

## JOHN BAPTIST WOHLLEBER

John Baptist Wohlleber: *What we know from his obituary dated Tues, Jan 27<sup>th</sup>, 1920- Watertown Public Opinion.*

*"John Baptist Wohlleber was born in on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1852 in the vicinity of Bamberg, Bavaria".*

Bavaria was an independent kingdom until approximately 1870 when it was united with Prussia to form Germany. Bavaria was about the size of South Carolina. Here is a description of Bavaria from another genealogist who used to live there:

"Bavaria always had its own government, it was a kingdom.....all the way up to the 1900 it was farmland and cattle. The mountains are beautiful and tourists from all over the world visit all year long, for mountain climbing, skiing and the most beautiful old houses which are painted and covered with flowers. When you walk through the towns it makes you feel like time stood still. The people are hard working and religion is very important; you will find the most beautiful churches (Kirche) in Bavaria".

*"There he grew to manhood, immigrating to this county when 30 years of age".*

Ship records indicate he left Antwerp, Belgium on Sept 9, 1881, on the S.S. Nederland, sailing from Antwerp, Belgium, arriving on Sep. 09, 1881.

The "Nederland" was a 2,839 gross ton ship, built in 1873 by Palmers Shipbuilding and Iron Co, Jarrow- on-Tyne, for the Red Star Line of Antwerp. Her details were - length 329.2 ft x beam 38.6 ft, one funnel, two masts (rigged for sail), iron construction, single screw and a speed of 13 knots. There was passenger accommodation for 70-1st and 800- 3rd class.

Launched on 23rd June 1873, she sailed from Antwerp in Nov. 1873 on her maiden voyage to Philadelphia. On 31st May 1877 she commenced her first Antwerp-New York voyage and between 1877-1896 sailed between Antwerp and New York or Philadelphia. From about 1895 she was converted to 3rd class only and on 26th Nov. 1896 started her last Antwerp-New York sailing. She subsequently sailed Antwerp-Philadelphia except for her last voyage from Antwerp to New York, starting 11th April 1905. In May 1906 she was scrapped in Italy. *North Sea Atlantic Seaway by NRP Bonsor vol 2 p 860*

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*"His first years in America were spent in the eastern states".* We have a picture of him in Ohio, there were Wohlleber's in New York and Ohio at that time, but I suspect we are related to the Ohio Wohllebers.



*"Later he came west and went to Mitchell, SD in 1884."*

We have a picture of him in Redfield, SD, taken by PJ Anderson. We have been told that Redfield was the end of the line; that may have been his first destination in South Dakota.

In October of 1883, John filed a homestead in Watertown, Dakota Territory, section 25 township 118, range 55 and paid \$14.00 as a fee of the entry. He also indicated his intention of becoming a US Citizen.

“The law required three steps: file an application, improve the land, and file for deed of title. Anyone including freed slaves, who had never taken up arms against the U.S. government, could file an application to claim a federal land grant. The occupant had to be 21 or older or the head of a family, live on the land for five years and show evidence of having made improvements”.  
(Wikipedia)

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From his homestead application: “Note- It is required of the homestead settler that he shall reside upon and cultivate the land embraced in his homestead entry for a period of five years from the time of filing the affidavit being also the date of entry. An abandonment of the land for more than six months works a forfeiture of the claim. Further, within two years from the expiration of the said five years he must file proof of his actual settlement and cultivation, failing to do which, his entry will be canceled. If the settler does not wish to remain five years on his tract, he can, at any time after six months, pay for it with cash of land warrants, upon making proof of settlement and cultivation from date of filing affidavit to the time of payment.”

*He married Eva Barr in 1884*

According to the requirements of the homestead, he was not to be gone for more than 6 months. It is unknown how he met Eva or why he went to Mitchell to find a bride, but it had to be done quickly so he didn't lose his homestead. He apparently was not working in Mitchell as a tailor when he met Eva.

*“The following year (1885) the family moved to Watertown where Mr. Wohlleber was engaged in the tailoring business”.*

We know they were in Watertown for the birth of John:

Birth Information for *JOHN WILLIAM WOHLLEBER* (State File Number: 650048)

File Date 01/25/1944

Sex Male

Birth Date 06/25/1885

City/County Codington

Mother's Name Eva Highman

Father's Name John B. Wohlleber

And from the Watertown City Directory 1886-1887

Sours, Levi, of Sours Bros., res e s Cottonwood st, bet Kemp and Codington avs. Wohlleber, John, tailor, e s Oak st, bet Kemp and Dakota avs, bds res Levi Sours.

*“After 7 years residence here, they moved to a farm near the city”.* 1900 Fuller Township, Codington County, census records.

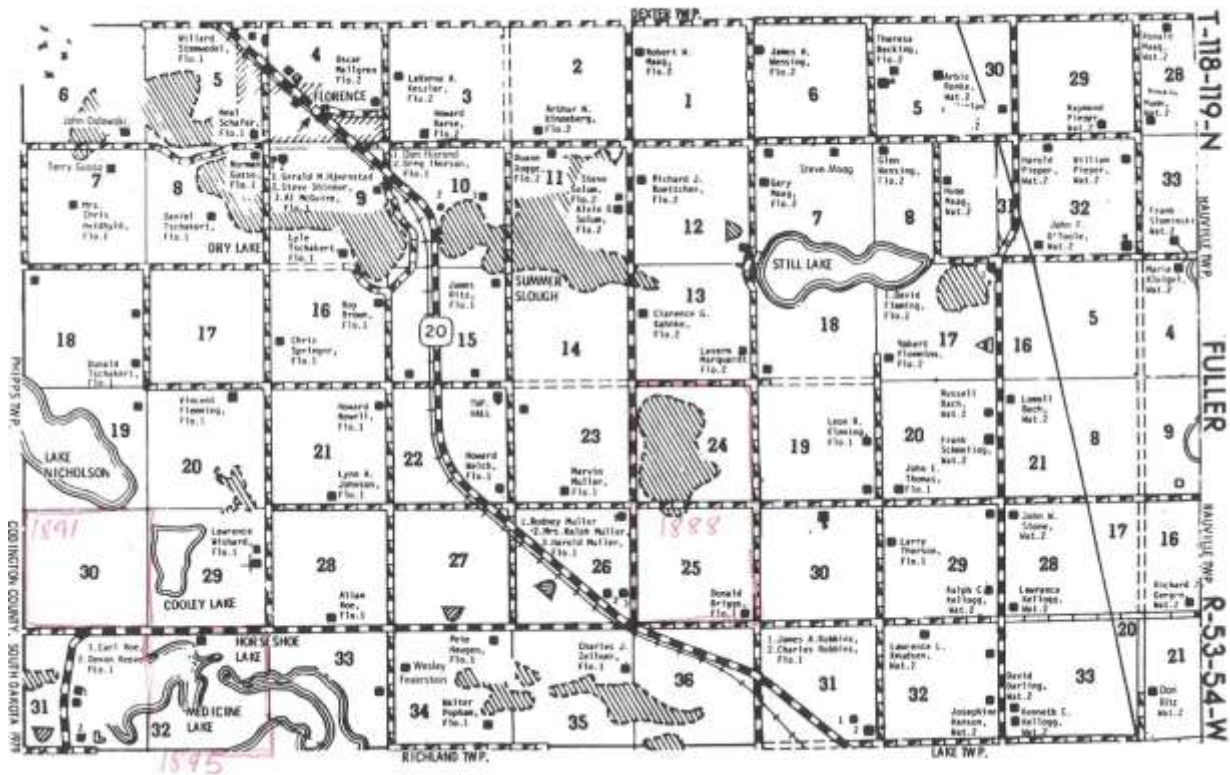
Actually, more likely 7 years after John made his initial application for the land below.

It appears John set up residence in Fuller Township earlier than reported in his obituary. He may have had Gus do the farm work and take trips in to Watertown to do this tailor business. He paid for the land in 1886 rather than wait the entire 5 years. At that time he was also naturalized.

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He bought section 30 in 1891 and 32 in 1895. The Courthouse in Watertown informed me he lost **one of the farms. Section 32 was Timber Culture.**

“Timber land embraced in a homestead, or other entry not consummated may be cleared in order to cultivate the land and improve the premise *but for no other purpose*. If after clearing the land for cultivation there remains more timber than is required for improvement there is no objection to the settler disposing of the same. But the question whether the land is being cleared of its timber *for legitimate purposes* is a question of *fact* which is liable to be raised at any time. If the timber is cut and removed *for any other purpose* it will subject the entry to cancellation, and the person who cut it will be *liable to civil suit* for recovery of value of said timber, *and also to criminal prosecution* under section 2461 of the Revised Statutes.



*“Later they removed to their farm near South Shore in Mazepa Township, where they lived until they returned to take residence in Watertown in October of the last year.”*

They were in the South Shore news in 1907.

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*There was a family of 6 children, five sons, one of whom died in infancy. They are John of Mazeppa Township, William W. of Tripp County, Fred of Iowa, and George who made his home with his parents and one daughter, Mrs. Frank Alexander of Iowa. The fifth son was Ernest, buried at Graceland Cemetery.*

*Mr. Wohlleber was a member of the German Lutheran Church in Mazeppa Township. No church records noted from 1907-1920*

*For the last few years he had suffered with a tumor for which he sought relief at the hospital in Rochester.*

*The operation seemed to be successful but the patient evidently did not have sufficient strength to rally. Per Inez "Because George Wohlleber took him to Rochester, you remember hearing, he had this great big thing on his neck, and they took him to Rochester, George took him down and he did fine and he contracted pneumonia and George Wohlleber called the Grand Hotel and talked to Uncle Jim and told him the stand of things and to tell George to come down, he didn't want to be there alone. "So my Dad (George Carlton) boarded the train that night and when Dad got there he couldn't be saved, he got pneumonia and so then he came back with Grandpa Wohlleber's body with Uncle George (Wohlleber)".*

*He died last Thursday am at 8:30, lacking about a month of being 68 years old. Mourning his death are his widow, Mrs. Eva Wohlleber, the children and the following stepchildren: Mrs. Alva Kiley, Gust Barr, Mrs. Bertha Carlton and Mrs. Mary Lockie. The funeral was held Sunday at the German Lutheran Church.*

The next obituary, (actual date in January not recorded, although it was prior to the one above) is somewhat contradictory.

*Jan 1920 Watertown Public Opinion Pioneer Farmer Dies, Rochester*

*John B. Wohlleber, settler in South Shore vicinity in 1881 dies at 68. Actually was not in Watertown or South Shore in 1881*

*Pioneer John B. Wohlleber, a pioneer farmer of Codington County died at Rochester, Minnesota, where he was taken for medical treatment one week ago. The body arrived here this morning for funeral services at the Wohlleber home in Watertown. The obit above states funeral was in the German Lutheran Church. It could have been in the home as we have a picture of him in his casket in a home.*

*Mr. Wohlleber was 68 years old. He has made his home on a farm near South Shore since 1881 when he moved here with some of the earliest settlers. Again, he filed his homestead in 1883, but arrived in the US in 1881.*

## JOHN BAPTIST WOHLLEBER

*He was born in Germany, and leaves a brother and a sister there from whom he had not heard since the outbreak of the World War. Their fate remains uncertain.* No contact with any German Wohlleber's to date.

*He has lived in Watertown since October. Mr. Wohlleber is survived by his wife and four children, John of South Shore, William of Tripp County, Mrs. Frank Alexander and Fred residing in Iowa, and George, who lived with his parents here. Four step-children left, Ernest Gus Barr, Mrs. J.E. Kiley, Mrs. George Carlton and Mrs ND Locke. Word from relatives out of the city is being awaited before announcement of the funeral service is made but it is probably the service will take place Sunday pm.*

### ***Surname: Wohlleber***

The name Wohlleber is said to be derived from Wholleberg (according to Arlyn Wohlleber), which means “good liver”. A Bavarian geneologist gave the following information : “It's true that "Leber" is liver and therefore Wohlleber could be translated to "good liver". However, I doubt very much that common people (except perhaps butchers) in the 15th century (when the name presumably first appeared) were familiar enough with anatomical knowledge that they would use the condition of a generally unseen and therefore little known human organ for a family name. I would rather think that the derivation comes from the German word "Leben" (life, to live) and a "Wohlleber" is simply a male person who is living well – at least compared to others in the village. At that time a female person who lives well would have been called a "Wohlleberin".

### Questions:

How did John and Eva meet? We may never know this, but it seems likely they met through the German community, she was a widow; he needed a wife. He may have gone to Mitchell to meet her. He wasn't supposed to be gone from his homestead for over 6 months. Mitchell was 182 miles away and I don't see where there was a direct connection by train.

Could he have met Christ Beyer when he applied to land? Or was a match made through other Germans in the community? Per Gus, when his mother got to Mitchell " **Well, there were some Germans there. They had quite a lot of Germans there and they got acquainted with those Germans and they had quite a lot to do, they got a house and stuff like that. "**

Did they attend school in Grover, (per Inez Johnson tape). It would be about 23 miles away.  
Why did they move to Mazeppa Township?