

Mayor John Roberts Jr.- 17th Mayor of Lehi

By Richard Van Wagoner

On November 3, 1903 Republican John Roberts, Jr., was elected Lehi's seventeenth mayor. Serving with him were councilors William Bone, Thomas Webb, George L. Comer, George Beck, Edward Karren, and John T. Winn; recorder T.J. Wadsworth; marshal J. Newburn Butt; and justice Eli Kendall.

Mayor Roberts, son of John and Adelaide For Roberts, was born December 20, 1848, in Woowich, Kent, England. After converting to Mormonism, he emigrated to America with his family, arriving in Lehi in November 1863. A former teamster and veteran of the Black Hawk war, Roberts found employment with the People's Co-op in 1882 and served as manager of the Branch (the downtown store) for fourteen years.

In addition to serving a term as mayor from 1904-05, Roberts also served as Lehi City treasurer for six terms, was a city councilman for two terms, and served on the Lehi School Board for six years. His first wife Alice Ann Taylor, who died in 1895, was the mother of ten children. He then married Mary Ann Cutler Standring who died in 1900. In 1901, he married Emma Jane Evans Taylor by whom he had three more children.

An unusual political event in 1903, during Mayor Roberts's term was the "excommunication" of the Lehi wing from the Utah Socialist Party. During the late 1800's, several European and American socialist political parties formed an international organization with a single set of beliefs inspired by the writings of Karl Marx.

Claiming that free enterprise systems are inefficient and wasteful, socialists believe that capitalism leads to such problems as unemployment, poverty, business cycles, and conflicts between workers and management.

In Lehi municipal elections of November 5, 1901, the Democratic and Socialist parties had combined to wrest away the recorder and marshal positions from the Republicans.

In the fall of 1903, however, Lehi's small Socialist party, consisting of W. S. Evans, Edison Whipple, John Whipple, Henry East, Mr Sims, Robert Gilchrist, and F. Wilcox, endorsed Democratic mayor candidate John Snow who opposed John Roberts. This action violated the "fusion clause" in state and national Socialist constitutions and resulted in the revocation of the local charter.