

Letter to Uriah Nielson from Jens Nielson  
Contributed By

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Leslie Nielson<sup>1</sup>

This letter was received by Uriah Nielson, son of Jens Nielson while serving on a mission in the Southern States.

Original letter in possession of Jean Nielson Bayles.

Bluff, March 20, 1901

Mr. Uriah Nielson

Dear Son,

I received your letter about a week ago, was pleased to hear from you and to learn you are well and enjoying your labors. To give a full history of my life will take longer time than I can express in a short letter.

I was born April 26, 1820, on the Island of Loland Denmark, son of Neils Jensen and Dorothea M. Tomson. I was married to Elsie Rasmussen when I was 30 years old. Soon after that I bought 5 acres of land that cost \$6.00 and built a house that cost about \$400.00. I had very little money to start with but the Lord blessed me on my right hand and on my left and I was very successful. Prospects in temporal concern was very bright. I was looked on as a respectable neighbor and many times invited to the higher class of society.

In the fall of 1852 two Mormon Elders came into our neighborhood. I knew nothing of the Mormons except very bad reports. They had the privilege of holding a meeting close to my home. I thought I would go there for curiosity sake. As soon as I saw those men' faces I knew they were not the men as represented to be and I told my friends so before I heard them speak. Before the meeting was out I knew the testimony they bore was of God. We bought some few of their tracts and studied them for a few weeks and was perfectly satisfied the work was of God. On the 29th of March 1854 I and my wife went into the water of baptism. From that time on all my former friends turned against me and spoke all kind of evil against me and that falsely. All my possessions had no power over me then, my only desire was to sell out and come to Zion. That summer I partly made a bargain with a man for my home, but before the bargain was closed the president of the conference paid me a visit and told me I had not done my duty, told me I had been warned and it was my duty to warn others. That council came right in contact with my natural feelings, but the spirit whispered to me I must obey, for

obedience is better than sacrifice. Then I was ordained a Priest and sent out to preach with another young man holding the same priesthood. We baptized some 12 or 15 persons but we did not have the power to confirm the Holy Ghost. Soon after that I was ordained an Elder and called to preside over the Branch where I lived. I was very successful in my mission, after which I received an honorable release to go to Zion.

I sold my place, got money, payed all my obligation, had money enough to come to Utah, but we were counseled to let all the money go we could spare and to cross the plains with the hand carts. When I came to Copenhagen I payed my first tithing and I hold the receipt for the \$60. to this day. We left Copenhagen the 3rd day of May 1856 and six weeks after we landed in New York. Then we came to the city of Iowa, that is as far as the railroad was built. It was 1300 miles to Salt Lake City from where we started our journey with the hand carts.

The hand carts and other things were not ready for our journey so we had to lay over here for five weeks, one reason we came to Salt Lake City so late. Iowa to Council Bluffs was 300 miles and very few settlers in the country in those days. At Council Bluff we lay in our supplies for a 1000 mile trip to Salt Lake City. Calculated 1 pound of flour for grown people and 1/2 pound for children per day for 70 days. Instead of that it took us 90 days to make the trip. Owing to that the Captain had to cut down our flour to 1/2 pound a day till there was not a pound of flour in camp. This caused a terrible starvation in camp. When we started from Iowa there was 20 people to each tent, 5 men and the rest women and children to make it up to that number and I was the Captain of a tent. When we came to Laramie we had the first snow storm about 500 miles from Salt Lake City. From that time the people began to die very fast. We traveled about 200 miles further, pulled the hand carts through the snow, sometimes two feet deep. Then the Captain told us there was not a pound of flour in camp. The Captain said he would saddle his mule and ride night and day till he found a team with flour, for we understood there was teams on the road to meet us with flour. Next night the flour came to camp and there was great rejoicing. We could get very little because they had to pass on to another hand cart company three weeks behind us. So we had to start our journey again, but before we did we had to bury 14 bodies of our number and my only son was among them, and a girl I had along for Bro. Mortensen who lived in Parowan. I told you there was 5 men to the tent and now the four was dead and I was the only man left, so I had to ask some of the largest and strongest women to help me to raise the tent and it looked like we should all die. I remember my prayers as distinctly today as I did then, if he would let me live to come to Salt Lake City that all my days should be spent in usefulness under the direction of his Holy Priesthood. How far I have come short

of this promise I do not know but I have been called to make 6 new homes and as far as this goes I have fulfilled my promise.

Speaking of the hardships of the hand cart company, no person can describe nor could it be comprehended nor understood by any human living in the life but only those who were called to pass through it. It would not have been so terrible had they started in good season. I have already told you we layed 5 weeks at Iowa, one week at Omaha. About 100 miles from there we lost 14 young oxen, hunted 5 days for them but did not find them, so we had to yoke our steers and heifers which were brought along, for beef, these were used to haul food, tents, and other things we could not get on the hand carts.

Then we had to put 100 pounds of flour on each hand cart and it made our journey very slow. About a week after the first team met us with flour another team met us and we were allowed a pound of flour a day after that. If the Saints in Zion had not given us a helping hand not one would have been able to reach Zion.

You have heard about Bro. Kimball prophesies that a bushel of flour would be worth a bushel of gold and I would say keep your gold and give me the flour for the gold would not sustain life. We come to Fort Bridger and teams came from Salt Lake City to meet us and here we left our handcarts. We came to Sal lake City on Sunday 9th day of November 1856. This is only a very short sketch of my life.

With Kind Regards,

Your Father Jens Nielson