

KUNZ
A brief history of Bern, Bear Lake Co. Idaho, and of some of our Ancestors leaving Switzerland. Their coming to the United States and the reasons for their coming.

We will begin with John Kunz I, who was born in Zwyschenfluh, Bern, Canton Switzerland, on Sept. 11, 1803. He died on Feb. 17, 1871 of dropsy and was buried at Zwyschenfluh, Swtz.

The main reason those people came to America, was because of their hearing the Gospel of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Soon after Christ restored His Gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, in 1830, it began to grow rapidly. The people investigated it and prayed about it unto the Lord, and they received a testimony in their hearts of its truthfulness, and would not, if they were honest, deny it.

In 1862, after meeting the Elders of the Church in Thun, Switz., and asking them to give Brother John Kunz' daughter (a hopeless invalid whom the Doctors were unable to help) a blessing, which they did, she was healed completely. They were taught the Gospel by the missionaries, and John Kunz I and his wife, Rosina Klossner were baptized. Soon a branch of the Church was organized, and because of persecution, it wasn't long before they had the urge to emigrate to America, to be near the headquarters of the Church. John Kunz II and his wife Rosina Knutti had a large family of ten children, and John Kunz III who married Magdalene Straubaar had three children. It was hard to make a living, and this, plus the hatred of the so-called Christian Churches, helped influence them to leave their homeland. They emigrated to America on the ship Manhattan. By August, 1870, the parents and unmarried children reached Salt Lake City, Utah, except for Rosina, wife of John Kunz II.

Pres. Brigham Young asked the Kunz family to move to Bear Lake Valley for the specific pupose of making cheese. This family was skilled in this trade in Switzerland. They accepted this call, stopping in Logan, Utah for a short time, to assist the farmers there in the threshing of their grain. This provided the Kunz family with the flour which they needed. They then moved on to the Bear Lake Valley and settled the community of Bern, on the west side of the valley, there building the first house and starting the making of cheese.

In 1873 John Kunz III, after fulfilling his duty as a member of the Swiss army, and having finished his training, along with his wife, three children, remaining sister and 71 year old grandmother (who had recently buried her husband in 1871) emigrated to Idaho. They, of course, came to

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Bern, Idaho, to the home of his parents and brothers and sisters. He lived there until his death in 1918 at the age of 72 years.

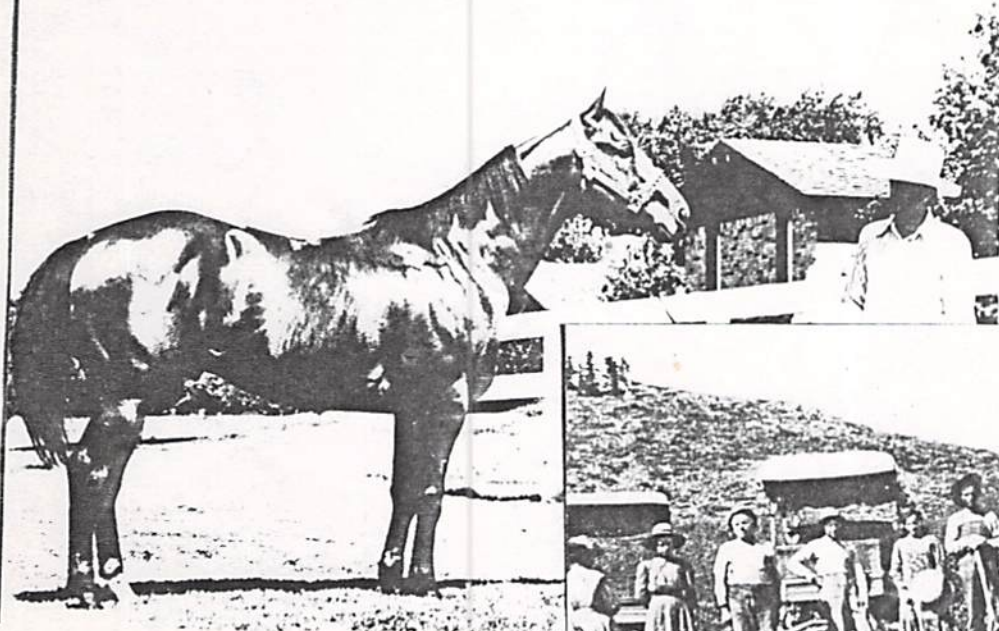
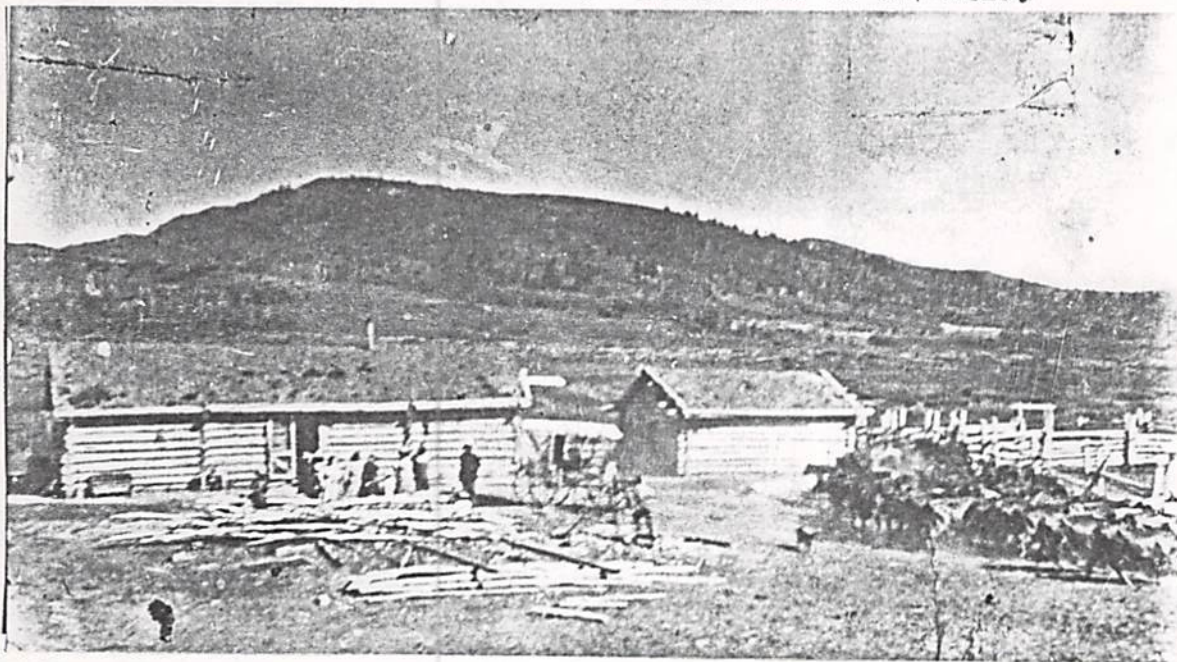
As other Swiss enigrants came, they also settled in Bern with their families, and began working the soil and planting crops. They raised livestock and milked cows, and many worked in different occupations to help make a living. Some of the occupations were cutting log props for mining in Wyoming, building roads for the State of Idaho, opening up new areas, raising hay, mining, sheep raising and sheep herding. Some worked for the railroad, and as time went on, it was possible to get a better education. They began to branch off into many fields, and as of today, there is no occupation that some of the descendants of the early pioneers of Bern are not engaged in. Examples of these are Education, medicine, law, engineering, politics, Army, Navy, Air Force, Atomic Engineering, Railroading, Ranching, Farming and church service.

Soon after they arrived a school house was built about a mile and a half below where it now stands. Later on that building was moved to the location where the present church house now stands. Church was held there and social activities such as dancing were also held in that building. The school then was held in a brick building, directly behind the present school house, which was later torn down. The school, built in 1921, is now being used as the Bern Museum, Civil Defense Storage Depot, and other uses.

Among the Swiss settlers and some others were the Allemans, Buhlers, Bienz, Debachs, Bishoffs, Barfuss, Eschlers, Schmids, Youngs and others. Very seldom were there more than 150 people living there at one time. At present (1980) there 160 local residents. They are, without exception, hard working, honest, God-fearing people, who have made the community a good place to rear children with high ideals and ambitions.

Plans at present are to finish the beautification of the Bern Cemetary at a cost of about \$18,000 during early part of 1980. Visitors are always welcome and should see the 12' high monument in the southern part of Bern, directly above where the first house in Bern was built. This is where John Kunz II and his wife Rosina Knutti lived. The original house is still standing but has been remodeled. Visitors should also see the Museum which was started in 1979. It has much of interest about early activities of Bern people and their occupations, and has gifts, histories and pictures from Switzerland.

Bern also boasts to most modern and largest horse ranch in the West, with some of the top stallions in the world. Visitors are always welcome to Viking Ranch Inc. The Church and Post Office are a part of Bern. Also after August, 1980, visitors can visit the completed Cemetery. Inquire anywhere in Bern for information, help or direction, or phone nearly anyone in Bern, listed in Montpelier, Idaho's directory. The phone of George Kunz is 847-0837, and the phone of Bishop Leland Kunz is 847-1216.





SCENES AT BERN IDAHO
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 JOHN KUNZ II JOHN KUNZ III