Elizabeth Boss Kunz and John Kunz III

(Parents of Lucy Kunz Hansen)

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Written by his grandson Philip R. Kunz
Elizabeth Boss Kunz ? Glimpses of Her Life and Family



Elizabeth Boss was born August 14, 1867 in the beautiful town of Guendlischwand, surrounded by the majestic Alps of Switzerland. She was the sixth child and the third daughter born to Johannes Boss and Marianna Gertsch. The family grew larger, with twelve children, one of whom died as a six year old child.

Elizabeth was christened in the church at Gsteig bei Interlaken on September 1, 1867. The walk to the church took the family about an hour and a half.

Elizabeth Boss was called Lizzie by many of her family and friends. She died May 13, 1900, some thirty-six years before I was born, but I think I know a lot about her as a result of writing this book. I hope to hug her one day and just call her "Grandmother." I am thankful for her and for her life and her testimony of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and for her membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Agnes Kunz Dansie, the oldest daughter of Elizabeth Boss and John Kunz III wrote a short history of her mother as follows:

> My Mother Elizabeth Boss Kunz was born the 14 Aug. 1867, at Guendlischwand, Bern, Switzerland. She was the sixth child of Johannes Boss and Marianna Gertsch. Their home was a two-story frame house, situated in a narrow valley, surrounded by high rugged mountains which were snow-capped the year around, and a beautiful river flowed through the valley.
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> The schoolhouse was surrounded by mountains in the alpine valley, three subjects were considered very important for girls, sewing, knitting, and music. Her mother [Marianna Gertsch] died when she was eighteen years of age. Her father was an architect and contractor, and the older brothers worked with him, my mother being the eldest daughter at home took care of the house when she was sixteen years old for about two years while her mother was sick, with the help of her sister, Emma.
>
> It was during this time that they became acquainted with the Mormon Latter Day Saint missionaries. Freidrich William Schoenfeld was President of the Mission. They began to investigate the Gospel. Mother [Elizabeth] was the first to join. She was baptized 6 Dec. 1885. Her Father, Johannes Boss, was baptized 19 Dec. 1875. Elizabeth was baptized at night because of so much persecution. Marianna Gertsch Boss, according to her granddaughter, Agnes Kunz Dansie, died before she was baptized due to her ill health. She died 22 August 1885. [Her temple work was done 17 December 1888] Mother [Elizabeth] was 18 years old when her mother, Marianna, died and with the help of her sister, Aunt Emma, took over the family for two years until coming to America.
> [Agnes Kunz Dansie]

John Kunz III's journal indicates that Elizabeth Boss and Marianna Zenger came from Guendlischwand to Thun and were met there by Elder Kunz. They went to Allmendingen to a meeting and then to Oberstocken, where Elizabeth was baptized late that night. The church records show that she was baptized in the creek called "Feissebach," which flows from the Alps and goes through the little hamlet of Oberstocken.

Given that the day was the 6th of December, the cold water and the darkness of the night demonstrated the faith and testimony of this wonderful woman, Elizabeth Boss.

After Elizabeth's baptism, she remained faithful in Switzerland and in the United States of America. President Frederick William Schoenfeld notes the attendance of two of the Boss sisters at a meeting in Switzerland some distance away from their home as follows:

> Sunday, March 21 1886 Stocken, We had two sisters coming from Guendlischwand which is a long ways to come. They were two sisters Boss and one of them had stayed in Almendengen. Them three had started at three in the morning. Started per Steamer from Daligen to Thun.

[Frederick W. Schoenfeld journal]

And in other notations:

> Sunday May 8 1887 Bern [with Brother Theurer] Found there one of our faithful sisters from Guendlischwand Elizabeth Boss [writes of meeting and flowers and then] at noon Br Theurer and [Brother] Boss arrived and we had dinner,...Br Theurer and Boss going valley up, and I chose a path upon the mountainside.

> Sunday Dec 11 1887 Berne
> We had visitors from Guendlischwand Sister Emma Boss [Elizabeth's sister]. Had a good Sunday School. [Frederick W. Schoenfeld journal]



She was taught the gospel by the missionaries and perhaps also by Swiss members of the Church who had already joined the Church and who lived in that area of the Alps. Her sister, Magdalena Boss Schoenfeld, indicated this type of contact with an "old man by the name of Weissmiller." She said:

> The greatest joy came to them when LDS missionaries called at their home bringing to them glad tidings of great joy. They welcomed them and invited them to explain the gospel to them. But this presented a problem, insomuch that they had to use great wisdom because of the prejudice that existed in respect to Mormonism. Persecution could result if anyone was found investigating the gospel. Mother told how they used to meet in secret at the home of an old man by the name of Weissmiller, who was a convert to the church. And there in the home they had the gospel explained to them by the missionaries. As they continued to receive these teachings one by one the members of the family began to see the light and were converted and were baptized, the father being the first to join. [He had actually joined a number of years prior to this - 1875] Magdalena Boss Schoenfeld

Being called to a mission and the subsequent missionary work was not always easy. John Kunz III who baptized Elizabeth Boss, had his share of heart breaking experiences:



John Kunz III was called to return to his native land to fill a mission. He left his home on 24 October 1884, to travel to the mission field. Of that departure, in which he left his three living wives and four living children, John Kunz III wrote:

> On the 24 Day of October 1884 in the Morning Six 0' clock I took leave of my Dear Beloved ones at home, they accompanied me so far as my fathers house, and it seemed to me a trial which I was not able to bear but I faced it with Determination and I shall never forget my last look on to their beloved faces, it was most to hard but for the Sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ I was willing to do it, and to face still more, but I also felt, that it was a trial for my family also. [John Kunz III Missionary Journal]

The call to serve and the subsequent service was given at great sacrifice by him and certainly by his wives and children; however, it was not without great blessings as well. His mission was successful in the conversion and baptism of many people, in supporting and strengthening the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Switzerland and in assisting in the emigration of many of the saints. Of such service, Paul Nielson, his grandson wrote:

> As we reflect upon this sacred occasion, let us remember the sacrifices made by these noble forebears. They listened to the gospel message and embraced it, thereby bringing upon themselves much persecution from relatives and friends; they followed the spirit of the gathering and left their beautiful native land to come to a foreign country and start a new life among strangers, thereby giving us a portion of our American heritage; they kept the commandments of God and made the gospel a part of their daily lives, thereby laying a foundation on which we may build our faith and increase our devotion.

I think of my dear grandmother, Elizabeth Boss, as she immigrated to America as a twenty year old. She left behind her family, friends, and homeland to be a part of the new faith she had embraced. Her actions were not without considerable cost and my heart is full as I think of her unselfishness for me.

Continuing the writing of Paul Nielson:

> A portion of the address given by John Kunz III on December 22, 1884, during the closing session of a missionary conference held in Berne, Switzerland, has been recorded in the Church publication for the German-speaking members, Der Stem (vol. 17, no. 3, 1 February 1885): (Translated by Paul Anthon Nielson)

(Translated by Paul Anthon Nielson)

> We have met here together at this conference where God has poured out His spirit in rich abundance upon us. It is necessary that we assemble from time to time to receive new strength and encouragement in the gospel. If we consider the small number of Saints in comparison to the large majority of mankind, we come to the conclusion that this gathering is very necessary, in order that we might receive the strength to swim against the mainstream of the world. I testify in the name of Jesus that God has again raised prophets to whom He has given power and authority to bind on earth., which bindings shall also stand in heaven. The world calls us fanatics, as though we were mere dreamers in our thoughts and in our faith. We desire to teach the world in order that they might see these things and learn of them. I would like to admonish you investigators to ask God for a testimony about His work, for it is impossible to receive a testimony of the truth but from Him. Everyone who has received such a witness should warn his neighbor. Let us not tire in this endeavor, and not weaken if we cannot emigrate as speedily as we would like to. [John Kunz III, as translated by Paul Anthon Nielson]

After the baptism of Elizabeth Boss in Switzerland December 6, 1885, she emigrated to Zion in 1887.. As Elizabeth was ready to leave, she went into the house to bid her brothers, Johannes, Christian and Friedrich, goodbye. According to Ernst Boss, the son of Christian, who was Elizabeth's brother, the emigration was stressful for the family. At the time of our visit to Switzerland in 1976, Ernst was eighty years of age and bed-ridden from a rather long illness. We visited a little with Ernst and his wife, Millie. As we were about to leave, he indicated that he wanted help to stand up by the side of his hospital type bed. He said, "When your grandmother left for America she went into the house to tell my father, Christian, goodbye. He turned his back on her and said, 'Get out of my life or just go now." That story has remained in our family all of these years and I want to hug you and tell you that such feelings must not persist in our families here and in America." With that he gave both Joyce and me wonderful hugs. He had tears in his eyes and we had tears in our eyes as well. It was a nice feeling and all barriers went down. Ernst told us that when letters came to Christian from his sister, the letters were thrown into the fireplace unopened and unread.

Elizabeth Boss emigrated in 1887 and went to Bern, Idaho, to what is now called "Lower Bern." Elizabeth lived in the home of William Kunz and his wives, Eliza Eschler and Mary Ann Roberts. William Kunz was the younger brother of John III.



Elizabeth Boss married John Kunz III in the Logan Temple on December 19, 1888. John's first wife, Magdalena died leaving her children without a mother. John married Magdalena's sister, Sophia, who helped him raise Magdalena's children. He subsequently married four more times, Elizabeth Boss becoming his sixth wife. The practice of plural marriage was officially stopped by the Church through the issuance of the "Manifesto" in 1890 by President Wilford Woodruff. Four of these wives gave birth to twenty-four children. The other two wives who did not have children assisted in raising the other wives' children. After the Manifesto stopping plural marriage, much persecution still came to the fathers because of their unwillingness to abandon their wives and children. The persecution obviously affected the wives and the children as well.

Agnes Kunz Dansie continues:

> Mother emigrated to Zion about the 11 May, 1886 [The records show that she emigrated in August, 1887 on the ship Wisconsin. She was Customs passenger # 472], she bade farewell to her Fatherland and started for Utah. There were missionaries and Saints in the Company. They traveled from Hull to Liverpool by train. At Liverpool they boarded the Steamship for New York. The emigrants joined in singing and dancing on the deck of the ship, many of them suffered with seasickness. They were on the ship 'ten days, and were sure happy when they sighted land. They came by train to Utah. [Agnes Kunz Dansie Book of Remembrance]

Accounts of the trip indicate that Elizabeth Boss sailed on the ship Wisconsin, departing August 27, 1887 and arriving in New York City September 8, 1887, with E. Bentley, the ship's Master, and J. Hart, the Company Leader.

A letter from John I. Hart - September 7, 1887, to President George Teasdale gives more history of the voyage as follows:

> President George Teasdale:
> Dear Brother, - - We are pleased once more to have the opportunity to write a few lines to you to inform you how we are all getting along. After leaving Queenstown, all that day and the next was quite pleasant, but on the 30th ultimo, it became a little rough, which lasted about three

was quite pleasant, but on the 30th ultimo, it became a little rough, which lasted about three days. Many of the Saints suffered somewhat with seasickness. On Thursday evening, the 1st instant, a very interesting affair happened; President Hart was invited into the smoking room of the first cabin by a number of gentlemen to give them an account of the principles of the gospel, which he accepted. The saloon was crowded to hear him; he was asked many questions, which he answered to their entire satisfaction. The captain of the vessel came in two or three times during the meeting, at one time he testified before all that were present that the Saints were the best passengers he had to take across the ocean; the most quiet and orderly people he had to do with. He said he had the pleasure of taking a good many companies of Saints over. Of course anyone speaking a good word for the poor, despised "Mormons', must be accused of being one of them, which was the case in this instance, but the captain told them he was no "Mormon", in fact he didn't know that he was anything, an he wanted to say was to speak the truth of the people, no matter to him what their religion was.

In the meeting there was present one infidel and one Jewish Rabi; the latter tried to condemn plural marriage, but President Hart proved to all present that the learned rabbi had not studied the laws of Moses nor his Jewish Bible. After the meeting was over, the entire company gave President Hart a hearty, unanimous vote of thanks.

At about 3 p.m. on the 3rd instant, we encountered a severe storm, which lasted several hours. One lady (not belonging to our company) fell and broke her leg.

About half past two 0' clock on Sunday morning, we had a new passenger come on board; Brother James Cotton's wife, Emily, of the Ashton Branch, Liverpool District, was delivered of a fine boy, both mother and baby are doing first -rate, of course the father is doing as well as can be expected under the existing circumstances.

We are pleased to say that the Saints have been able to attend to morning and evening prayers regularly every day; we held two meetings on Sunday, the 4th instant. The speakers were very much blest with the good Spirit of the Lord, and all that were present seemed to enjoy the same blessing. We are happy to state that the Saints, as a general thing, are feeling well.

On the morning of the 6th instant our little stranger was blessed, President Hart being mouth, it was named Edward Wisconsin Cotton We arrived at Sandy Hook at about 3:30 p.m. on the 7th instant; got into dock at New York at 5:30 p.m. met our friend and brother, Elder Hart, the Church Emigration Agent, and several other friends from home. We leave New York tomorrow at 3 p.m.

So far our journey has been a prosperous one; the Saints having got along the best kind and feel splendidly. We return to the Lord our grateful thanks for his preserving care over us during our voyage across the mighty deep, and pray that we may be blest with a safe and speedy journey across the continent to our destination.

With kind regards to yourself and all at "42" [42 Islington was the address of the British Mission in Liverpool] we remain your brethren in the gospel of peace, John I. Hart, president of company, J. C. Nielsen, counselor, F. Theurer, counselor,C. J. Thomas, secretary [pg 622]

Bill: Hart, John I, et. al. [Letter], Latter-day Saints Millennial Star 49:39, (Sept. 26, 1887) pp. 621-22. (HDL)"

The 3,238-ton Wisconsin brought 33 companies of Saints to America. Each company carned from 7 to 976 Saints. The ship, Wisconsin, brought many Saints to America, including Elizabeth Boss Insert Wisconsin link here

Agnes Kunz continues her mother's history:

> Learning the English language was quite an ordeal because they only knew the Swiss language, they always spoke it in their home.

In fact, Elizabeth's father, Johannes Boss, never did learn to speak the English language, although he could understand much of it. The introduction into the new culture was not always easy. Conrad Gertsch, brother of Johannes's second wife, Margaritha Gertsch, reported that:



Adjusting to America was often difficult. Schoolmates would tease me because of my peculiar dress and talk, and often beat me. One day John Morton told me I must fight for my rights and suggested that I fight if anyone bothered me again. That settled



it, I laid several out flat, and I was teased no more. [Conrad Gertsch at funeral of Johannes Boss' second wife, Margaritha Gertsch Boss]

Elizabeth lived in their first home which was a two story log home, in Pegram, Idaho. Later she and her children moved back to Bern. She went to Williamsburg, Idaho each summer to help make cheese and then returned to Bern in the winter. For several years Elizabeth and her children went to Williamsburg. She was a hard worker.

Elizabeth Boss and John Kunz III had six children: Agnes Ruth, born July 23, 1890, Julia Esther, born January 20, 1893, Parley Peter, born October 28, 1894, Hedwig Hazel, born September 29, 1896, Lucy May, born November 13, 1898 and Lydia, born May 13, 1900. All but Lydia grew to adulthood and had wonderful families. Lydia died at birth and was buried with her mother, Elizabeth Boss Kunz, who died at that same time on May 13, 1900. Both were buried in the same casket in the cemetery in Bern, Idaho.



In the spring John Kunz III would begin in the south end of Bear Lake valley and pick up cows from people along the way and take them to Williamsburg to his dairy, where they were milked in the summer and returned, along with some cheese, to their owners for the winter season. At that time, John Kunz III, who was Bishop in the Bern, Idaho Ward, developed a relationship with President Joseph F. Smith in which President Smith bought several cows [I have in my mind that it was either nine or eleven as my father, Parley Kunz told me] which he placed in Bishop Kunz's care. Each fall cheese was shipped to President Smith, but his cows remained in Bern. My father, Parley, had seen either this letter from President Smith to his father John Kunz III, or another one written to the Kunz brothers [probably Parley and Abel] at the termination of the agreement with President Joseph F. Smith. The letter has been lost for many years and the exact content was questionable.

After intensive inquiries at the Church Office Building of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah over a period of some twenty years. My persistence finally paid off. To a recent inquiry, I received the following letter from Ronald G. Watt, Archivist, Sr. in the Church Archives:

Enclosed with the letter was the following typed copy of the letter:

> September 24, 1915
>
> Bishop John Kunz Bern, Idaho
>
> My Dear Bishop:
>
> Your most welcome favor bearing date of Williamsburg, Idaho, September 9th, reached me September 11th, also lading of cheese at Soda Springs. About a week later the cheese came in very good shape, some of the boxes a little broken but the cheese looking well. I scarcely know how to express my appreciation of your kindness or the extent of my gratitude to you and kind Providence for such a blessing as my crop of cheese is to me and my family. Each season we look forward with the livest interest to the coming of our harvest of cheese which seems to be relished by my numerous family better than any other class of cheese which the market affords; we almost always run short toward the latter end and are obliged to supplement our supply by such cheese as we can buy at the store which is always, according to our liking inferior to that which we get from you.
>
> Wishing you continued prosperity and the choice blessings of the Lord in your Bishopric, I am,
>
> Gratefully yours,
>
> /s/ Joseph F. Smith

There are somewhat different statements reporting the death of Elizabeth and her infant daughter, Lydia. As noted above, Agnes Kunz Dansie, her oldest child who was just short of ten years of age at the time of her mother's death writes: "... the baby Lydia died soon after birth, and was buried with Mother (who died in childbi11h) in the same casket on the 13 May, 1900 in the Bern, Idaho Cemetery." Thus, Agnes believed that the baby was born live but then died within a very short time. This statement is supported by a letter from John Boss to his daughter, and later translated for Agnes and one of her sisters, by Elizabeth's sister, Emma Boss Schoenfeld.

On the other hand, the journal of John U. Stucki, a native of Switzerland, joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, immigrated to Paris, Idaho. He returned to Switzerland as Mission President two different times, and was a stake leader in the Bear Lake Stake. He eventually served as the Stake Patriarch

different times, and was a stake leader in the Bear Lake Stake. He eventually served as the Stake Patriarch. He kept a very interesting journal over the years, including the following:

> 1900 Journal
> Monday-May 14
> This morning Bro. Bienz returned from Bern he brought the sad news of the death of Lizzie [Elizabeth] Boss Kunz, wife of Bp. John Kunz [III], it seems she was ailing for some time & gave birth to a still born child. Worked at the Office all day.
> Tuesday-May 15
> My wife Margaret & I went to Bern to attend the funeral of Sister Lizzie Boss Kunz, Meeting was held at 2 P.M. Jacob Straubhaas, David Kunz [brother of John who went to Switzerland as a missionary at the same time as John, but returned a little before John], & myself being the speakers. By request I also dedicated the Grave. At the Cemetery in conversation Bp. John Kunz told me that Dr. Hoover offered to deliver wife some time ago she having been sickly for some time, however the Bp. thought it was against nature. The Dr. was present when Sister Kunz died and said, she would have stood a better chance a month ago. I replied that I thought her work was finished and it would not have made a difference. This brought to his mind a vision he had in Berlin while on his Mission in 1885. [John Kunz III spent most of his mission in Switzerland, but the latter part he served in Germany - mostly in the Berlin area.] He had baptized his wife Lizzie [Elizabeth Boss] and another Sister of hers, Emma Boss, in Canton Bern and soon after he was sent to Germany. In the vision it was shown him that he would marry Lizzie, then he saw a number of very nice children around him, she being the Mother. After that he saw her running away with a new born baby in her Arms in her night clothing and after that he saw Amasa Rich pass by riding a dark colored horse. He had not thought any more about this vision until after his wife died. He thought her running away meant that she was running away because of persecution, but there she lay dead, her new born baby in her arms, and as stepped out of doors, there he saw Amasa Rich riding past on the very horse he saw in his Vision. This seemed to be a great comfort to him as he realized that it was according to the Will of God that his wife should die. [John U. Stucki Journal]

A letter, which Agnes apparently had, but for which the whereabouts are not now known, was written in German by John Kunz III probably to Johannes Boss September 2, 1900, in regards to Mother's [Elizabeth Boss] trouble at the time of her death. Emma Schoenfeld interpreted it to Agnes and Hazel February 11, 1954 in Orem, Utah. Hazel wrote of this translation:

> She (Mother) was to have her baby in May. About February she started to hemorrhage a few days at a time, and then quit a few days. The doctor advised to take the baby then, but Mother wouldn't consent. So she kept on in this condition until labor started. Father got the best doctor he knew of. They had the baby. It came feet first and lived only about five minutes. Mother seemed to be coming along alright at first and started to whisper to them but being very weak. It appeared she might be alright but soon took a sinking spell and started to hemorrhage so badly, before the doctor could do anything. He having stepped to a neighbor for a call. She died about 2 hours later. The doctor said he had only lost 3 or 4 cases like her in all his practice of 2000 cases. Father felt they had done their best. He wrote in the letter what a wonderful wife and mother she had been to him and her children. [Hazel Kunz Smith]



The other five children were strong and healthy as Elizabeth was able to nurse them all. John Kunz III asked Aunt Louise [Louise Weibel, his 4th wife] to take care of them. She had no children of her own. The children all attest to her wonderful care and concern for them throughout her life. At the time Louise Weibel Kunz began to take care of these five children Agnes was almost 10 year old, Julia was 7, Parley was 6, Hazel was 4 and Lucy was 2 years old.

Continuing with the history Aunt Agnes wrote about her mother, Elizabeth Boss:

> The general health of mother was good, her eyes were brown her hair was auburn (dark) her height five foot one inch, her weight was 125 lbs. and her chest measured 36 inches. She lived with Uncle William Kunz and family, when she first came here. Later she was married to my Father, John Kunz [III], who was a brother to William. They were married the 19 Dec. 1888, in the Logan LDS Temple in plural marriage. She was especially interested in rearing her family, and in the gospel, for which she gave up her home and loved ones in Switzerland. She was the mother of six children, Agnes Ruth, Julia Esther, Parley Peter, Hedwig Hazel, Lucy May and Lydia, the baby Lydia died soon after birth, and was buried with Mother (who died in childbirth) in the same casket on the 15th of May, 1900 in the Bern, Idaho Cemetery. Previous to her death in May, 1899 she was sealed to her parents along with her brothers and sisters [in the] Salt Lake Temple. Her father Johannes Boss was born 2 Nov. 1831. He died 15 Mar. 1912 at Midway