

Mayor Ole Ellingson-Lehi's Tenth Mayor

By Richard Van Wagoner

Samuel R. Thurman's second term followed Andrew R. Anderson's administration. Thurman, in turn, was succeeded by Ole Ellingson, the tenth man to serve as Lehi's mayor. A three-term chief executive, Ellingson served consecutively from 1883-1887 and again from 1893-1895.

Mayor Ellingson was born in Norway on 28 February 1831. A convert to Mormonism, he arrived by ox train in Utah Territory in October 1854, the only member of his family to emigrate to America. Settling in Lehi, the young man served in the Lehi Militia during many campaigns including the Salmon River expedition to rescue besieged settlers at Ft. Limhi in northern Idaho.

In 1861 the thirty-year-old bachelor married young Abigail Evans, fifteen-year-old daughter of Bishop David Evans. Ellingson prospered as a farmer and he and his wife parented a brood of twelve children. He returned to his native Norway as Mormon missionary in 1878.

Ole Ellingson, who had served for years as Lehi treasurer, was elected mayor on February 12, 1883. Officials to serve with him during his first term included: Alderman, George Webb, Abel John Evans, J. Edgar Ross; councilors, Andrew A. Peterson, Byron W. Brown, Samuel Taylor, William Clark, and John J. Child; recorder J. Edgar Ross, Edwin Evans; marshal Thomas Fowler; and treasurer, William E. Racker.

In 1885, the city council, having heard of the successful drilling of artesian wells in Salt Lake County, purchased a drilling rig for the use of the citizenry at a cost of \$377. The horse-powered equipment, promoted as capable of drilling a well 10-12 inches in diameter, proved a complete failure when tested. It was later sold at a loss during public auction.

During 1885, Lehi was visited by a severe epidemic of diphtheria. Medical science had not yet discovered a treatment for this dreaded disease. Many deaths occurred, especially among young children, and the city's Quarantine Board, under Mayor Ellingson's direction, was kept busy trying to isolate contagious families.

The following year the town nearly emptied of men of prominence. Federal marshals, under cover of darkness, and with a spotter to show them where the polygamists lived, arrested nearly two-dozen Lehi luminaries and carted them off to prison. Mayor Ellingson, a monogamist, remained behind to administer the town's official business.

When Ellingson ran for mayor a third term, local politicians, following the demise of the Mormon controlled People's Party in 1891, were divided along national party lines. Ellingson has the distinction of being Lehi's first Republican mayor. Others serving him included: councilors John Roberts, Jr. Thadeus Powell, Benjamin S. Lott, Edward Evans, and Joel Myers; Treasurer Ole Ellingson Jr. and school trustees George Webb, James P. Carter and Elias Bushman.

In his later years, Ole Ellingson served on the board of directors of the Lehi Irrigation Company and was a founder of the Lehi Commercial and Savings Bank in 1891. His death, after a long illness, came on August 29, 1903.