NIELS AAGARD
1861-62 EARLY PIONEER SETTLER OF WASHINGTON CITY WASHINGTON UTAH

THE MIGRATION OF 1861

The promise of new blood to bolster up the discouraged settlers came none too soon. After several years of colonizing there were in 1861 79 families located south of the rim of the Great Basin of which 20 were at Washington. There had been about 50 there during the spring and summer of 1857, but many had gone elsewhere for reasons readily understood. Others came to take their places, but those leaving greatly outnumbered those who came to stay. Wandle Mace, who came to Washinhgton when the colonists of 1861 arrived, says they found the discouraged settlers about to desert the place. Floods had again torn out their dam and they were too few in number to replace it. But the arrival of the new settlers gave the old ones fresh courage, and the dreary task of dam-building was taken up again.

But it would be a mistake to assume that all the settlers at Washington had lost heart. But in spite of the optimism of the few who still had faith, it is probably no departure from truth to assume that had it not been for the new arrivals in the winter of 1861-1862 and the needed strength they gave to Washington, the settlement would have been abandoned. Washington drew confidence too from the establishment of St. George and the addition of new settlers at Santa Clara and towns up the river.

Records of those who arrived are incomplete. Among those who came were a number of Scandinavian Saints who had first located in Sanpete County. The were organized for the move south by Apostle Orson Hyde who acted under the instruction of President Brigham Young, who under date of October 13th, 1861, told Hyde to raise from 30 to 50 families for the Southern Mission. Among those who came in 1861-1862 were the families of James W. Wilkins, Wandle Mace, Thomas Blazzard, George Pector, Niels Sorensen, Robert F. Goold, Henry Harriman, Jacob Bastian, John M. Chidester, John P. Chidester, **Niels Aagard**, Washington L. Jolley, Jeppe Iverson, Han Peter Iverson, Peter Nielson, George W.C. Averett, Elisha Averett, Elijah Averett, Andrew Larson, Francis Boggs, George Prince, Richard Prince, Joseph L. Heywood, and others.

THE "FORTY DAYS AND NIGHT"

They arrived after winter had set in. Shortly after most of them had reached their new location, the great storm set in, making life very miserable for those who had no shelter but the wagons they came in. All during the month of January the rain fell incessantly. February came and still more rain. In later years the early settlers of Washington, undoubtedly linking this downpour with biblical events of Noah's day, always referred to this deluges as "the forty days and nights of rain."

The Virgin carried a huge flood, the cumulative outpouring of every creek and wash draining into the stream. Grafton, some thirty-five miles up the river was destroyed; Virgin City suffered heavy losses; the Fort at Santa Clara, housing most of the people there, was washed away by the swollen waters of the Santa Clara

Creek. Washington stood on ground not generally subject to floods and so escaped its worst ravages, but John D. Lee's combination lumber and gristmill on Mill Creek was washed away.

They paid a high price to come this land. Malaria was rampant, killing many and making others almost useless to perform manual work. Dysentery and typhoid fever were common, and more of the babies and youngsters died than survived. "Ague" was the name used to cover many an illness. Food was scarce; they called it "the starving times." Workers were malnourished and could hardly work a full day. In the midst of all this, men and boys dug ditches and canals. Niel's struggled for seven years but his health got the best of him, he was released and returned to Levan, Utah, most likely in 1868.

*Information taken from "The Red Hills of November" A Pioneer Biography of Utah's Cotton Town by Andrew Karl Larson