Niels Jensen Aagard

This story of the life of Niels Jensen Aagard was gathered mostly from the memos left by his daughter Mary Anderson and by his first wife, Sorena K. S. Aagard, and from church records located by Earl Taylor, a great grandson, when he did a research paper at B.Y.U. and was compiled and edited by Dora Aagard Butterfield.

Niels Jensen Aagard was born on January 15, 1835 in Farre, Jutland Co., Denmark to Jens Peterson Aagard, a farmer, and his wife Maren Anderson. He was one of five children born to these parents, only three of whom lived to maturity. His father owned land near a river as evidence by the name "aagard". The family name had been Jensen but this led to a great deal of confusion because of the many people in the area with this same name. To keep the different families distinguished they, at times, added a name based on their surroundings. "AA" in Danish means stream, and "Gard" means tract of land, thus "Aagard" means river farm.

Agriculture at that time in Denmark was almost evenly divided between the production of grains, primarily rye, and the keeping of dairy cattle. Typical hours of work were from 6 am to 6 pm with a 2-hour rest in the middle of the day. If farm labor was hired, the typical wages for a male servant on a farm was $30 a year and $18.00 for a female servant. In addition to this they received free board and room.

When Niels was twenty Denmark had mandatory conscription for its military. This required a term of service of three years. Niels was mustered into the King's service as a soldier and served as a lifeguard to the king. Six lifeguards were required to guard the kind as he rode in his chariot. They wore elaborate uniforms and rode horseback, three on each side of the king's chariot. While Niels was away in this service his sweetheart died.

On Niel's return home he embraced the Gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through the missionary work of Erastus Snow who was laboring in Denmark at that time. Niels was baptized January 7, 1858. His sister, Kjistrine also joined the church and in 1859 they left their native country with a group of converts to Mormonism to sail to the United States and to Zion. 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 traveled across the Atlantic to the Port of New York on the sailing vessel, "Tappscott". He was in Neil's company with Gould in command. The boat had both Scandinavian and English converts who were on their way to Utah. The trip across the Atlantic took five weeks and was described as "most uncomfortable". The emigrant's accommodations were below deck and 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 this long voyage.

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