

Andrew Rasmus Anderson-Lehi's Ninth Mayor

by Richard Van Wagoner

Andrew Rasmus Anderson, Lehi's eighth mayor, was the first of our chief executives not born in America. His birth place on March 9, 1844 was Viddum, Denmark. He didn't arrive in Utah until 1862 and he settled at first in Ephraim where many other Scandinavians were also living. On January 1, 1863, he married Mariane Pederson. On 21 November 1868, he became a U.S. Citizen.

In 1867, prominent Lehi citizen Canute Peterson was called to be Bishop of Ephraim. In 1870 Peterson sold his Lehi property to Andrew R. Anderson and he was soon living in the old Peterson home as well as farming thirty-five acres and maintaining fifteen acres of excellent pasturage near Utah Lake at the south end of Fifth West (Lake Road).

His son, Andrew B. Anderson, writing of his father said he was essentially a "100 per cent farmer." He was also a lover and breeder of good horses and a dairyman. And he found considerable success in his agronomy and husbandry pursuits.

Anderson's first local position of authority was a Lehi City policeman, to which he was appointed by Mayor William H. Winn in 1871. Two months later, when Alonzo D. Rhodes resigned, Anderson was appointed Lehi Marshal. He apparently did not like that position, however and he resigned five months later.

On March 7, 1871, when Lehi Ward's Deacon Quorum was organized, Andrew A. Peterson was listed as president of the then-adult organization. During October 1874, General Conference in Salt Lake City, Anderson was called as a missionary in his native Denmark. He reached his home on July 24, 1876.

In 1877 Anderson was called by bishop David Evans to serve in the Lehi Ward bishopric, a position he would hold for nearly twenty-seven years until the division of the Lehi Ward in 1904. In 1879 he was chosen mayor of Lehi, most likely because of his ecclesiastical position with the community.

During Mayor Anderson's administration the Lehi Irrigation Company was formed making that organization the legal entity for water distribution throughout the community. The Denver, Rio Grande, and Western Railway also brought their line through town during this period as well.

A census of Lehi was also required during Anderson's tenure. This was necessary in order to legally secure title for several tiers of property in the eastern section of town then situated on patented school lands. The population was shown to be 2,026.

After his retirement from his mayorship, Anderson continued to serve in the ward bishopric, as well as being on the board of directors of the Lehi Irrigation Company, the Utah Banking Company, and the People's Co-op.

Like many of his Mormon contemporaries, Andrew R. Anderson, father of fourteen children by two wives, lived in plural marriage. His son A.B. Anderson, left a detailed memory of what it was like to live in a polygamist home during the federal government raids of the late 1880s. "The outside door of the old home was always locked, Anderson wrote:

"The kitchen door opening to the north was always secured with a large hook and staple that when once fastened made the door perfectly secure. For months and at divers times during the day when one left the door someone on the inside secured the hook. This practice never failed. In the upstairs between the roof and the ceiling was a cavity dark as night. More than once this proved to be a successful hiding place (for father).

On a Sunday evening in October, 1888, marshals arrived on the farm where Anderson was doing his chores and served him with a warrant. On his court appearance he was given the maximum fine of three month imprisonment and a \$300. fine. On his release he moved his second family to Manassa, Colorado, a safe haven from Utah territory's anti-polygamy crusade which ended in 1893 after which the family was reunited in Lehi.

Mayor Anderson's long life in the service of his fellow men ended on July 10, 1919. His funeral in the Lehi Tabernacle was one of the largest in the history of Lehi.