

Sergeant John N. Berg

John N. Berg was born April 16, 1889 in Kalsvit, Sweden. John Berg served in World War I with the United States Army. The enlistment was April 3, 1918 and the service was completed with an Honorable Discharge on June 12, 1919. Recognized by two governments for extraordinary heroism.

Story of Service

Submitted by Kelly E. Herzog, community member

(This information was compiled from historical records, citations, and newspaper accounts.)

John N. Berg was born April 16, 1889 in Kalsvit, Sweden to Mr. and Mrs. Nels and Maria Lund Berg. The family immigrated to the United States around 1893 and settled within the area of Crosby, Pennsylvania. He had eight siblings: Adolph (Jennie) Berg, Helen (George) Griffin, Esther (Henry) Lesser, Clara (Ben) Young, Anna (Albert) Cleveland, Martin (Grace) Berg, Hilda (Harry) Comes, and Augusta (Demont) Walters.

Mr. Berg enlisted in the U.S. Army April 3, 1918 and trained at Camp Lee, VA. He embarked on USS Mongolia at Newport News, VA on May 26, 1918 and arrived in France in early June. Mr. Berg was a member of Co. C, 317th Infantry, 80th Division.

From July 1st he had seen almost continuous service. From September 26th to November 6th, he was in the front lines, under fire, without any rest for 2 or 3 days at a time. There were times without food and sleeping conditions were poor or non-existent. Mr. Berg participated in battles in Artois Sector, St. Mihiel Offensive, and Meuse-Argonne.

For engaging in action with the enemy near Sommauthe, France, Nov. 4, 1918, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross by Gen. John J. Pershing on December 26, 1918. With extraordinary heroism, Corporal Berg led his squad under heavy machine gun fire in an attack on a machine gun nest, capturing two machine guns, killing the gunners and driving off the remainder of the crews. With his squad, he held the position for one hour until the arrival of the rest of his company. The Distinguished Service Cross is second only to the prestigious Medal of Honor. After this citation, he was promoted to Sergeant.

It was the same battle in which he earned the Croix de Guerre with gilt star, by the Marshal of the French government, for being a soldier of admirable courage. The award was received the following year, on November 15, 1919. Sergeant Berg is the most decorated veteran in our community and perhaps, in the county.

Meanwhile, Sergeant Berg disembarked on Nanesima at Brest, France on May 20, 1919 to return to the United States. He was honorably discharged on June 12, 1919. Upon his arrival home, it was only few days until he married Blanche McDade on June 28, 1919.

Described as a modest, unassuming young man, Mr. Berg went on about daily life and worked as an oil field driller. His wife, Blanche, purchased a property near their home December 19, 1928. Together they improved the property at 9479 Route 46 and opened a social hall called “The Wagon Wheel”, which operated a various capacities in the years that followed.

After a 16 month, cancer-related illness, John Berg died at Veterans Administration Hospital in Buffalo, NY on July 29, 1956. A short time later, Blanche was presented with an offer to establish an American Legion Post in honor of her husband. The Legion Charter was granted on March 14, 1958 and Blanche sold the property to John Berg Post, Inc. on October 31, 1958. John Berg Post #976 was given Mr. Berg’s original service medals and citations.

John Berg Post #976 suffered a devastating fire on January 15, 2013, in which his items were destroyed in the original Post Home. The Post rebuilt, but without any tangible mementos of Berg’s service.

I had the fortuity to capture electronic images of the original photographs, citations, service records, and reproduced newspaper accounts, for a research project in 2008. These documents have allowed me the opportunity to continue to share his story today. It is my hope that the Post will reflect on the values for which their Charter was intended, and to make a solid effort in remembering Sergeant John N. Berg for his courage and patriotism.