St. Mary's Church of the Purification in Marystown, Minnesota, United States, is a stone church building completed in 1882. The spire was finished in 1883. The Lenzmeier family spoke German at this church.

And Elizabeth? She was happy. And one smart woman!

The Lenzmeier House from the Souvenir of the First Reunion of the Lenzmeier Families, Shakopee, Minnesota, June 19, 1983.
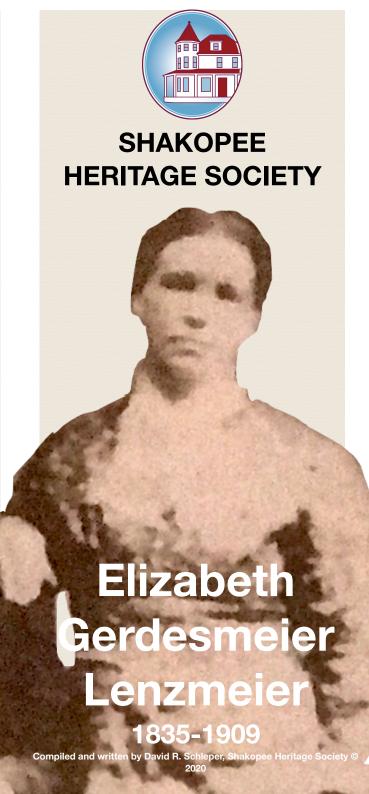

Elizabeth Gerdesmeier Lenzmeier died on January 21, 1909 at age 74.

SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY

Elizabeth Gerdesmeier Lenzmeier

1835-1909

A contingent of peasant farmers from Germany left for the new world, including the Lenz and Gerdesmeier families around 1848. When they arrived in America, the authorities asked their name and occupation, and decided to combine their name (Lenz) with their occupation (dairy farmer) to become Lenzmeier.

Mary Theresa Elizabeth Gerdesmeier (called Elizabeth) was born on April 9, 1835. Elizabeth married Stephan Lenzmeier either in Germany or in East St. Louis, Illinois. In 1860, Elizabeth and Stephan came by steamboat to St. Paul, where they traveled to Scott County and to Marystown.

Twenty-five year old Elizabeth, who was either pregnant or carrying a newborn infant along the trip, arrived and the registered their homestead in Shakopee. The family, like others in Marystown, spoke German. The church in Marystown had services in German, and then later in German and English. The parish built a school very early, with German as the official language, with English as a second language.

Stephan settled the homestead and brought in crops and did fairly well, with

Elizabeth every inch the heroic pioneer woman, keeping people fed and clothed while rearing a big family, including 8 boys and finally a baby daughter, Mary, in 1878.

Stephan either went west to Idaho where silver and gold had been discovered, or out to South Dakota under General George Custer to look for gold in the Black Hills. Stephan was 53 years old, while Elizabeth was 38, and stuck at home with the children. Stephan was hoping to get rich quick, but he didn't succeed. He reportedly fell ill away from home and had difficulty getting back. He did return, but his health was broken, and he died at 57 of heart failure, just two months after the birth of baby Mary.

It was said that his widow, Elizabeth, was very bitter about his death, blaming him for bringing on his own demise and leaving her to raise their large brood and run the farm, even with an infant at her breast. She reportedly held up the child before his open casket and cried something to the effect of "Here, take her with you, why don't you! How can you leave me here alone with all this responsibility and this little one, too?"

Now Elizabeth surveyed her situation. She was a widow at age 43 with assets of a good farm, eight sons, and an infant daughter. Life must go on. Elizabeth learned of a good family in Shakopee who had some marriageable daughters. She made an inevitable logical decision. One Sunday morning, she hitched up a team to the buggy and drove the five miles to the Hubert Roehl farm just West of the town of Shakopee, along the road leading to Jordan.

Hubert Roehl was an immigrant from Luxembourg, and owned a long piece of land parallel to the Minnesota River. He also owned an overabundance of daughters!

Elizabeth told Hubert about her big, handsome boys, and suggested that they had a basis for an arrangement. Elizabeth was one smart woman!

And so it was arranged that her sons would marry Roehl's girls. And four of them did! The four brothers who married Roehl's sisters received pieces of good land from their father-in-law's original claim along the Minnesota River.