

# **John N. Whimpey-27th Mayor of Lehi 1938-39**

**By Richard Van Wagoner**

Riding on the coattails of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, most Democrats across the country in the fall of 1937 found success. Worried Americans, still in the doldrums of the Depression wanted change-new faces, new ideas, and no Republicans. Former Republican Mayor Stanley Taylor, despite the success of his administration, lost the local election to newcomer John N. Whimpey, one of the few Lehi mayors who had not previously held a civic office.

The new mayor was born October 4, 1882, in Justus, Stark County, Ohio, a son of Isaac L. and Alice C. Butt Whimpey. He came to Lehi as a child where family circumstances dictated that he engage in full-time farming activities from the age of thirteen. He was a quick study, loved the soil, and learned much from observing successful local farmers and questioning them on their techniques. In July 1914, he leased 150 acres of prime farmland near Saratoga, eventually becoming one of the areas most respected and knowledgeable farmers.

Mayor Whimpey's associates during his term of service included: Sylvester Evans, J.E. Johnson, B.J. Lott, Isaac Bone, and Jackson C. Wanlass (councilman); recorder Leland Powell, treasurer Inez Peterson; marshal Thomas Trinnaman; and justice Joseph E. Smith.

Few local resources were available to the new elected officials because of the depression. A wise move, however, was the purchase of ninety-seven acres of property at Schoolhouse Springs for a meager \$231.00

During Mayor Whimpey's administration, a WPA sewing center employing as many as seventeen women, including my mother, was established in the basement of the Memorial Building under Alice Hutching's supervision. Dr. Elmo Eddington also deeded his Lehi Hospital Building to Lehi City so that the facility could qualify for federal funds. A \$14,000 WPA grant upgraded the building into

an eighteen-bed hospital. Construction work, under the direction of W.W. Dickerson, began on July 1, 1937 and was completed by year's end.

The August 25, 1938, Lehi Free Press announced that the city had been given a \$3,407 WPA grant to be matched with \$1, 794 of its own money for several projects, including a concrete bandstand and restrooms at Wines Park, demolition of the old Fire Station and city hall on Main Street, construction of a new fire station on the south end of the Memorial Building and the creation of a lily pond surrounding the Pioneer Monument.

In the fall of 1939, the political winds blew in another direction and Mayor Whimpey was not renominated by his party. Continuing in his farming activities, the former mayor also became employed at the new Geneva Steel Plant where he worked until his 1946 retirement. Long-term chairman of the board of directors of the Utah Valley Hospital, Whimpey also served with distinction on the board of Directors of the Utah Lake Distributing Company which controlled the lake's water rights.

Whimpey had married Irene Peterson in 1905. Together they became the parents of seven children: Don L. Whimpey, Howard F. Whimpey, A. Dale Whimpey, Lela Russon, Madge Hutchings, LaRae Eddington, and Ruth Glover. His death at age eighty-seven occurred on March 7, 1969.