

13 Stories III
Story Options 2022

Option #13: Josie Kensler

Born in Utah in 1872, Joan "Josie" Lawrence attended school for only five years. Her family moved to Malad, Idaho in 1886, at age fourteen, she married John Kensler, 38 (twenty-four years her senior). Josie and John had two children together while living in King Hill (near Glenns Ferry, Idaho). Josie developed a reputation for having extramarital affairs while married to John Kensler. She began seeing a man named Albert Freel, a hired hand on the Kensler farm. The two lovers murdered John Kensler together. Pregnant at the time of her arrest, Josie, now twenty-five, gave birth to a child while at the Idaho State Penitentiary. Her sister-in-law assumed responsibility for the child. In 1902, she claimed a guard (unnamed) impregnated her, and that Warden C.E. Arney and prison physician Dr. J.K. Dubois forced her to receive an abortion. Due to lack of sufficient evidence of the pregnancy, authorities ultimately dismissed the case. Released on December 1, 1909, Josie married Andrew Ketchum in 1911, but soon ran away with William H. Thomas, a former fellow Idaho State Penitentiary prisoner. Josie and William moved to Bozeman, Montana in 1933, and she died in 1938.

