This History was copied from the Aagard & Jensen History compiled by decendants of Niels's brother, Anders Jensen Aagard

NIELS JENSEN AAGARD

Niels Jensen Aagard was born in Farre, Jutland County, Denmark on 15 January 1835 to Maren Andersen and Jens Pedersen Aagard.

It was difficult to identify families, as many had the same name. For this reason the family added the identifying name of Aagard. "AA" in Danish means stream, and "Gard" means tract of land, thus "Aagard" mean river farm.

When Niels was twenty he was required to serve in the military. For three years he served as one of the king's lifeguards. Six lifeguards were required to guard the king as he rode in his chariot. They wore elaborate uniforms and rode horseback, three on each side of the chariot. It was during this period of military service that his sweetheart died.

Niels Jensen Aagard as a young man in Denmark

When Niels returned home from the King's service in 1858 he embraced the Gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through the missionary work of Erastus Snow who was laboring as a missionary in Denmark at that time. Niels was baptized 7 January 1858. His sister, Ellen Kjerstene, also joined the Church.

The two left Denmark with a group of converts to sail to the United States and to Zion in 1859. It took them five days to cross the North Sea to Liverpool, England. This was a most uncomfortable voyage. The ship was crowded and they had to use boxes to sit on, and their beds were made on the floor.

Niels and his sister traveled across the Atlantic to the Port of New York on the sailing vessel, "Tappscott". They were in the Nielsen Company with Gould in command. The five week voyage was described as "most uncomfortable". The emigrants accommodations below deck were very poor. The group arrived in New York in May 1859. Sixteen couples were married at this time, some to people they had never seen prior to boarding the ship for the long journey.

Not much time was spent in New York. They quickly arranged to board a train for Chicago, arriving there near midnight. They were in a hurry to leave Chicago for fear of being mobbed as

Illinois was the state where the Prophet Joseph Smith had been murdered. Their first stop was Iowa City, and then on to Winter Quarters in Nebraska. This was where the train ride ended and the place where arrangements had to be made for the remainder of the trip to Utah. The hard part of the trip was ahead of them.

The preparation for the trip across the plains took three weeks. Niels and his sister were fortunate as they could afford a wagon. Even so, they joined up with a handcart company.

Serena K. Sorensen the first wife of Niels

As they were travelling along, one handcart lagged behind from the start, and soon it was so far behind that the others feared for the safety of the people. It was decided that someone would have to go back and help the group. Niels volunteered. The handcart family was Mr. and Mrs. Larsen and a ten-year old boy. The husband was ill and his wife's hope was that he would reach the new land. A few days after rejoining the company Mr. Larsen died and was buried by the roadside. Before he passed away, he was assured that his wife and son would be taken care of as there was room in Niels's wagon for them and their belongings. This kindness was never forgotten. Mrs. Larsen never missed a Christmas in giving Niels a pair of long woolen stockings she had knitted. (That would have been 33 pairs.)

The trip from Winter Quarters to Salt Lake took thirteen weeks. Then Niels and Stena went to Moroni, in Sanpete County. They then sent for their parents and their brother and sisters. The following year in 1860, their parents and their brother Anders, 16, and their sister, Birthe, 19, made the journey to America.

Niels made frequent trips to Salt Lake City for supplies, and on one of those trips he met a young lady named Serina K. Sorensen. This friendship grew and they were married in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City 11 August 1866.

While living in Moroni, Niels would take trips on his horse and look over the country. One day he crossed over the mountains and saw a long stretch of level land, and as far as he could see it was one big beautiful, green valley. He absolutely loved what he saw. He did not return home that night and his folks were

quite worried. When he returned the next day his mother asked him where he had been and he answered, "I have been in paradise." He did not know then that this beautiful valley would someday be his home and would be called Levan.

Niels and Serina were called by the Church Authorities to go and help colonize Utah' Dixie. They settled in Washington, Kane County. At this time Dixie had been organized by Brigham Young to live the United Order. There they remained for seven years before they were honorably released due to Niels's failing health (chills and fever).

Boletta Marie Rasmussen, second wife and the mother of Neils's children.

In 1869 Niels and Serina moved to Levan, in Juab County. This town was directly west of Moroni, Sanpete County, but on the other side of the mountain. While in Levan, Niels was called to serve as a missionary. This was in 1876. He labored mostly in Nebraska and returned home in 1877.

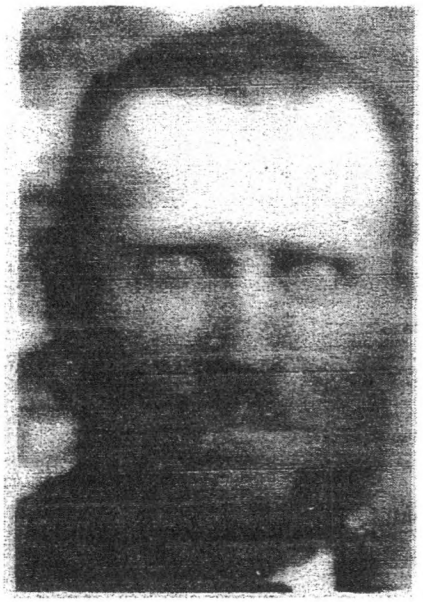
In July of 1877 the Nephi District was made into a stake and Niels was ordained and set apart as the first Bishop of Levan Ward. Samuel Pitchforth and Elmer Taylor, preceded him as Presiding Elders in the Levan Branch. Serina presided over the Relief Society and both she and her husband were working for the same cause, the building of a church. Prior to this time the church meetings were held in the Aagard home.

The first settlers had to live in dugouts until they could be replaced with cabins. Niels started out with a two room adobe house, which later grew to be a two story brick home.

Serina was never blessed with children. After 17 childless years her husband was urged to take a second wife. This had to be with the consent of his first wife. Serina, knowing that she wouldn't have children, and feeling that every man should be a father, consented to the second marriage. The first two children of the second marriage were to go to Serina.

Niels began meeting the new Danish emigrant trains in Salt Lake City. In October of 1877 Niels became acquainted with a 22 year old Danish girl, Boletta Marie Rasmussen who had traveled to America with her mother, Dorthea Rasmussen. They traveled by train from Salt Lake City to Nephi. Niels was also on the train and went through each of the cars seeing who was there. He stopped to talk to Elder Brown and Steve Christensen of Levan who were sitting talking to Boletta. Niels said jokingly to Steve,

"Well how are you coming with the girl, Steve?" Evidently Boletta had a boy friend waiting for her.



Niels Jensen Aagard.
Bishop of Levan, Utah

Boletta and her mother knew no one in Utah, so Elder Brown took them to his home in Nephi to spend the night. The next day he had his son drive them to Levan for the Bishop to take care of. They stayed with Niels for a short time until he could rent a small home for them in the northeast part of town.

Niels began seeing Boletta regularly and after two months of friendship, they were married on 29 December 1877. Five children were born of this marriage. The first child died in infancy. Before the last child was born the Edmund's Act of 1882 was passed which prohibited a man from having more than one wife.

Niels would not make a choice between his wives, so Boletta took her youngest child, James and went to Mendon, Cache County, Utah to await the birth of another baby. The two other children, Mary and Niels made their home with Serina. Two years passed and Boletta still could not return unless Niels paid the penalty. He decided to pay the $50 cash and the 50 days in jail.

The U. S. Marshall was very lenient with Niels as they were good friends. He promised Niels that he would not have to wear the striped clothes of the prisoners nor have his head shaved, as was required of the other men.

Serina did want her husband to have children, but when he would see him show any affection to Boletta, it was more difficult to cope with than she had anticipated. Her jealousy made Boletta's life almost unbearable. She had very little to live on after Niel's death as all of his estate went to Serina. But she did her best to provide for her family and raise them to be honorable men and women.

Niels served his prison term. He arrived home from prison on 11 May 1889. It was 9 o'clock at night when he arrived at Levan. He was met at the north entrance of town by the people of Levan and also by the town orchestra. They all then went to his home for refreshments.

Niels was stricken with pneumonia on 4 February 1892 and died. In his obituary, because his second wife and family were

not "legally' recognized by the government, it listed as his wife, Serina, as his survivor. He was really survived by his two wives, Serina and Boletta, and by four children, Mary, Niels, James and Sonnie, all of Levan. Niels was buried in the Levan Cemetery.

It was very difficult for Serina. She couldn't have children, and she was to share her husband with his second wife. She was very jealous.

Boletta had a hard life and endured many trials. Serina made her life miserable. She died 2 February 1910 at Levan, Utah.

Children of Niels and Boletta Aagard: Olie Sonnie, Mary, Niels, Boletta, and James.