Jens Pedersen Aagard

(This story is written by me, Peggy Knighton, July 2006. The information is taken from several different documents. I have made a great effort to be as accurate as I can from the information that I have gathered. It is written in first person to be presented at our Haynie Family Reunion, July 9, 2006.)

I was born in 1791 – over 200 years ago in Denmark.

The name Aagard was added to our family name because there were so many different people with the same name. So we had an "identifier" name added. Aagard means river farm. Our land was near the river.

When I was a young man, I spent three years in the Danish Army, serving in Napoleon's Army because Denmark had an alliance with France. I had to be away from my family for three years. In those days communication was limited, so my family did not hear from me at all during that time. They feared that I might be dead. They were very happy to see me trudge up to my home one day. I used to sing old Napoleonic war songs to my young children.

My first wife, whom I married at the age of 28, was named Kirsten. After three years, my dear wife died.

So I married a second time to a young girl whose name was Birthe. We had three children. A few months after the birth of our third child, my wife, Birthe died.

Two years later, I married a third time, to Edel Jensen. Tragedy struck again. She gave birth to a dear little boy who only lived one day, then she herself died six days later.

Later that year, I found a lovely woman, 17 years younger than I. Her name was Maren. We had six children. The first two did not live to maturity.

Maren and I joined the church in 1858 when I was 67 years old. We wanted to go to American to Utah to join the Saints there. So we made preparations by selling our property and belongings. I gave the money to the Perpetual Immigration Fund of the Church. Our two oldest living children, Niels and Ellen left for American in 1859 to determine if I would be able to undertake such a journey. But I would not be left behind. So the following year Maren and I and our two youngest children make the voyage.

We sailed from Denmark to Liverpool, England. On May 11, 1860 we set sail for America. The voyage was stormy and unpleasant. Small pox broke out among us Scandinavian Saints. The passage took 35 days. During that time, there were ten deaths, four births, and nine marriages. When we arrived in New York harbor, we were quarantined for five days on the ship. It was a long time for all of us to be on that ship.

From New York we traveled through Niagara Falls, Canada, Chicago, Missouri and finally to Florence, Nebraska where we joined the Captain Stoddard Company. We were in that last handcart company to cross the plains. But we were privileged to have one of the six wagons among the 22 handcarts. Our son Andrew was 16 and Birthe was 19.

I was told that window glass was badly needed for the building of the new houses. So I brought some all the way from Denmark. I loaded my wagon with as many panes of glass as possible. The leader of the company thought that my wagon was too heavy and told me to unload it. But I refused. The next morning my oxen were missing and the company went on ahead without us. Well, I found the oxen and took a shortcut and arrived at the camp site before the rest of the company.

Brigham Young sent all of us Scandinavian Saints to Sanpete County. We settled in Moroni.

One day the Elders of the Church came and told me I had the nicest pony in town and that they thought the Bishop should have it, so they came to get it. I replied, "Oh that pony belongs to Andrew, my son. I gave it to him and he has raised it and uses it to herd the cows. He is out in the field working and you can't take it without his permission. You can take the pick of all the other horses in the corral.

The men walked down to the corral and let down the poles. I stood in front of the gate protesting to them. But they just pushed me aside. I was unsteady on my feet at that age, and so I fell down. They did not even stop to help me. I was so insulted. Well, they didn't take Andrew's pony. But I was still upset. I found it difficult to attend church there in Moroni. But I always knew it was true.

We then moved to Fountain Green and were among the early settlers there. We did have a lot of trouble with the Indians, so we had to built a fort there and all move into it. I was about 75 years old by then.

At the age of 83, I passed from this mortal life while living in Fountain Green. That is where by body was laid to rest, along side my dear wife, Maren.