

William H. Winn-Lehi's Seventh Mayor

By Richard Van Wagoner

William Henry Winn, born in Pennsylvania on June 10, 1833, arrived in Utah in 1855. In 1858, he, along with twenty-two other young Lehi lads were formed into a militia company by Captain Sidney Willes. The poorly clad men, most without overcoats, wore moccasins and generic brand underwear made from rough wagon-cover canvas. The group joined a two hundred-man force at Ogden and set out to rescue embattled Mormon colonists at Fort Limhi on the Salmon River in Idaho.

When Winn returned from his militia duty, he married Martha Evans, a daughter of Bishop David Evans. From 1867 until his 1884 death he served in the Lehi Ward bishopric as a counselor to both his father-in-law and Bishop Thomas Cutler.

Winn, along with his partner William Clark, was a pioneer Lehi sheepman. The two became wealthy grazing their wooly animals on the local hills and establishing shearing and lambing grounds in Tickville (north of Cedar Fort). In 1880, Winn built a beautiful two-story adobe home at 192 North Second West. At the age of fifty-one he died there of an appendicitis.

The Winn home, still-standing today, is one of the town's most captivating residences. An excellent example of pioneer artismanship, the place, with walls fifteen-inches thick, has many intriguing nooks and crannys. In the early 1970s the house was beautifully restored by Ferd and Lila Evans. Lila now the sole caretaker of this charming old Lehi dwelling, is proud of the role she and her husband played in preserving the Winn mansion.

During Mayor Winn's tenure, the town erected its first city hall. Lehi municipal affairs had previously been conducted at several different location including the log school, the Tithing Office, the upper room of the Meeting House, and the Southwest (Thurman) School. During the summer of 1871, the town began

erecting a small civic building on the north side of Main Street between First and Second West. The \$750 adobe structure was constructed by masons Abraham Enough and J. Wiley Norton and carpenters Thomas Ashton, Westley Molen, John McOmbie and John Stewart. The city council held its first meeting there on April 22, 1872.

The adobe city hall was a rather unpretentious building and city leaders quickly became dissatisfied with both its size and bumpkinish appearance. Just five years after completion of the edifice, builder Thomas Ashton was given permission by the city to prepare a cost estimate on a new building. He recommended a thirty-by-thirty-foot brick structure with basement which would cost \$1,928.

Mayor Winn and councilors Thomas Ashton and Ole Ellingson comprised the building committee which supervised masons Carl Carlson and John Andreason, carpenter Ashton, and plasterer Joseph Trinnaman. Begun in 1877 on Main Street just west of the present Lehi Bakery, the building was completed the following year. The adobe city hall, attached to the north end of the newer brick building was afterwards used as a jail.

Mayor Winn, elected in his position when he was thirty-six, was one of the town's youngest mayors. A progressive idealist, much of the town's bedrock ordinances were put on the books during his administration, including virtually all criminal law up to that point. An "Ordinance Providing for the Establishment and Support of Common Schools" allowed the creation of the Lehi School District which remained in effect until 1915 when it was absolved by the new Alpine School District.

Also entitled during the Winn's years was the establishment of business licenses as a way to control commercial activity as well as tax it. For example, a "dram and tippling shop keeper," a person who sells spirituous and fermented liquors was charged the highest rate of all. If you were a physician in 1872 Lehi would would pay a business license of \$20/year. But if you owned Savsy's Saloon, Mayor Winn and his council set your annual fee at \$400.

Other important ordinances under Winn's administration created the establishment of the present Lehi City Cemetery and defined the duties of the Sexton. On May 6, 1872, the city council passed two interesting ordinances. The first resolved the cellar under city hall be "known and hereafter used as the City Prison or jail," The position of "office of Jailor" was then created.

The offices of "Assessor and Collector," "Quarantine Board," and "Auditor of Public Accounts" created by Winn and his council, although necessary to the political structure of the nineteenth-century, are no longer city offices.

Several laws passed during Mayor Winn's tenure were intended to control loose livestock wandering about the streets. Not only were rogue animals dangerous, but their droppings could place a man's sole in jeopardy. Animal control statutes included: "An Ordinance in Relation to Joint Stock (E)nclosures," "An Ordinance Defining a Lawful Fence," and "An Ordinance Prohibiting Animals from Running at large and for other Purposes."

Other intriguing laws of this period were designed to prevent Sabbath breaking. Although not quite as restrictive as the Jewish Dacalogue, the "Ordinance in Relation to Public Games" declared that "any person or persons who are found pitching quoits, horseshoes, playing at ball, cards, marbles, jumping, wrestling, or any other public game, within the limits of this City, on the Sabbath day, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor." A supplementary "Ordinance in Relation to the Sabbath Day" also prohibited the sale of merchandise, "spirituous, malt, vinous, or any other intoxicating liquors," as well as meat or fish on Sunday.

Some of the laws of this period seem rather amusing when viewed retrospectively. One of my favorites was "an Ordinance in Relation to Sale and Distribution of Explosive Substances by Candle Light." Jay Leno would like that one. Moreover, a real tongue twister, "An Ordinance to amend an Ordinance Entitled an Ordinance to Amend an Ordinance Defining the Duties of Assessor," still leaves me perplexed.

If you were out of work in the 1870s Lehi, you could get into big trouble. An Ordinance in Relation to Vagrancy defined that "any person residing within the

limits of said City, who has no visible means of support shall be deemed a Vagrant and “compelled to labour on the public works a sufficient length of time to pay the costs of prosecution.”

If you were civic-minded you would also be compelled to work on the streets with the vagrants. The Winn administration, like municipalities everywhere else, passed a “City Poll Tax.” Simply stated, if a man wanted to vote he either had to work on the city streets for two days per year or he had to pay an equivalent \$3.00

The most absorbing controversy during Winn’s a term of duty was a dispute respecting how he and the other Lehi City officials were “unanimously” elected in 1873. The procedure, strikingly similar to the Mormon custom of sustaining leaders with an “uplifted hand” rather than by secret ballot, was first challenged by merchant James W. Taylor and others.

Taylor, president of the People’s Co-op was angered by the religious and civic control of Lehi maintained by the powerful David Evans clan which included Mayor Winn, the bishop’s counselor and son-in-law, and Alderman Israel Evans, the bishop’s son.

The Taylor faction’s challenge was heard by the Municipal Court which consisted of Mayor William E. Winn, Alderman Israel Evans and John Woodhouse (Israel Evans’s brother-in-law), and Recorder Joseph T. H. Colledge. To no one’s surprise the court ruled that “the new election had been held legally.” Lehi citizens anxious to see a separation of church and state in local politics would have to wait another twenty years for genuine bipartisanship to prevail.