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Borgmann, Ferdinand (1825 - 1916)

Dorothy Hansmann

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Ferdinand Borgmann was born in Westphalia, Germany, May 24, 1825, and came to the United States when twenty-seven years of age. He has served four years in the German Army and saw service under arms during the revolution of 1848 and 1849.

He first located at Toledo, Ohio, where he worked one year in a sawmill. He could have taken a homestead on the out skirts of the town but he thought it an interminable task to clear the land of the heavy timber. For that reason he came west to the prairie lands of Iowa and located at Guttenburg. From that point he decided to explore further and joined an ox train party destined for the far west. They came as far as Lincoln, Nebraska and there had a thrilling experience with Indians. The Indians were on a rampage and preparing to attack the settlement. The explorers were encamped outside the settlement. The chief of the war party came to the camp and through the persuasion of Mr. Borgmann, and the bribe of a bowl of sugar, the land hunters were permitted to pull stakes and depart. That night the settlement was attacked by the red-skins and a number of whites massacred.

Mr. Borgmann returned to Guttenburg and was married there on October 4, 1855, to Antoinette Schurmann. Antoinette was born April 18, 1835, in Reclinhausen, Germany. She came to America with her parents in 1853 and settled in Guttenburg, Iowa.

Two years later Ferdinand and Antoinette (Schurmann) Borgmann came to Minnesota, settling at Lake George. There Mr. Borgmann formed his first acquaintance with James J. Hill and Alexander Ramsey, who later became governor, by pulling them out of a mud hole in which their wagon had mired.

In 1857 the Borgmann's came to Lake George where they purchased a claim. They began to make a clearing, and helped by willing neighbors,

they soon had a one room log cabin for their first home. Here their first child was born. The closest church was at Saint Cloud; so when the child was a few weeks old they took her there to be baptized. The journey was terrible. A river had to be forded, and the oxen were very stubborn and wanted to go down the river instead of across.

About 1861, the Indian war broke out and Mr. Borgsmann was told that he must help keep down the Indian massacres. He was very busy at this time; so he hired a man, whom he had to pay \$700, to go in his place. By the time this man got ready to go, the war was over.

Massacres had been taking place in all the townships around them, so one day the men of the community (there were six in all) met at a place about five miles from their homes. The women all stayed at the Borgsmann cabin, which set well back from the road and was nearly hidden by brush. The women were very nervous about the Indian outbreaks, so they took turns at watching the road to see if anyone was coming. While Mrs. Borgsmann was on guard duty she noticed something coming toward her. She couldn't tell exactly what it was but thought it must be an Indian so she hurried back to the cabin and warned the other women.

The man came to the house and he proved to be a friendly half breed instead of a troublesome Indian. He couldn't speak much English, but with the little he knew he made them understand that nearly all the whites had been killed in the massacre at Grove Lake. The neighbor women became frightened and ran for protection leaving Mrs. Borgsmann alone. She asked the half breed if he would help her hitch the oxen so she could get away. He said he would do anything if she would give him something to eat as he had been without food for three days. In the meantime the women who had run away from the cabin came to the meeting place of the men, and after hearing that Mrs. Borgsmann had been left alone Mr. Borgsmann became worried

and started at once for his home. He found Mrs. Borgsmann safe.

They left home at once and went as far as Richmond. They stayed there a few weeks and then returned home. They found everything just as they had left it. Later he asked Chief Little Crow why he hadn't destroyed their dwellings and possessions. In reply the chief said that the farmers around there had always treated the Indians fairly so they did not wish to molest their things.

About this time a very small church was built at New Munich. Mrs. Borgsmann hadn't been to church in a long time so she decided to walk the eighteen miles to attend the services. She started at sunrise so she would arrive in time. She started home later than she had planned, and it was quite dark before she was nearly home. She met a large timber wolf with three whelps, they came nearer to her and as she had nothing with which to protect herself, she began to run, and finally they stopped following her.

The Sioux and Chippewa Indians were at war at this time and they had their camps on opposite sides of the river. The Sioux Indians came one day and asked Mr. Borgsmann for one of his fat calves. He said he didn't like to give up his nicest calf but he would sell them one of the others. The Indians would not think of buying anything so they went to the grindstone and began sharpening their knives. They then went over to the herd of cattle and killed the choicest veal before Mr. Borgsmann could make any protest. The chief came over, took him by the arm and led him to where they had killed the calf. While he watched them they cut it up and divided the veal among themselves.

At another time he went to Fort Ambercrombie to sell his produce as he thought he could get a better price for it there. By that time he had a team of Indian ponies, but even then travel was slow because the roads were so bad and some were merely trails. Often he met with old acquaint-

tences and once he met a family he had known in Kansas City who told him news of his old friends, neighbors and relatives.

On his return home, the second evening out, one of his horses became lame and he unhitched and prepared to spend the night to allow the animal to rest. While he was eating his supper, some Indians came riding by. They were hungry and kept pointing to the wagon and then to their mouths.

Finally they began opening his packages and found one that contained sugar; they put their fingers into it and licked them off. Mr. Borgsmann became disgusted and offered them part of what he had, but even then they begged for other articles. One of them touched the powder horn and seemed to think it contained some rare delicacy because it was guarded so carefully. He had given them enough food for a meal and he was anxious for them to move on so he said, "If I touch a match to that it will blow you all to pieces." He motioned as if to do so and the Indians left in a hurry. His wife had become worried over his long stay and was very glad to see him return safely. During his absence she had done all the work, although in her youth she had not been used to such labor. People in those days adapted themselves more readily to their environment.

One day, early in the winter, Mr. Borgsmann had butchered some hogs which he took to market. When he came home he brought a hogs head for their own use. While he was doing chores a squaw came along and begged Mrs. Borgsmann for the head, which she saw lying on a table. Mrs. Borgsmann showed her that they had several small children and that they also must eat. She gave her some bread and beans, but she kept pointing to the pig's head and finally Mrs. Borgsmann gave her a part of it and she left. Several days afterward the squaw came back and brought two

pair of moccasin for the smaller children.

As time went on the family again moved; this time to a farm about one and one-half miles south of the city of Sauk Centre in 1865.

Ferdinand Borgmann was always active in the upbuilding of the community, served about twenty years as supervisor of town and township, was one of the founders of Saint Paul's church and a true pioneer in every sense of the word.

The first catholic services in the vicinity of Sauk Centre were held in the Borgmann home by wandering priests.

Ferdinand Borgmann died April 16, 1916 from gradual physical disintegration due to old age. Had he lived until May 24th he would have been ninety-one years old. Mrs. Borgmann preceded her husband in death by about four weeks. She was eighty-one years old at the time of her death on February 16, 1916.

Ferdinand and Antoinette (Schurmann) Borgmann were the parents of twelve children, seven of whom survive. They are: Henry G., who now has the original homestead; Ferdinand J.; George R.; Mrs. F. E. Minette; Mrs. Peter Ehr; Mrs. Peter Gaspard; and Mrs. Henry Thiers.

Interviewed: Genevieve Lux
Date: August 26, 1936
By: Dorothy Hansmann

TAKEN FROM THE CENSUS RECORDS OF 1860

Enumerated on July 2, 1860 by -- C. Grandelmeyer

Post Office -- Torah (Richmond)

Page No. 69

Line 17

Ferdinan Borgman	Age 35
Sex	Male
Occupation	Farmer
Born	Prussia

Line 18

Antonet Borgman	Age 25
Sex	Female
Born	Prussia

Line 19

Antonet Borgman	Age 3
Sex	Female
Born	Minnesota

Line 20

Francisca Borgman	Age 2
Sex	Female
Born	Minnesota

Line 21

Louisa Borgman	Age 7 months
Sex	Female
Born	Minnesota

Line 22

John Gilbert	Age 25
Sex	Male
Occupation	Laborer
Born	England

FROM THE RECORDS IN THE STEARNS COUNTY COURT HOUSE

FOR THE FERDINAND BORGMANN BIOGRAPHY

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>	<u>Place of Birth</u>	<u>Father's Name</u>	<u>Age</u>
1. George Borgmann	Apr. 8, 1871	Sauk Centre	Ferdinand Borgmann	
2. Henry Borgmann	May 15, 1873	" "	" "	
3. George R. Borgmann	Aug. 16, 1877	" "	" "	

<u>Mother's Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Book</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Line</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
1. Antonette Borgmann		A	49	28	
2. " "		A	127	36	
3. " "		A	16	16	

DEATH RECORD BOOK I. PAGE 18 LINE 178

Ferdinand Borgmann Born in Germany, May 24, 1825

Parents unknown

Died April 17, 1916

Age 90 years 10 months and 24 days

DEATH RECORD BOOK I. PAGE 18 LINE 175

Antonette Borgmann Born in Germany April 18, 1835

Died February 26, 1916

Age 80 years 8 months and 8 days

BORGMANN, FERDINAND

Second interview to affirm or correct information in biography as compared to information as listed in the legal records in the Stearns County Court House.

CORRECTION:

Death of Ferdinand Borgmann, April 17, 1916, is correct as stated in legal record.

CORRECTION:

Death of Antonette Borgmann, February 26, 1916, is correct as stated in legal record.

CORRECTION:

Spelling of name Antonette.

Re-interviewed: Antonette(Borgmann) Minette
Date: October 5, 1937
By: Dorothy Hansmann