dakota, where he worked as a drayman again. They lived there a number of years, but Mother persuaded him to return to their farm. There they lived the rest of their lives near their children.

Memory, man's strongest and most lasting link to life, can be dissolved only by death. So it is that our Lord took all of them home. But memories of their love and courage linger with us.

We are richer in having known many of them, and their small part of this world is a better place because they came to live here.

**Philip Huber (1840-1881) and Emilie Huber (1844-1899).**  
Their children and spouses:

1. Christina Huber (1863-1936) and Jacob Kilber.
2. Wilhelm Huber (1864-1936) and Katherina Buchmann (1872-1965). His first wife, Mary Weber, died in 1891.
3. Johanna Huber (1867-1916) and Henry Weber (1866-1916).
4. Katherina Huber (1869-1938) and Jacob Huber (1862-1924).
5. Maria Huber (1872-1956) and Jacob Ulmer (1868-1935).
6. Emilie Huber (1875-19\_\_\_\_) and Jacob Blum; \_\_\_\_\_ Kaul.
7. Christiana Huber (1878-early 1900s) and Alexander Ellwein (1874-approximately 1969).
8. Philip Huber (1882-1953) and Sophia Roth (1881-1919); Maria Waldt Blumhart (1889- ).

9. Jacob Weber (1890-1918). Married, no family.

- 1. Christina Huber (1863-1936) and Jacob Kilber ( ).** They lived in the Roscoe, South Dakota, area. Their children and spouses:
- a. William Kilber-Lydia Schaeffer.
  - b. Elizabeth Kilber (1886-1970) and John Reede.
  - c. Leonard Kilber-no family.
  - d. Reinhold Kilber (1892-1974)-no family.
  - e. Lydia Kilber (1894-1974) and Gottlieb Reede.
  - f. Hulda Kilber (1897-1962)-Solomon Reede.
  - g. Albert Kilber (1899-1980)-Bell Merkel (1907- ).
  - h. Art Kilber (190\_\_)-Melitta Bauer.
  - i. Edward Kilber (190\_\_)-Minnie Reede.





**TOP PHOTO:** Four generations in 1942: Matilda, daughter of Reinhold Huber and son Gerald Tornow; Katherina Huber, mother of Reinhold.

**BOTTOM PHOTO, RIGHT:** Wilhelm Huber's sister, Marie Ulmer and her husband, Jacob, of Menno, South Dakota.

- j. Trougott Kilber (1903-1943).
- k. Otto Kilber (1904- )-Viola Haar (1910- ).
- l. Martha Kilber (1906-1971)-Edgar Kilber.
- m. Edmund Kilber-no family.
- n. Gottlieb Kilber (190\_-)-1961)-Edna Hofer.

**2. Wilhelm Huber (1864-1936) and Katherina Buchmann (1872-1965).** They lived in the Clayton area, near Freeman, South Dakota. Their children and spouses:

- a. Reinhold Huber (1893-1969)-Josephine Langle (1895-1972).
- b. Albert Huber (1895-1978)-Lillian Schulz (1898-1975).
- c. Lydia Huber (1896-1976)-Theodore Roth (1895-).
- d. Edward Huber (1900-1968)-Amelia Huber (1901-).
- e. Martha Huber (1902-)-Anton Langle (1897-).
- f. Frieda Huber (1906-)-Arnold Juhnke (1903-).
- g. William O. Huber (1908- )-



Large barn on John Roth's farm near Freeman was destroyed by a tornado in 1924. Mrs. Roth was Wilhelm Huber's cousin.



Melitta Dubs (1914- ).

**3. Johanna Huber (1867-1916) and Henry Weber (1866-1916).** They lived in the Ashley, North Dakota, area. Their children and spouses:

- a. Lydia Weber (1891-1980)-Ed J. Schaeffer; John Roth.
- b. Edward Weber (1894-1954)-Martha Nill (1897-1984).
- c. Reinhold Weber (1896-1960)-Emma Hoffman (1913-).
- d. Lenä Weber (1897-1951)-Christian J. Schaeffer (1896-1968).
- e. William Weber (1900-1947)-Ida Miller (1907).
- f. Edwin Weber (1902-1956)-no family.

g. Arthur Weber (1904-1976)-no family.

h. Raymond Weber (1906-1943)-Lillian Roth (1911- ).

**4. Katherina Huber (1869-1938) and Jacob Huber (1862-1924).** They lived in the Zealand, North Dakota, area. Their children and spouses:

- a. Mary Huber (1890-1945)-Henry Reiner.
- b. Gust Huber (1894- )-Elizabeth Oschner.
- c. Reinhold Huber (1892- )-Pauline Martell.
- d. Jacob Huber (1899-1954)-Emma Pfeiffer.



**Wilhelm and Katherina Huber family of Freeman, South Dakota: Wilhelm was the oldest son of Emilie and Philip Huber. His father died in Russia in 1882, and his mother had Wilhelm go to America so that they could go over later. Wilhelm went through many hard times because he had no money and had to ask people for help. He arrived at Yankton, South Dakota, and from there went to his Uncle Georg Huber's farm near Freeman in the early 1880s. He at one time lived at Lesterville, South Dakota, but returned to Freeman, where he started a dray service. Wilhelm married Mary Weber. When she died in 1891, he married Katherina Buchmann. Following the dray service, Wilhelm and Katherina bought a farm near Freeman. Shown in the front row: Martha (Langle), Wilhelm Huber, William O., Katherina Huber, and Frieda (Juhnke). Back row: Albert, Reinhold, Lydia (Roth), and Edward. Photo taken in 1912.**

**5. Maria Huber (1872-1956) and Jacob Ulmer (1868-1935).** They lived in the Menno, South Dakota, area. Their son and his spouse:  
a. Leonard Ulmer (1891-1928)-Eva Stoller (1890-1965).

**6. Emilie Huber (1875) and (1) Jacob Blum; (2) \_\_\_\_\_ Kaul.** They lived in the Zeeland area and later at Burbank, California. Their children and spouses:  
a. Hulda Blum-William Kunnert.  
b. Emil Blum- killed on motorcycle.

c. Laura Kaul.  
d. Elsie Kaul-Ervin Rempfer.  
e. Emma Kaul-\_\_\_\_\_ Briest.

**7. Christiana Huber (1878-19\_\_\_\_) and Alexander Ellwein.** They lived in the Roscoe, South Dakota, area. Their children and spouses:  
a. Robert Ellwein (1898-)-Loretta Keim.  
b. Harold Ellwein (1905-)-Agnes Stern (1909-).  
c. son who drowned.  
d. son who choked while eating carrots.

**8. Philip Huber (1882-1953) and (1) Sophia Roth (1881-1919), (2) Maria Waldt Blumhart (1889-198\_\_\_\_).** They lived in the Bridgewater, South Dakota, area. Their children and spouses:  
a. Theodore Huber (1905-1960)-Pauline Boettcher (1903-).  
b. Otto Huber (1909-)-Miriam Huenemann (1911-).  
c. Leonard Huber (1913-1974)-Emma Bettcher.  
d. Irene Huber-Norman Eberling.  
e. Ermgardt Blumhart (step-daughter)-Charles Barrett. □