

# Niels and Johanne's Story

*by Lana Archibald, April 2010*

In 1863 when our Danish ancestors came to Utah with the Mormon pioneers, our gg grandmother Maren Larsen came here with her elderly father, and two brothers. Maren and her brothers Niels and Jorgen were all in their late 20s.

After they got to Utah, nothing much was known about Niels or what happened to him for about 140 years. Then this spring (February 2010), I got an email from a man in Denmark named Ole Larsen. Ole had seen my webpage with histories of our family on. He said he was the descendant of Niels, and told me that Niels had a wife Johanne and children in Denmark before he left. They joined the LDS Church and planned to emigrate on a large sailing ship. But the year before they left, two of their little children died of illnesses and were buried in Denmark. They had just one little girl left, and Johanne was in the early months of another pregnancy. When they got to Copenhagen to board the large ship, Johanne couldn't do it. We don't know if she was worried about going across the ocean, or had morning sickness and couldn't bear the thought of being on a swaying ship for weeks, or if she couldn't bear to leave the graves of her two children. Maybe it was a combination of all three reasons. For whatever reason, she decided she just could not go. But Niels had sold his farm. They had already spent most of the money for their tickets. They decided Niels would go on to America without them, and prepare a place -- then after the baby was born, Johanne and the two children would try to come join him.

But it never happened. They never saw each other again. Niels and Johanne wrote letters back and forth for several years, then suddenly, Niels got a bowel infection and died in Brigham City, Utah. Johanne stayed in Denmark. And since there were no descendants in Utah, no one followed through on the genealogy. Johanne and the children were forgotten about. Niels was never sealed to his family.

Ole Larsen, in his email, helped me to track down the pieces of information we needed to complete this family. We found their birth and death dates, and the names of all the children. Then I told Ole I wanted to "seal" the family together. Ole Larsen is not a member of the LDS Church. He only speaks broken English. He wrote back by email: "What is this sealing? What does that mean?"

I responded by telling him about temples and the priesthood power that was restored to the earth so families could be sealed or united together beyond the grave. I also told him that I was sure Johanne and Niels would be very glad to finally be sealed to each other after all these years. Ole wrote back, "I approve what you plan to do [sealing Niels to Johanne and the kids]."

In March 2010 we had the temple work done and sealed the family together.

I'm sure Niels and Johanne are smiling.

**Postnote:** In December 1867, four years after Niels went to America, his wife Johanne gave birth to another son whom she named Niels Peter Larsen. His father was a man named Soren Larsen. There is also a record of a Niels Larsen married to a Margaret Grumstrup from Brigham City in June 1867. Three years later, in April 1870, Niels died in America. We cannot judge them from these events. It must have been very difficult being separated, not only for Niels trying to make a new home in a strange land, but for Johanne trying to support herself and two children alone. They were difficult times in both Denmark and the frontier of Utah.