

MEMORIES FROM MARIE WOBKEN WEITZENKAMP

(as told to Mildred Von Seggern, Oct. 1993)

My first year of school was 1913. First I would like to start with a description of the inside of the school. There was a slate blackboard across the east end of the building. A slightly raised platform on the east provided for the teacher's desk and a recitation bench. There were three rows of desks with two aisles. These were double desks, accessible from both sides. They were mounted onto two inch boards so that the whole row would have to be moved at the same time. Probably seated 34-36 students. There was a large heating stove in the center--coal and cobs were carried daily from a shed on the east side of the school ground.

An entry area was partitioned off on the west. On the north end there was storage space for a waterbucket and dipper and lunch buckets. On the other side there were coat hooks for boys and girls.

For many students language was a hardship at first. Not only were they starting school but learning English as well. But on the playground the German language was used freely prompting Esther Stover to say she learned to speak German on the playground.

I remember sharing a double desk with Ellen Von Seggern all through school. Each double desk had its own ink well. Writing with ink was done with a pen point dipped into the ink frequently. It was not easy to have the right amount of ink on your pen and use the right pressure.

I remember the winter of 1918-1919, the winter of World War I. When the flu epidemic hit our community we did not go to school--in order to avoid the contagious nature of it. When we got sick we were confined to an upstairs bedroom. Several beds were put in the same room which could be heated. The remedy was hot water with whiskey, honey and sugar. Then to bed to "sweat it out". This usually reduced the fever. While we were confined upstairs, I remember watching a funeral procession go by to the church, a half mile west of our home.

Wartime also brought discrimination against the Germans and in some areas families had to put aside all German language and customs in order to get along with the neighbors.

Because we had to travel two miles one way each day to get to school, I have many memories of walking and buggy riding. When we walked we used the Grosch driveway and then walked across the prairie to our home. One cold days we would stop behind a hay stack to get out of the wind and catch our breath.