

Adolph Borget - A Private in the Civil War

By Marian Ruhland Burmester



Adolph Bernard Borget was born on August 11, 1833, in Selm, Westphalia, Germany, to Johann Bernard Borget and Gertrud Goeke. He was baptized on August 12, 1833.¹ According to the 1910 census, Adolph immigrated to America in 1854. While a resident of Jackson County, Iowa, he enlisted on September 16, 1861, in the Third Light Artillery Battery Iowa at age 27. He would later move to the Plain, Wisconsin, area.

The Third Iowa Battery (known as the Dubuque Battery) was organized during the months of August and September in 1861 at Dubuque, Iowa.

The Battery was attached to the Ninth Regiment Iowa Volunteer Infantry. The original commissioned officers were as follows: Captain Mortimer M. Hayden; Senior First Lieutenant William H. McClure; Junior First Lieutenant Melville C. Wright; Senior Second Lieutenant William H. Crozier; and Junior Second Lieutenant Jerome Bradley. The roster shows that upon completion of its muster, the battery numbered 140 men, rank and file.

The Third Iowa Battery with the Ninth Iowa Infantry arrived in St. Louis, Missouri, on September 30, 1861, aboard the steamer "Canada." Later they were sent 35 miles west, to Pacific City, Missouri. Here the Battery received its armament of six guns - four six pounder bronze guns and two twelve pounder howitzers. Each gun was attached to a limber pulled by six horses with a chest carrying about 1,200 rounds of ammunition. This was supported by a caisson carrying two ammunition chests. On January 25, 1862, the Third Iowa Battery and the Ninth Iowa traveled by rail to Rolla, Missouri, where they joined the army under command of Major General Curtis in an aggressive campaign against the enemy.

Early on the morning of Feb 14th at Flat Creek (fifty miles from Springfield), the Third Iowa Battery fired at the enemy, but the rebels were out of range. They pursued the enemy across the Missouri line and reached Sugar Creek in Arkansas where the cavalry sustained considerable losses. Then the Third Iowa Battery was moved forward, firing so accurately, that in less than thirty minutes they had silenced the fire of the rebel battery. The battery had no casualties, but two horses were killed, and one caisson was disabled by the enemy's fire. General Curtis complimented the battery for their skillful management of guns.

On March 4, 1862, Confederate General Van Dorn was advancing north to defeat the Federal forces and take St. Louis. General Van Dorn divided his army into two divisions. To gain speed, he left the supply trains behind, which proved a crucial decision. They marched in a freezing storm for three days. The Battle of Pea Ridge/Elkhorn Tavern began on March 7th. General Curtis had gathered the Union forces along Little Sugar Creek. General Van Dorn sent his forces to march around the Union line while he kept the camp fires burning in front of the Union line. When Curtis realized that Van Dorn's forces were absent from their camp, he ordered an about face, making everything seem in reverse and disorienting, but his men maintained order and discipline. The Confederates had an advantage of about 16,500 men and 60 guns to the Union's

¹ Ancestry.com, Germany, Select Births and Baptisms, 1558-1898

11,000 men and 50 guns. The battle resembled a series of Artillery duels. Two sections of the Third Iowa Battery proceeded to the front and went into action near Elkhorn Tavern. They were relieving the First Iowa Battery which had suffered a heavy loss with several of its caissons exploding. The rebel gunners' range was very accurate, and their fire was destructive. Within ten minutes under fire, the Third Iowa had one gun disabled, one caisson blown up, several of men wounded, and a number of horses killed or disabled. The division commander, realizing the danger of their being entirely disabled or captured, ordered them to fall back out of range to the right of Elkhorn Tavern where it remained that evening.

It was on March 7, 1862, the first of the two-day Battle of Pea Ridge, that **Private Adolph Borget** was wounded by a bullet shot. The bullet entered near the middle of his upper lip, shattered his left jawbone severely, and passed out on the left side of his neck near the ear. For some minutes, Borget was laying on the ground when he again became conscious and rejoined his comrades. The same evening, he was placed in charge of Dr. McClure of the Ninth Iowa Regt. Infantry Vol. who sent him North from the hospital at Cassville, Missouri. He received treatment for over a month.²

Another description of Adolph's injury said that the bullet entered on the right side of the nose, broke the upper jaw on the left side, ran through the tongue then struck the lower jaw, came out an inch and a half below the left ear and left only four teeth in the upper jaw on the right side, and blinded the left eye.³

Adella Beck Hetzel, a granddaughter of Adolph, owned a scrapbook which included this interesting note handwritten next to Theresia Borget's obituary: "The year 1862 March 8, Battle of Pea Ridge, Ark. Grandpa Borget was wounded. Gen. McCulloch was killed."⁴ It actually was on the same day that Adolph was shot. Confederate General Benjamin McCulloch was shot out of the saddle and died instantly on March 7, 1862. Adolph may have told this story to his granddaughter and it seemed very memorable to the family.

The following paragraph is Captain Mortimer M. Hayden's description of the Battle of Pea Ridge up to the time that Borget was shot: "I sent forward one section of the battery, in charge of Lieutenant M.C. Wright, who took position in the road directly in front of and under a heavy fire from the enemy's battery. Lieutenants W.H. McClure and J. Bradley, with their respective sections, were ordered forward to engage the enemy on the right and left of the first section. Supported by the Ninth Iowa Infantry, we held this position until the rebel guns had disabled ten pieces and killed and wounded many of the men and horses. The engagement became general along the whole line, with both artillery and infantry. The enemy's fire becoming too severe, we withdrew, leaving behind our disabled limber and several killed and wounded horses. We then took position about 300 yards in rear of the point where our fire was first opened, remaining there until near evening (having held the enemy in check during the entire day), at which time the whole division fell back to a large open field where it halted during the night. Here the

² Pension File: Nov. 14, 1863 ó Letter from Headquarters 3rd Iowa Battery, Little Rock, Arkansas. Signed by M.C. Wright, 1st Lieut. Comdg. 3rd Iowa Battery.

³ Pension File: January 19, 1878 ó 48 years old ó enrolled in the Des Moines, Iowa Pension Agency at a rate of \$4 per month ó Wants an increase in pension.

⁴ Scrapbook 18, page 75

enemy pursued, but, being vigorously engaged by our artillery and infantry, was driven back with severe loss. During the engagement we attempted to plant the pieces of the battery upon a commanding eminence, but failed in the endeavor, an immense force of the enemy's infantry charging upon us, carrying away one of my guns and killing and wounding two of my own and several of the battery horses."⁵

On March 8th General Curtis regrouped and counter-attacked, successfully employing his artillery, forcing the rebels back. Since Confederate General Van Dorn decide to leave his supply train behind for speed, they were running short on ammunition and were forced to abandon the battlefield. The battle cost the Confederates about 2,000 casualties, while the Union suffered 203 killed, 980 wounded, and 201 missing.

Private A. Borget was discharged because of wounds from the 3rd Light Artillery Regiment Iowa on August 27, 1862, in Davenport, Iowa. After being discharged he must have returned to home area in Iowa. Draft registration records for June and July 1863 showed he was a resident of Tete Des Morts (township) in Jackson County, Iowa; he was born in Germany in 1833, and was unmarried.

Three years later, on February 14, 1865, Rev. Michael Weisbauer⁶ officiated at Adolph's marriage to widow Theresia Reuschlein Thering in Burlington, Racine County, Wisconsin. Theresia's first husband, Joseph Stephen Thering, died on January 7, 1864. She had six children: Mary Ann, Theresia, Joseph Frederick, Josephine, Henry Andrew and Caroline.⁷

Together Adolph and Theresia had six children. Elizabeth born on August 7, 1870; Hannah born on October 3, 1873; and four who died in childhood.⁸



Adolph and Theresia Borget with daughters Elizabeth and Johanna.

⁵ The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. 1883

⁶ Pension file: By Rev Weisbauer in Burlington, Wis. ó found Rev. Michael Weisbauer in Burlington, Racine Co. Wisconsin 1860 US census in 1870 US census name is spelled Wisbauer.

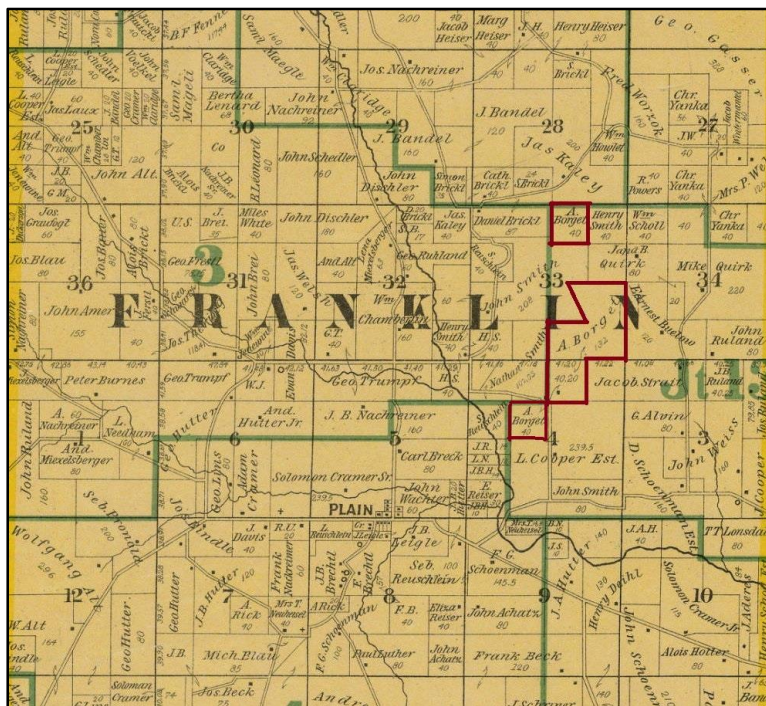
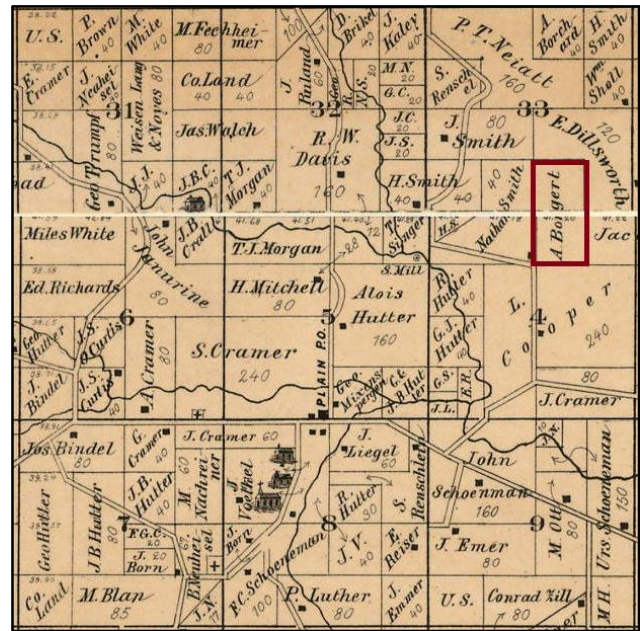
⁷ Danelskiø Reuschlein book Vol. 1 page 44.

⁸ Pension file: March 8, 1915 Adolph answers a questionnaire, Danelskiø Reuschlein book Vol. 1 page 330, Ancestry Tree (Bonnie Gruber) and Theresia obit.

There are two differing accounts of the date that Adolph and Theresia moved with their two children and Theresia's six children to Franklin Township in Sauk County, Wisconsin. Although there is only one day's difference, it is worth noting. Theresia's obituary mentions "October 4 1878, they came to the town of Franklin, settling on a farm about one mile northeast of Plain." The obituary for Josephine Thering Cramer (a daughter of Theresia) says: "Mr. Adolph Borget moved with family of eight children from Burlington to Franklin on October 3, 1874, and located on the farm now owned by Casper Volk."

The 1870 Franklin Township plat map shows "A. Borget" on a plot of land in section 33.

Adolph must have been a good farmer. Looking at the plat map below for 1893, the land that the family owned increased quite a bit, extending into Section 4.



According to the 1904 Town of Franklin assessment book, Adolph Borget lived in school district 4, owned one horse, had personal property valuing \$640, and a net amount of moneys totaling \$600.⁹

Per certificate dated February 16, 1863, by Surgeon Dr. Luke, Adolph was one-fourth disabled by his face injury. This qualified Adolph to receive a pension on February 10, 1864, of \$4.00 per month which would commence on November 28, 1862. Adolph received the following increases

⁹1904 Assessment Roll for Franklin Township. Page 41. Original book at Old Franklin Township Historical Society museum. Scanned by Debbie Blau.

through the years: \$6 per month on February 14, 1878, \$12 per month on July 21, 1877, \$16 per month on July 2, 1884, \$18 per month on Feb. 2, 1888, and the final increase on January 5, 1891, of \$24 per month. Many times throughout the years he applied for an increase but was denied because his injury didn't hinder his ability to perform manual labor.

Below is a surgeon's report dated 1877, found in pension papers:

Particular description.	<i>A more particular description of the Pensioner's condition is subjoined:</i>
	Height, <i>5 ft 2 in</i> ; weight, <i>160</i> ; complexion, <i>light</i> ; age, <i>43</i> ; respiration, _____; pulse, _____.
	<i>On Examination of the above Pensioner I find him suffering from the effects of a wound received in Superior Maxillary Bone by a Musket Ball, the ball entering in front just under the right nostril and passing out behind the angle of the inferior Maxillary Bone on the left side. The said wound has produced blindness of the left eye. The above disability I would rate at one half of total and entitling him to four dollars per month. The same ball wounded the tongue causing contraction and impairing the power of motion thereby injuring his speech. It also fractured the inferior Maxillary Bone on left side, and removed all the teeth on left side. I would rate the above disability a one half of total and entitling him to four dollars per month.</i>
	<i>Jonathan C. Pettit</i> Examining Surgeon.

Following are a couple of Adolph's requests for an increase in pension payments:

April 29, 1884 ó 50 years old - Private Dubuque Battery 9th Iowa ó enrolled in Milwaukee Pension Agency at rate of \$12 per month: ". . . entitled to an increase of pension on account of increased disability. Not having but two teeth left. Can't eat well and what I do eat does not digest as I can't chew it and am laid up several days at a time every once in a while. Cannot do one half of the work that I could do a few years ago."

June 26, 1902 - 68 years old ó Town of Franklin ó Sauk Co., Wisconsin ó enrolled at the Milwaukee Pension Agency ó rate of \$24 per month from disability: "Gunshot wound of face

with resulting loss of sight of left eye and loss of teeth." While serving in the Dubuque Battery 9th Regiment Iowa Vol. Infantry: [*he was sent to the 9th after his injury while serving for the 3rd Light Artillery Iowa*] "That he believes himself entitled to an increase of pension due to the injury to my tongue, fracture of my jaw bone and loss of my teeth. I can't wear artificial teeth due to my fractured jaw. I can't eat anything except soups and soft food and for this reason my stomach does not digest food properly. My bowels are always constipated and I have severe heart trouble due to the shock and indigestion. I have almost continual pains in my head and am dizzy and seem to be losing my memory. Seems to be an opening in the nose not natural. In the base of the skull there seems to be a grinding sensation when I turn my head."

In 1901 Adolph and Theresia built this home at 1165 Main Street in Plain, Wisconsin.

"My grandparents, Adolph and Theresa Borget, lived next door and they couldn't help themselves. My mother asked the rest of her family to help but they didn't so she kept ME home from school for a whole year to help. I didn't mind. I took the meals over and cleaned the house. My grandfather came from Cologne and my grandmother came from Wiesbaden." Source: *Sauk Prairie Star* (Sauk City, Wisconsin), November 17, 1992: Adella Beck Hetzel interview by Doris Litscher Gasser.

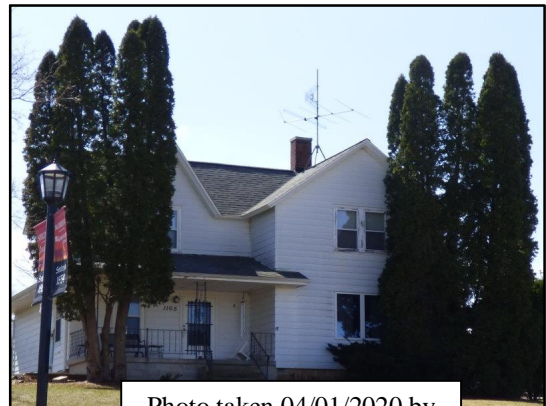


Photo taken 04/01/2020 by Marian Ruhland Burmester.

Adolph's wife Theresia passed away on February 14, 1908, in Plain, Wisconsin, USA, at the age of 76. They had been married 43 years. [Sources: Cemetery Inscription book, volume 6, page 42, St. Luke old cemetery in Plain, WI, Theresia's obit. Doris Danelski's book, Reuschlein Vol.1]

In 1910, Adolph had the honor of sitting on a float during the Fourth of July parade along with twenty-five young ladies singing "America" and "The Star-Spangled Banner." The newspaper reported, "On this float was also seated venerable Adolph Borgett, the only survivor of the civil war who was present that day. Mr. Borgett was clothed in his army uniform and bore a bayoneted musket. During the war Mr. Borgett was a cannoneer and at the battle of Pea Ridge was severely wounded, a large part of his jaw being shot away."¹⁰

Adolph Bernard Borget died on February 8, 1916, in Plain, Wisconsin, when he was 82 years old.¹¹ Adolph and Theresia were buried in St. Luke's old Catholic Cemetery at Plain, Wisconsin.



Photo by Marian Ruhland Burmester, 09/05/2019

¹⁰ *Weekly Home News* (Spring Green, Wisconsin), July 7, 1910, page 1, column 5 (Typed as print in the newspaper so there are a few misspellings)

¹¹ Adolph Borget obituary: *Weekly Home News*, February 10, 1916, page 1. Cemetery Inscription book, volume 6, page 42, St. Luke old cemetery in Plain, WI, Death Certificate Vol. 10, page 94, Danelski's Reuschlein Vol.1, Erna Liegel Ringelstetter's Reuschlein Thering Borget Book.