

Sarah Peterson Berg

“The Wald History” was written by Cleva Darling in 1939. Her work has been the foundation of much of my research, but today we have tools that Cleva never dreamed of. Looking back we can imagine that her history was based mostly on information gathered from family members who were alive at the time and who were telling from their own memory about the past generations. At that time the family was either living nearby and available for interview, or perhaps she corresponded through the mail. They may have had family bibles, or old letters, and there was the local family cemetery to consult. I doubt there was a whole lot more in terms of original sources for her information.

Today we have tremendous collections of documents found in all kinds of libraries, churches, courthouses, and databases from around the world. We also have computers and the internet to help us find the documents, sort through them, and organize them to focus the history which is has been deeply obscured by time.

The subject of this report is Sarah Peterson Berg of DeKalb, Lee, and Ogle counties in Illinois. She was born in Norway on 3 May, 1864 and given the name Serina Pedersdatter. According to the documents I have, her parents were Syvert Pedersen and Gurina Olsdatter Volden who lived for a short time at Midtbrekka on Store Døvik in the township of Årdal, Rogaland, Norway. The descendants of her family, now living in Illinois, say that Sarah came to America when she was only six weeks old. At least one document from Norway confirms this. The U.S. census from 1870 shows that the family lived in LaSalle county, Illinois. By 1880 they had moved to DeKalb county, and on 24 March, 1887 Sarah married Ludwig Berg in Sycamore, DeKalb, Illinois. Sarah and Ludwig had six children together. In 1900 they were living with all their children in the township of Alto, Lee, Illinois. After a long life together, Ludwig died in 1941, and Sarah died in 1958 at the age of 94. They are buried with several of their family members at Woodlawn cemetery in Ogle county, Illinois.

I now have direct proof to make this connection from Serina Pedersdatter of Årdal, Norway to Sarah Peterson Berg of DeKalb, Illinois. I also have a substantial body of circumstantial evidence to support this conclusion, as well as two primary source documents that prove the case beyond a reasonable doubt.

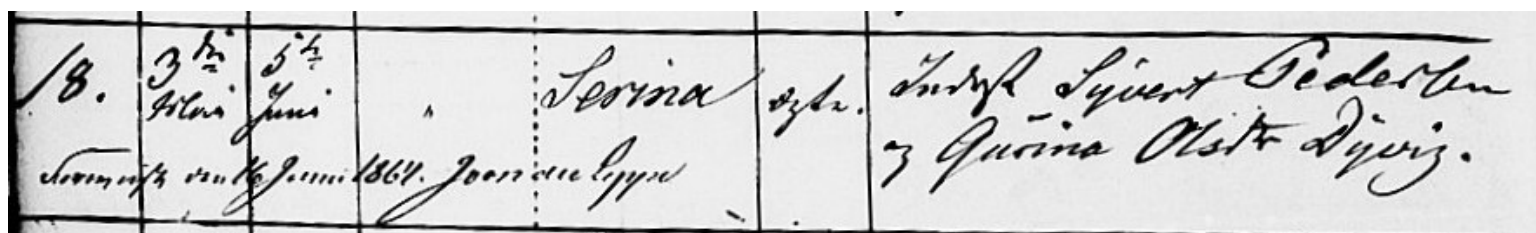
The following is from Cleva Darling's history:

“Sarah and Gurina also came to the United States and both settled in Illinois. Sarah married a man from Esmond, Illinois and had one girl who married Ludwig Burg. She has six children. Gurina married Mr. Olson. They had two children: Regina, who married Hulver Warren of Eagle Grove, Iowa, and had three children; and Andrew K. who lived at Cambridge, Iowa, married and had four children--Ella, Mary, James, and Ollie.”

“Sarah and Gurina” here are sisters to Ole J. Olson Wold who was our great great grandfather. The parish register from Aardal, Rogaland, Norway contains the birth records of all eight children in this family. Their parents were Ole Iversen Volden b. 1808, and Siri Pedersdatter Hagen b. 1806.

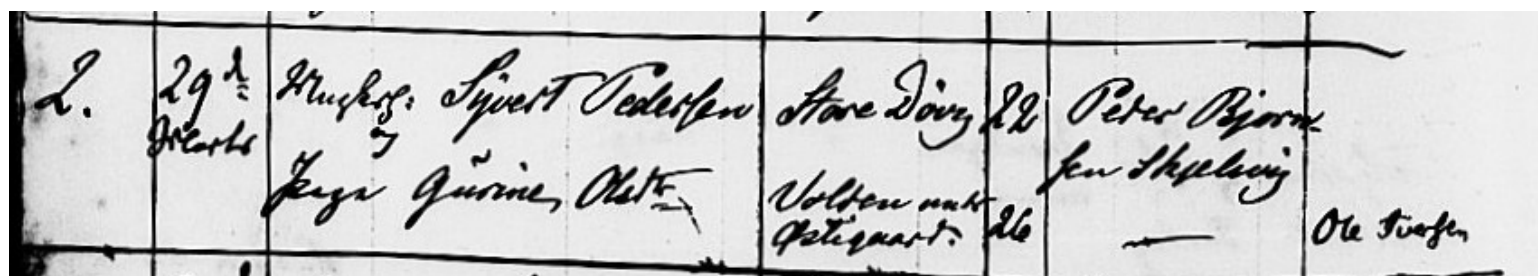
The quote above clearly shows that there was a relationship between our family and the family of Ludwig Berg, but as written the precise relationship is not entirely clear. Sarah (Serina) Olsdatter, b. 1833, was the second of the eight children. My previous research has shown that she never came to America as stated by Cleva Darling. According to the excerpt above it was Sarah's daughter who married Ludwig Burg and had six children. However, the documents from Illinois, Iowa and Norway show that it must have been Gurina's daughter, also named Sarah (Serina), who married Ludwig Berg and had six children. It is easy to see how the confusion began because the younger Sarah was also born in Årdal. This Sarah, born 1864, was the daughter of Syvert Pedersen Dyvig (Døvik) and Gurina Olsdatter Volden. The mother listed in her birth record is clearly the same Gurina who was a sister of Ole J. Olson Wold, and her identity is made certain in the marriage record, also 1864, where her birth place is called: “Volden under Østigaard”, and her father's name is given: “Ole Iversen”.

Parish records from Årdal, Rogaland, Norway, 1864:



“#18, born 3 May, christened 5 June, Serina, ægte, parents Syvert Pedersen and Gurina Olsdatter Dyvig, witnesses: Martha Horton, Serina O. ibid, Thorberg Brakken, Johne Skjelsvig, Anders Svadberg”. (There is a small note which indicates that the information

for this entry was conveyed to the clerk who wrote this on 16 June, 1864. I seems that the family had already left for America at that time).



Parish records from Årdal, Rogaland, Norway, 1864:

“#2, Married 29 March, Bachelor Syvert Pedersen Store Døvig, age 22, and Maiden Gurine Olsdatter Volden under Østigaard, age 26. The groom’s father was Peder Bjornsen Skjelsvig and the bride’s father was Ole Iversen.”

Syvert Pedersen and Gurina Olsdatter came to America soon after the child was born. There are many questions about them that remain unanswered. This time period provides very few records from Norway or from frontier America that would help us. The event of their leaving Årdal was not recorded in the parish record. Since the family was not listed in the 1865 Norway census, we assume they must have come before then. See the following two census records:

1870 U.S. census, Rutland, LaSalle, Illinois:

	age	occupation	place of birth
Peterson, Levi B.	29	Farmer	Norway
Julia	29	Keeping house	Norway
Sarah	6	at home	Norway
Thomas	4		Illinois
Betsey	2		Illinois
Caroline	1		Illinois
Betsey	62	with son	Norway

1880 U.S. census, Afton, DeKalb, Illinois:

	age	place of birth	occupation
Samuel B. Peterson	37	Norway	Farmer

Celia Peterson	35	Norway	Keeping House
Sarah Peterson	15	Norway	At Home
Thomas Peterson	12	Illinois	Works on farm
Betsey Peterson	9	Illinois	
Celia Peterson	4	Illinois	
Peter Peterson	8m	Illinois	

The 1880 census above is certainly the family of our Sarah Peterson. The 1870 census does not agree completely with the later, but it appears to me that it is still a good candidate. Comparing the two records, in the later census Gurina (Julia) has died and Syvert (a.k.a. Samuel / Levi) married a second time with Celia Oleson. That marriage is recorded in DeKalb county records on 2 September, 1873. Just to be clear, it appears that Syvert had in the earlier census used the name Levi B., then in the later census changed his name to Samuel B. Peterson. Also, in the earlier census he is with his first wife, and in 1880 with his second wife. This is important because the 1870 census lists his first wife who would be Gurina from Årdal, and we have documentation of that marriage from Norway. The name 'Julia' is a common substitution for Gurina used by immigrants of this period. There are slight age discrepancies between the two records. That fact doesn't bother me because we see it a lot in census records. The youngest child in 1870, Caroline, does not appear in 1880. In this scenario she must have died, but I have found no birth or death records for these children. It is possible that Caroline's death is the result of the death of her mother while she was very young. The older children, Sarah, Thomas and Betsy, do appear in both records. That and the fact that Samuel B. Peterson's second marriage is well documented are the primary details that lead me to believe these are the same family.

So, my conclusion is that Syvert Pedersen at one point used the name Levi B. Peterson, then later settled on the name Samuel B. Peterson which is the name he used the rest of his life. The following document is the only direct proof I have found for this:

From the Evangelical Lutheran Church Archives, film # ELCA 5

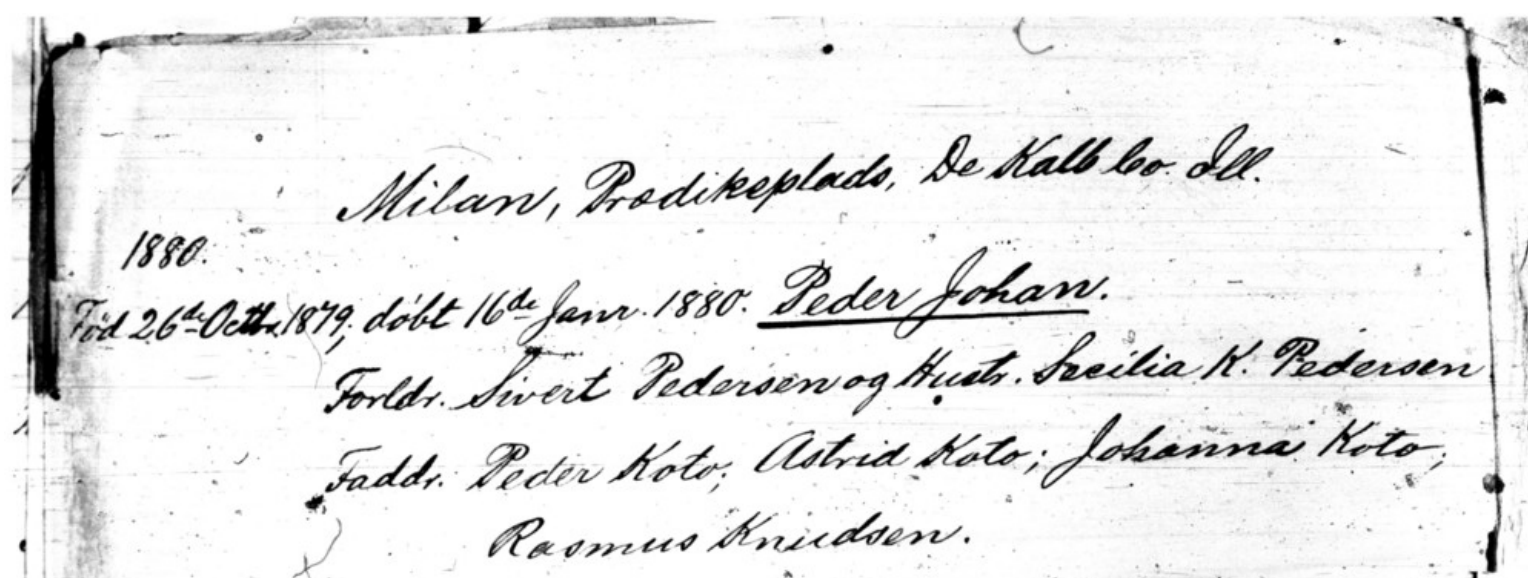
“Milan, Prædikeplads, DeKalb Co. Ill.”

“1880. Born 26 October, 1879, Christened 16 Jan. 1880. Peder Johan.

“Parents: Sivert Pedersen and wife Sacilia K. Pedersen

“Witnesses: Peder Koto; Astrid Koto; Johanna Koto; Rasmus Knudsen.”

The birth record above was recorded in the church book from Milan, DeKalb, Illinois. The child “Peder Johan” is also listed in the 1880 census as “Peter”, age 8 months, son of Samuel B. Peterson. In that census, next to the age column there is another column that states: “if born the previous year, give the month”. For Peter it states



A photograph of a handwritten birth record from a church book. The text is written in cursive ink on aged, slightly stained paper. The record is for a child named Peder Johan, born on October 26, 1879, and christened on January 16, 1880. The parents are Sivert Pedersen and his wife Sacilia K. Pedersen. The witnesses listed are Peder Koto, Astrid Koto, Johanna Koto, and Rasmus Knudsen. The location is noted as Milan, Prædikeplads, DeKalb Co. Ill.

1880. Milan, Prædikeplads, DeKalb Co. Ill.
Født 26^{de} Octbr. 1879, døbt 16^{de} Janr. 1880. Peder Johan.
Føddr. Sivert Pedersen og Hustru. Sacilia K. Pedersen
Fæddr. Peder Koto; Astrid Koto; Johanna Koto;
Rasmus Knudsen.

that he was born in October of 1879 which agrees with this record. Furthermore, we know from other documents, including the 1900 census, that Samuel B. Peterson had a son named Peter J. born at this time. The significance here is that the Priest wrote the father’s Norwegian name on this birth record even though he was using his Americanized name for other official documents. There is no other individual using the name Sivert in this place at this time, so we must conclude that Sivert Pedersen and Samuel B. Peterson are the same person. The actual book that this document came from was not at all complete, and I found no other birth records or documents regarding this family.

There are other circumstantial reasons for arriving at this conclusion. First, we don’t find a Samuel B. Peterson or his family listed anywhere in the 1870 U.S. census, and we don’t find a Levi B. Peterson or his family listed anywhere in the 1880 U.S. census. Therefore, there are no other families that would overlap during these years.

Second, we know that Celia (Sacilia) was Samuel's second wife because we have the marriage record from Illinois in 1873. It is also noted in the 1910 census that Celia is Samuel's second wife. Third, I have already mentioned that the name Julia is a common American version for the Norwegian name Gurina / Guro / Guraa, so we expect that this is a name that she might have used. Thus we see her listed as Julia in the 1870 census. Fourth, and perhaps most important, the older children in this family, Sarah, Thomas and Betsey, match in both records even though the ages don't agree as well as we would like. Fifth, the birth places are consistent. The parents and the oldest child Sarah were born in Norway, and all the younger children were born in Illinois. Sixth, the 1900 census from Afton, DeKalb, Illinois, states that Sam B. Peterson was born in December, 1842, and that he immigrated in 1865. This is consistent with what we know about Syvert Pederson who was born 11 December, 1842 in Årdal, Norway. Finally, in the 1870 census we see Betsey Peterson, age 62, also from Norway, who was listed as the mother of Levi. If we accept the conclusion that Syvert Pederson who married in 1864, Levi B. Peterson from the 1870 census and Samuel B. Peterson from the 1880, 1900, and 1910 census are the same person, then this must be his mother who had come with them from Norway. Syvert Pederson's parents are known from the Årdal parish record. They were Peder Bjørnsen, b. 1794, and Britha Thorsdatter, b. 1807. The name Betsey was again a common substitution for the Norwegian name Britha or Bertha, and her age in 1870 would have been 62 or 63. This is again consistent with the family from Norway.

Perhaps most important of all, I now have a copy of the marriage certificate for Ludwig Berg and Sarah Peterson. I obtained this document just a few days after I completed this report, so I am including it here as part of this updated version. It was a member of the Berg family in Illinois who sent this to me only after I sent them my initial report. I was so happy to get this that I was completely undaunted by the fact that it came after the first report was done. The only other way I would have found this original document would be to travel to Illinois and visit the local historical library which I could not easily do.

First note that the name of Sarah's mother is given as 'Julia Oleson Vohl.' This is certainly our gal whom we know as 'Gurina Olsdatter Volden '. Also remember that the 1870 census had the name 'Julia' for the mother. Next note that her place of birth is given as 'Ordal, Norway'. The proper spelling is Årdal or Aardal, but the Norwegians pronounce this [Or-dahl]. This document which gives her name with the place of birth makes her identity certain, especially on top of all the other evidence.

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF HEALTH.

Return of a Marriage to County Clerk.

1. Full name of GROOM, Ludwig Berf
2. Place of Residence, Town of Wilson Dr. Kalb Co Ill
3. Occupation, Farmer
4. Age next Birthday 25 years. Color, White Race, Caucasian
5. Place of Birth, Christiana Norway
6. Father's Name, Hansen Berf
7. Mother's Maiden Name, Not known
8. Number of Groom's Marriage, First
9. Full Name of BRIDE, Sarah Peterson
Maiden Name, if a Widow,
10. Place of Residence, Town of Oron Ills.
11. Age next Birthday, 22 years. Color, White Race, Caucasian
12. Place of Birth, Norway
13. Father's Name, Samuel Peterson
14. Mother's Maiden Name, Julia Plerson Vohl
15. No. of Bride's Marriage, First
16. Married at Sycamore Ill. in the County of Dr. Kalb and State of Illinois, the 24th day of March 1887.
17. Witnesses to Marriage H. W. Willard Osman Rogers

N.B.—At Nos. 8 and 15 state whether 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, &c., Marriage of each. At 17 give names of subscribing witnesses to the Marriage Certificate. If no subscribing witnesses, give names of two persons who witnessed the ceremony.

Sycamore Ill. March 24th 1887

We Heresby Certify that the information above given is correct, to the best of our knowledge and belief.

Ludwig Berf (Groom.)
Sarah Peterson (Bride.)

I Heresby Certify that the above is a correct return of a Marriage solemnized by me.

Dated at Sycamore Ill.
this 24th day of March 1887

Charles A Bishop
County Judge

Now consider the family of Ludwig Berg. First we have the testimony from Cleva Darling who stated that one of the daughters “married Ludwig Berg of Esmond Illinois and together they had six children”. When we look for this family we find them in the 1900 census in Alto, Lee, Illinois which is about twenty miles from Esmond. See the following:

1900 U.S. Census, Alto township, Lee, Illinois:

		age	birth place	year of citizenship
Berg,	Ludwig		37	Norway 1868
	Sarah	wife 35	Norway	
	Henry S.	son 12	Illinois	
	Grace C.	dtr. 9	Illinois	
	George B.	son 7	Illinois	
	Leonard S.	son 6	Illinois	
	Lilly S.	dtr. 5	Illinois	
	Morris J.	son 3	Illinois	

1910 U.S. census, Lynnville, Ogle, Illinois: (This place is even closer to Esmond.)

		age	birth place	year of citizenship
Berg,	Ludwig	head 47	Norway	1867
	Sarah	wife 45	Norway	
	George	son 17	Illinois	
	Lilly	dtr. 14	Illinois	
	Leonard	son 14	Illinois	
	Nolas	son 13	Illinois	

There are six children in this family, and the wife’s name is Sarah. According to Cleva Darling she is the daughter of one of the sisters of Ole J. Olson. There were no new children listed in 1910, so the total remained at six. Family files posted at <www.rootsweb.com> also show this family with a few more details:

From [www.rootsweb.com/.../worldconnectproject/.../Berg family](http://www.rootsweb.com/.../worldconnectproject/.../Berg%20family):

“Ludwig Berg, b. 7 Feb 1862 Norway, d. 7 Mar 1943

“wife: Sarah Peterson b. 4 May 1864 Norway, d. 6 Apr 1958

“married: 24 Mar 1887 Sycamore, Illinois

“children: Henry

George

Leonard

Norris

Grace

Lillie

The order of the children is different, but this is certainly the same family. There is a note in the Rootsweb file stating that Sarah came to America at the age of six weeks. It also states: “Bertha Peterson (Betsey), sister of the bride, was Sarah’s attendant at her wedding”. And most importantly, the birth date given by these family records from Illinois is just one day different from the birth date given in the Årdal parish record shown at the beginning of this report.

Now let’s look at Ludwig Berg’s family. See the following:

1870 U.S. census, Milan, DeKalb, Illinois:

	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
Berg, Oloise	29	Farmer	Norway
Sophia	37		Norway
Hedwig	10		Norway
Ludwig	7		Norway
Hilda	5		Norway
Oscar	2		Illinois
Adolph	5/12		Illinois

Ludwig Berg above is age 7 in 1870. This census is the right place and therefore a good match for Ludwig Berg age 37 in 1900. We know from Ludwig’s marriage that he had a brother named Oscar who was his attendant at the wedding. One detail doesn't match the marriage record from 1887 which lists Ludwig's father as 'Hansen Berg'. I wonder if the name Hansen is a mistake because the 1870 census above is clear, and the

name Hansen is not a first name. His name could have been Olaus / Oloise Hansen Berg. We will need a birth record from Norway to be sure.

This earlier family does not appear again in the 1880 census from Illinois. But we do find a very interesting entry in the following census from Story county, Iowa:

1880 U.S. Census, Howard twp., Story, Iowa:

	age	occupation	birthplace /	parent's birthplace		
Borg, Olaus	39	Laborer	Norway	Norway	Norway	Norway
Gunhild	45		Norway	Norway	Norway	
Hilda	15		Illinois	Norway	Norway	
Adolf	10		Illinois	Norway	Norway	
Matilde	8		Illinois	Norway	Norway	

1880 Census, Howard twp., Story, Iowa:

	age	occupation	birthplace	parents birthplace
Berg, Ludwig	17	Laborer	Iowa	Norway

It appears the wife could be different person in 1880, but this certainly looks like the same father with two of the same children present, Hilda and Adolf. More interesting is the fact that they have now moved to Story county, Iowa which is only a few miles from where the Wald family were then living. We also have Ludwig Berg, presumably the same individual, now working as a laborer on a nearby farm, also in Howard township.

This record indicates that Ludwig Berg was raised near Esmond, Illinois, came to Story county, Iowa with his family some time after 1870. Then he went back to Illinois where he married Sarah Peterson in 1887. There they had six children by 1900. Whether Ludwig met Sarah in Iowa or Illinois we don't know. We also don't know if Sarah ever lived in Iowa, but her family may have traveled there. During this period there were several families that were closely related who had immigrated about the same time. We also know that our Wald family spent several years in LaSalle county, Illinois from 1854 to about 1867. So the family of Olaus Berg may have known them there. This seems to me an extraordinary coincidence to see Ludwig Berg moving to Iowa near the Wald family and then back to Illinois. There must have been ties between these two families because they were both from the same parish in Norway, and they would have certainly known each other and attended the same church in Iowa.

Back to Ludwig's parents. Olaus's wife was named Sophia in 1870 and Gunhild in 1880. These may have been two different women, but I was not able to find a marriage record for either one, so that will remain a question mark. There is a biography from Illinois regarding Theodore O. Berg who was possibly Olaus's brother (see below).⁵³ In that record it states that they were born near Christiania (Oslo). Since they left before 1865, this place as given is not specific enough for an easy search. I have searched all the parishes registers from near Oslo for the birth of Theodore Berg, born 23 Nov., 1833, but so far I haven't found it. Theodore Berg was married to Maria Donaldson in 1858 in Hederson county. In the census from 1860 in Henderson county, he is listed as Theodore Olson and has a brother named Louis. This is presumably Olaus, the same person as Ludwig's father, so his full name would have been Olaus Olson Berg. This is important to know when looking for their home parish in Norway, but 'Berg' is a very common place name, so we will need more to go on before continuing that search. Additionally, there appears to be another brother who came later named Erick O. Berg who is listed on the same page with Theodore in the 1880 census for Milan, DeKalb, Illinois. There are many more details could be researched regarding them.

Today the Berg family still lives in Illinois, and the following pictures were taken from a family web site at <<http://www.andrew-jarrett.com/alvincurtisberg.html>>.

Allen H Wald

53 "The Biographical Record of DeKalb County, Illinois", S. J. Clark Pub. Co., 1898, pg. 127.



Front Row: Ludwig and Sarah Berg, and son, Norris

Back Row: Their other children: Lily and Leonard (twins), Henry, George and Grace



Left: Sarah and Ludwig Berg with Henry, Grace and George (on his dad's lap), taken about 1894. Henry would be 6 and Grace would be 4.

Right: Four generations, Sam Peterson, Grace Berg Busse, Sarah Peterson Berg, holding Freddie Busse, about 1910.



THEODORE O. BERG¹ resides on section 19, Milan township, where he owns a farm of three hundred and twenty acres, which he keeps under the highest state of cultivation. He is a native of Norway, born near Christina (Christiania? / Oslo), November 23, 1833, and in his native country grew to manhood and received a limited education. In 1853, he came to the United States, taking ship at Christina, for Quebec, from which place he came directly west to Chicago, arriving in that city he made the trip with his brother Ole Berg, and they went direct to LaSalle county, where our subject commenced work on a farm by the month, and continued to be thus employed for one year, when he was taken sick, and remained in ill health for two years. He then resumed work on a farm, and later purchased a threshing machine and engaged in threshing and also in teaming.

Mr. Berg was married in Henderson county, Illinois, in 1858, to Maria Donaldson, a native of Norway, who came to the United States in the spring of 1853, and located first in Chicago, after which she went to Henderson county. After marriage, Mr. Berg rented a farm for three years in Henderson county, which he operated, and in 1864 moved to De Kalb county and purchased eighty acres of unimproved land in Milan township, on which he located, and as time passed, made other purchases of land until he was the owner of six hundred acres, all of which was well improved. His home place may be considered a model farm, having all the improvements used on a farm at the present time, including a gasoline engine for pumping water for stock and grinding feed for the same. Coming to this country without a dollar, his success in life has been remarkable, and all has been acquired by his own labor, assisted by his good wife. They are the parents of two children, Oscar T., who is married and residing on the old farm, and Amelia, wife of A. Sanderson, a farmer of Milan township. They have lost three children. Caroline grew to womanhood, married Charles Sanderson, and died leaving six children. Oscar died at the age of four years, and Caroline died in infancy. To each of his children he has given good farms, while yet retaining the home farm of three hundred and twenty acres.

In addition to his general farming, Mr. Berg has for years owned and operated a steam thresher, and has now one of the most complete threshing machines manufactured. He began the business before coming to DeKalb county, and has continued in the same to the present time, making it a source of some revenue. He has always been in favor of good roads, and for six years served as commissioner of highways, giving much of his time to the improvement of the roads. Politically he is a Republican, but is not what is now termed a politician. He believes in the principles of the party and annually votes his party ticket. He and his wife have been life long members of the Lutheran church. They are good people and are held in the highest esteem wherever known.

TWELFTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES.

 State Illinois
 County Deer

SCHEDULE No. 1.—POPULATION.

 Township or other division of county Alto Township
(Town name of township, town, precinct, district, or other civil division, as the case may be. See instructions.)
Name of Institution, X
 Name of incorporated city, town, or village, within the above-named division, Alto

 Enumerated by me on the 18th 19th day of June, 1900, Samuel J. Whelton

LOCATION.			NAME	RELATION.	PERSONAL DESCRIPTION.										NATIVITY.			CITIZENSHIP.		
IN CITIES.	IN CITIES.	IN CITIES.			DATE OF BIRTH.		APPROXIMATE AGE.		SEX.		MARRIAGE.		COLOR.		Place of birth of each person and parents of each person enumerated. If born in the United States, give the State or Territory; if of foreign birth, give the country only.			Year of immigration to the United States.		
Street.	House Number.	Number of dwelling in this part of block.	of each person whose place of abode on June 1, 1900, was in this family. Enter surname first, then the given name and middle initial, if any. Indicate every person living on June 1, 1900. Omit children born since June 1, 1900.	Relationship of each person to the head of the family.	Color of hair.	Sex.	Month.	Year.	Age at last birthday.	Whether single, married, widowed, or divorced.	Number of years married.	Number of live born children.	Number of live born children living.	Number of live born children living.	Place of birth of this person.	Place of birth of Father of this person.	Place of birth of Mother of this person.	Year of immigration to the United States.	Number of years in the United States.	Naturalization.
84		142-148	Berg, Ludwig J.	Head	Ar	M	Feb	1863	37	M	15				Norway	Norway	Norway	1888	32	na
85			Sarah	Wife	W	F	May	1865	35	M	15	6	6		Illinois	Norway	Norway			
86			Henry S.	Son	W	M	Mar	1888	12	S					Illinois	Norway	Illinois			
87			Grace C.	Daughter	W	F	Dec	1890	9	S					Illinois	Norway	Illinois			
88			George B.	Son	Ar	M	Mar	1892	7	S					Illinois	Norway	Illinois			
89			Leonard S.	Son	Ar	M	Mar	1894	6	S					Illinois	Norway	Illinois			
40			Lilly S.	Daughter	W	F	Mar	1894	6	S					Illinois	Norway	Illinois			
41			Morris J.	Son	W	F	Apr	1897	3	S					Illinois	Norway	Illinois			
42			Neffestad, Martin	Boarder	W	M	Oct	1870	29	S					Norway	Norway	Norway	1888	11	al

1900 U.S. census from Alto, Lee, Illinois: Berg, Ludwig, Sarah, Henry S., Grace C., George B., Leonard S., Lilly S., Morris J., Neffestad, Martin (boarder).