

In

Memoriam

William A. Boerger

(November 26, 1875 – June 13, 1955)

Stearns-Benton County Bar Association
District Court
Seventh Judicial District
St. Cloud, Minnesota

May 1, 1962

William A. Boerger

(November 26, 1874 – June 13, 1955)

There were at least four pillars of influence in the life of William A. Boerger. There was his family, of course. He married Wilhelmine Schmidt in 1885, and they had seven children: sons Lawrence, Max, Albert, Bernard, and Herbert, and daughters Irma and Juletta.

And there was his faith. He was a devout Catholic. Arriving in St. Cloud in 1900, he became principal, organist and choir director of St. Mary's Church. Later he was active in numerous church organizations, including the Knights of Columbus and Catholic Aid Association. This entry appeared in the 1946-47 edition of *The American Catholic Who's Who*.¹

Boerger, WILLIAM A., lawyer; b. St. Joseph, O., Nov. 26, 1875; s. Andrew and Katharine (Fischer) B.; educ. Normal Sch.; m. Minnie Schmidt, Hoven, S. Dak., Nov. 5, 1895. Sch. teacher in Mo., S. Dak., Idaho, Minn.; prin. St. Mary's Sch., St. Cloud, Minn., 7 yrs.; city editor, St. Cloud Daily Times, 3 yrs.; alderman, St. Cloud, 3 yrs. (acting mayor the last yr.); county supt. of schs. Stearns County, Minn., 1910-35; admitted to bar, 1919. Collab. in *History of Stearns County* (2 vols., 1915). *Mem.*: Catholic Central Verein (pres. Minn. br.); K. of C.; Catholic Foresters; pres. State Federation of Cath. Socs., Minn., '28-40; dir. Youth Activities, Cath. Aid Assn. of Minn. *Home*: 702 14th Ave., S., St. Cloud, Minn.

There also were his professions—he was a teacher and school administrator, writer and lawyer. He came late to the legal profession, being admitted to the bar on September 17, 1919, at age forty-four.² Still, he managed to practice longer than many lawyers.

¹ 7 *The American Catholic Who's Who* 25 (1946-1947).

² Roll of Attorneys, Supreme Court, State of Minnesota, 1858-1970, at 161 (Minnesota Digital Library).

Finally, there was his commitment to serve the community. He was Superintendent of Schools for Stearns County, chaired the County Welfare Board, and was President of the St. Cloud City Council and acting Mayor. He was a good citizen.

He died on June 13, 1955, at age seventy-nine. The *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* carried the story:

**William Boerger,
St. Cloud Civic
Leader, Dies**

One of St. Cloud's most distinguished citizens, William Boerger, 79, died Tuesday (sic).

Since coming to St. Cloud in 1900, he served 24 years as superintendent of schools, was a member of the city council, acting mayor and city editor of the St. Cloud Times. He also practiced law for 20 years.

In addition he found time to write a song, write and publish a novel and help launch the Stearns county 4-H club program.

Mr. Boerger held offices in both the Stearns county and state bar associations and was active in a number of Catholic organizations.³

On May 1, 1962, a memorial service for deceased members of the Stearns-Benton Counties Bar Association was conducted in District Court in St. Cloud. The following eulogy was read by Harry E. Burns:

William A. Boerger was born November 26th, 1875, at St. Joseph, Mercer County, Ohio.

³ *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, June 15, 1955, at 25 (list of survivors omitted). Obituaries also appeared in the *St. Cloud Daily Times*, June 14, 1955, page 1, and the *St. Paul Dispatch*, June 15, 1955, at 12. A photograph of Boerger in the *Times* is too dark to post.

He graduated in 1892 from St. Francis Normal School in Wisconsin, at the early age of seventeen, when he became a teacher.

He was musically inclined, and was an accomplished organist at this early age.

He was married November 5th, 1895 to Wilhelmine Schmidt, in Hoven, South Dakota.

He taught in Wisconsin, South Dakota and Idaho before coming to Minnesota.

He entered Stearns County by way of Jacobs Prairie, where he was a teacher and an organist in 1900, from which place he came to St. Cloud, where he acted as Principal at St. Mary's School, and became organist and choir director at St. Mary's Church.

He was a newspaper reporter, and later city editor of the St. Cloud Times from 1908 to 1910.

He at one time served as President of the City Council and Acting Mayor, City of St. Cloud.

In 1910, he was appointed Deputy Clerk of the District Court, and shortly thereafter was elected County Superintendent of Schools, Stearns County, in which capacity he served well and ably twenty-four years.

While he was Superintendent of Schools, he served as Chairman of the Stearns County Welfare Board for a period of years.

He was a linguist and, in addition to English, he was master of the German, Polish and Scandinavian languages.

He was an author of repute, being a writer of many short stories and poems.

He wrote the words and music to the song "Our Absent Boy," which song was published during World War I, and was later used by the Veterans of Foreign Wars on the Memorial Day cards they put out to the public.

In 1952 his novel, "Until He Comes Again", was published.

He was cited in "Catholic Who's Who." Recognized as a leader, he held office in many fraternal groups, both local and state, a few of which are: Grand Knight and District Deputy of the Knights of Columbus; member of the Board of Directors for the Catholic Aid Association; Chief ranger of the Catholic Order of Foresters; and President of the St. Joseph's Society. He was one of the originators of the Stearns County 4-H Clubs. He directed many local, home-talent plays.

In 1924 the Democratic Party drafted him to run for Governor of Minnesota, but he declined.

He was admitted to the Bar in August, 1918 (sic), having received his degree from the Black Stone Institute of Law. He loved the law, and was a lifetime student thereof.

He was intelligent, honest, energetic, hardworking, exceptionally fair, and was possessed of a brilliant mind and a persuasive personality.

He was a friend to all, whether of means or without means, and on a person-to-person basis, he knew more men, women and children in Stearns County than did any other individual of his time.

He had a great sense of humor, and was never too serious to enjoy a good joke.

He was a devoted family man, and left surviving him his wife, three sons: Albert, Bernard and Herbert, and two daughters: Irma Yaeger and Juletta Yaeger. Two sons, Lawrence and Max, predeceased him.

He left the world a better place to live in, when he died at the age of seventy-nine, June 15th (sic), 1955.

He practiced law until December, 1954, when he discontinued his practice, just six months before his demise.

In the words of one of his great friends, I quote the late Albert J. Mueller, Attorney-at-Law, St. Paul, Minnesota:

"Doubtless we shall never fully know how many good causes our friend has served as man, as Christian, as citizen. Such men conceal their good works. But, as Charles Lamb once said, 'It is a pleasant thing to do good by stealth and be found out by accident.' His secret way was known only to his God. We who have worked with him know what an inspiration he was to youth; how he took pleasure in assisting the needy and downtrodden. No problem was too great, no task too small. The monument he has erected as a result of his loyal friendship and invaluable service to his fellow men will stand as a living memorial to all who knew him. His entire life was one of devotion. He truly was one of God's noblemen."

Dated at St. Cloud, Minnesota, this 1st day of May, 1962.

Respectfully submitted,

Harry E. Burns,

Member, Stearns-Benton County Bar Association

I move the Court that the Memorial, which I have just given, be made a part of the permanent records of the Court, and I

ask the Court to make its Order Directing the Clerk to send a certified copy of the Memorial to the family of the deceased.⁴

◇ ω ◇

Appendix

Boerger's patriotic song, *Our Absent Boy*, is part of the collection of World War I sheet music preserved by the Library of Congress. It follows.

⁴ Boerger's memorial is from familysearch.org. The other memorials delivered that day have not been located.

©CLE450797
APR 28 1919

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
OUR ABSENT BOY

—♥—
A PLAIN HOME SONG

Dedicated to the Memory of
THE BOYS WHO - ARE SLEEPING
SOMEWHERE - OVER - THERE.



Words and Music
by

WILLIAM A. BOERGER

Price **40** cents
NET

WILLIAM A. BOERGER
PUBLISHER
St. Cloud, Minn.

11046
-B

40

Our Absent Boy

Words and Music by
WILLIAM A. BOERGER

mf

Just a moss - cov - ered log by the side of a brook, Where his
 Just a low, nar - row mound back of No Man's Land, Ris - ing
 Just a bright lit - tle star shin - ing o - ver - head, As the

mf

fav - or - ite haunt used to be; Just an
 out of the tan - gled grass; Just a
 shades of the night creep a - long; Just the

rit.

old rust - y blade ly - ing in the leaves, And a
 plain lit - tle cross in the up - turned sod, Where his
 faint tint - ed gleam of an an - gel's wing, And the

rit.

All rights reserved.

Copyright MCMXIX by W^m A. Boerger.

name in the bark of a tree; Just a
 friends nev - er - more will pass; Just a
 breath of an an - gel's song; Just a

cresc. faint nar - row path lead - ing up from the stream, To a
 small sad - ed flag wav - ing in the breeze, As it
 fond ray of hope stream - ing down from a - bove, Like the

poor lit - tle home in the glen; Just a few bro - ken toys and a
 plays in the tuft - ed green; Just a few wilt - ed flow'rs from a
 joy of a soul that is free; Just a warm glow of love as of

rit. va - cant chair, Mark the place where he once had been!
 com - rade's hand, Mark the place where he last was seen!
 God's own smile, Mark the place where he now must be!

Our Absent Boy 2