

Mosiah Evans-Fourteenth Mayor of Lehi 1896-97; 1900

By Richard Van Wagoner

Mosiah Evans, successful Republican mayoralty candidate in November 1895, was Lehi's fourteenth chief executive. A son of Bishop David and Barbara Ann Evans, Mosiah was born on September 22, 1862. His older sister, Barbara, who in 1870 became the local telegrapher for the Deseret Telegraph Company, took him under her wing. He eventually became a respected telegrapher for the Union Pacific Railroad.

Evans continued his work with the railroad for ten years following his 1882 marriage to Catherine Esther Carter. He then found employment with the People's Co-op as a bookkeeper and accountant. Having served a term as Lehi City recorder, Evans was an experienced civic leader when elected to the mayorship in 1895. Others serving with him during this term were: Councilors Ole Ellingson, Andrew A. Peterson, Richard Bradshaw, and John S. Willes; recorder John E. Ross; marshal Joseph A. Thomas; and treasurer James Harwood.

These men had the distinction of being our city fathers when Utah became the nation's 45th state. Anticipating this even, Mayor Evans authorized local carpenter Gay Whipple to erect an eighty-foot flag pole on the jail lot at approximately 150 West Second North. A large flag was first hoisted up the two-ton pole on July 4, 1895, but the town's most patriotic outburst occurred six months later. The Lehi Banner editorialized:

January 4, 1896 dawned upon our peaceful city as she lay wrapped in a mantle of the beautiful. The morning was crisp and bright. The golden sun, as he peeped over the eastern mountains and shed his rays over the valley below was the forerunner of the joyous news which was then traveling with lightening speed from the east to the west. Suddenly a sound was heard which echoed from hill to hill and every ear that caught that sound listened but a moment, then bang, bang, ting, ring, and all knew then that the glad news had arrived that President Cleveland

had issued his proclamation declaring that Utah, the Queen of the West, was now a State and every one now shouted hurrah for the land of the free and the home of the brave.

The single issue of the twenty-fourth municipal election was Prohibition. The position of the Democrats, led by mayor hopeful John S. Willes, was “that the sale of intoxicating liquor shall be prohibited in this city.” The Republican position was to pursue “a policy of high license and strict regulations.” The battle lines were drawn. “Prohibitionists press on!” a teetotaler exclaimed in the October 26, 1897 Banner, “and show by our ballots that we do not sell our honor for high licensed legitimate business.”

“PROHIBITION WINS” spouted the November 3, 1897 Banner. Democratic mayoralty candidate John S. Willes, and all his running mates except one, won by landslide margins. Serving with Mayor Willes were councilors Andrew A. Peterson, James Allred, Samuel Taylor, George H. Smith, and George Glover; recorder Edward Southwick; marshal Joseph A. Thomas; and treasurer Thomas F. Trane.

The most important accomplishment of the Willes administration was bringing electricity to Lehi. Although twenty-six kerosene lamps had been installed throughout the city in September 1890, during the administration of mayor Samuel Taylor, their light was dim and in windy weather the lamps often blew out.

In the spring of 1899 former Lehi resident Christian Garff approached the Lehi, American Fork, and Pleasant Grove city councils with a plan for providing all three towns with electricity. Garff’s proposal was accepted by the municipalities. The Utah County Light and Power Company was formed on August 2, 1899, and a hydroelectric plant was constructed at the mouth of American Fork Canyon. The long-awaited electric light made its first appearance in Lehi on the night of December 12, 1900.

While Lehi citizens were amiable to electricity they decided they did not like Prohibition. Two years was enough. In November 1899, every Republican,

including mayor-elect Mosiah Evans, won by a lopsided margin. “Prohibition is now a thing of the past, “ editorialized the Banner, and the burden of paying a great amount of the city’s expense will fall upon the whiskey dealers, who for the past two years have not been compelled to pay one cent into the city treasury.”

Mayor Evans was elected to the state legislature in November 1900 and resigned his mayorship. In 1904 he moved to Garland, Utah, where he had been appointed resident construction manager of the new Utah-Idaho Sugar Company factory at Garland. The following year he was elected first president of the Garland town board. He was an organizer and promoter of the Garland Commercial Club and served extended terms as president of the Bank of Garland the Garland Athletic Association.

In 1916 the Evans family moved to Spanish Fork where he continued his work with the sugar company for three more years. His tragic death in Salt Lake City occurred on April 15, 1921.