

19th Mayor-Mayor Edward Southwick 1910-11

By Richard Van Wagoner

By late summer 1909, Lehi had more than enough water to quench its thirst thanks to the new culinary water system that brought high-quality spring water down the pipeline from Alpine. Those citizens who desired a drink of something stronger, however, found the town again teetering on the brink of prohibition. On August 11, 1909 representatives from all Utah County cities met and approved a county-wide prohibition law to take effect on January 1, 1910.

“LEHI HAS COME IN LINE,” screamed the September 16, 1909 headline of the “Lehi Banner,” “City Council Passes a Liquor Ordinance.” But the vote was close. After Gus Slade and Judge Rydalch made an impassioned plea for the liquor men, Councilmen Sam Goodwin, Joseph Goates, and Henry Lewis voted aye for prohibition while Jonas Holdsworth and LeRoy Lott voted nay. Mayor Thomas Webb, though opposing the ordinance, signed it into law. Six weeks later, On November 2, local anti-prohibitionists were swept from office and the Democrats were again in power.

In addition to mayor-elect Edward Southwick, who had served as city recorder from 1898-1899, and a trustee of the Lehi School District from 1907-1910, local officials included: councilors Joseph W. Goates, William F. Gurney, George G. Webb, John Whipple, and James Gough; recorder George A Goates; treasurer John Stokes; and justice Eli Kendall.

In a special city council meeting on March 22, 1910, Mayor Southwick recommended that the city employ a detective to root out the liquor dens that had sprung up after the saloons were shut down. Cliff Austin, a spirited young man of the era, told me that despite prohibition, young sports could quench their thirst with beer imported from Salt Lake County. He recalls one memorable occasion when he was sixteen years old. “I bought a bottle, and I took it to a dance. Well, I had it in my (coat) pocket. It was winter. I went up by this hot stove, and I got too close

and that thing exploded! It never hurt me, but it went running down my pants.”

Prohibition kept Marshal Henry East busy. Bootleggers were everywhere. The most notable speakeasy was the Blind Pig, established in Gus Slade’s former Elk Saloon building at 106 West Main. Though East knew liquor was being sold on the premises. until the city had established “Search and Seizure” regulations, nothing could be done. On the night of May 19, 1911, however, the raid was on.

East walked up boldly to the door and knocked politely. A peephole was opened, but he did not have the password (which was usually something lofty like “Joe sent me”). Refused entry, East rode his bike up to Mayor Southwick’s house and told him what had happened. Southwick put on his coat and returned with East to the building, where they met other officials including City Physician Dr. Walter Hasler, City Attorney William Asher, and policeman George Wing.

Virgil Peterson recalled that the mayor ordered the door opened. The doorman hesitated so Southwick bellowed, “If you don’t open this up, we’ll come in by force.” Dale Peterson relates that as soon as East had left of Southwicks, however, “everything was put away and done away with.” When the officials finally gained entrance, they found a group of well-behaved gentlemen “sitting around chatting.”

A search of the place quickly proved that the men were engaged in more than idle conversation. The city officials confiscated three dozen bottles of beer, three gallons of wine, and four packages of whiskey. They also seized the ice box, two barrels, empty bottles, two dozen half-pint bottles, eighteen whiskey flasks, and the building’s fixtures.

When the 1911 Utah legislature convened, Carl A. Badger (former secretary to Senator Reed Smoot) introduced a local prohibition option bill which passed and was signed into law by Governor Spry. Though Lehi was already “dry” because of the administrative action of its Democratic officials, a special “liquor election” was held in June 1911. Of the 773 cast, a landslide majority of 587 townspeople supported continued prohibition.

The entire state of Utah went dry in 1917. And by January 16, 1920 the 18th Amendment imposing nationwide prohibition was ratified by the states. To enforce it Congress passed the Volstead Act. But the effect of nationwide prohibition proved to be catastrophic for the country. By December 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Democratic Congress pushed through the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, which repealed prohibition. The temperance problem was returned in the states.

Aside from its prohibition enforcement, Mayor Southwick's administration was responsible for Lehi's first public library. During an January 11, 1910 meeting of the city council local LDS church representatives petitioned to lease the Pavilion in the city park, where most of the town's gatherings were held. The M.I.A. proposed that in exchange for free use of the building, they would "support and maintain a public library six days per week" through the proceeds from Pavilion events. A \$300 annual grant from the city was also requested. After some discussion and a recommendation from the city attorney, officials decided that the city itself would manage the Pavilion and open a public library.

On February 8, 1910, the Lehi Public Library-which consisted of all books from the four ward libraries-opened its doors in the "bluerock building" (which still stands at 169 West Main). In most accounts this historic building, completed in 1891, is called the "Senate Building"--as though political debates and legislative matters were conducted there. Library patrons contrasted sharply with the stone building's previous tenant--the Senate Saloon--which hosted a less sober clientele.

During the week June of June 5-11, 1911 the city celebrated its first Homecoming. Plans had been in the making for months. Mayor Southwick proclaimed 3 May as "Cleaning-Up Day," and the city was spiffed-up to greet former residents. Huge banners at both railroad depots greeted guests with "Welcome Home, Lehi is A Good Place To Live." Gaily decorated in blue and white, the city entertained hundreds of visitors at programs, operettas, concerts, reunions, organ recitals in the new Tabernacle, moonlight dances in the Pavilion, baseball games, swimming at Saratoga, and tours of the schools, sugar factory, waterworks, and Jordan Pumps. LDS Church President Joseph F. Smith was on hand for a day as was Utah Governor William Spry.

Lehi born and raised Edward Southwick, married to Rachel Webb, and the father of seven children, served in the Utah House of Representatives from 1913-14 and again from 1917-18. From 1919-1923 he served in the Utah Senate where he sponsored the income tax bill of 1921, and introduced a bill to prohibit the advertising and sale of cigarettes in the state.

Locally he was a director of the State Bank of Lehi for many years, and operated a profitable real estate business on Main Street. At the time of his 1933 retirement, he was employed as a dairy inspector for the Utah State Department of Agriculture until 1933. His early twentieth-century-built home at 213 North 200 West is the current home of his grand-daughter Rama D. Bennett and her husband Gordon.