

Mayor L. Carlos Coates-31st Mayor of Lehi 1948-1950

By Richard Van Wagoner

The Lehi City Council appointed L. Carlos Coates the town's new mayor on April 13, 1948. The future mayor was born in Lehi on April 8, 1903 to Luther and Emma Christina Lundgren Coates. As a young man he served a mission to the Southern States for the LDS church.

Coates ultimately became an electrician and as a Lehi City employee was a strong representative for other city employees in resolving fair wage disputes with the administration. Prior to his election as a city councilman in 1946, he obtained employment as an electrician at Geneva Steel where he worked until his retirement.

Lehi City, during Mayor Coate's administration had an annual budget of just \$33, 686.38. And the town continued to reel under the wake of returning servicemen. Ambitious and anxious to establish themselves, a number of ex-G.I.s exerted considerable economic influence on the city.

Ralph Johnson opened a Western Auto store in the former armory building at 173 West Main in January 1947, and in February M.S. Lott added a new section on the front of his plumbing business at 55 West Main. This new portion became the headquarter for the Lehi Post Office in September 1949. Clyde McKay, owner of Fashion Cleaners at 101 West Main, sold his business to Harold Ellison and Alvin Folkerson in December 1947. During March 1948, Glen Baker purchased Bank's Appliance Business at 189 West Main.

One month later Don Howard opened a Truck Inn at 210 West State which later became Ralph Hoover's Truck Inn and eventually the La Casa Supper Club. Cloyd Penrod opened Penny's 5-10-25cent store in the old Elk Saloon Building at 106 West Main in April 1948.

On July 1, 1948 Henry Grass opened Grass Furniture in the large Co-op building at 151 East State. LeRoy and Edna Gammon purchased Webb's Clothing Store at 187 East State street, which became Edna's Shop in January 1950.

The F. Haws Durfey Dry Cleaning Plant at 217 East state in March 1950, and three months later Melvin Hartshorn purchased the Lehi Floral from Broadbents. In June 1950, Jay Haws opened Haws Sweet Shop at 129 East Main Street, and Paul Julian's Drug in the former Lehi Baker building at 35 West Main.

To coordinate activities of Lehi's centennial celebration from June 25 to July 1, 1950, the Lehi Centennial Committee from June 25 to July 1, 1950, the Lehi Centennial Committee was organized August 23, 1949 by Mayor Coates. General Chairman Dr. W.L. Worlton directed the week, which was filled with historic programs, socials, pageants, exhibits, parades, rodeos, and other events. It was announced during that festivities that the Federal Board of Geographic Names had officially shortened Lehi City's Name to Lehi.

In addition to a new name, two monuments were also dedicated in the community. Honoring Lehi's first permanent settlement at Sulphur Springs--later called Snow Springs--the Centennial Committee set a twelve-ton boulder into a cement base near the site of the springs on Saratoga Road. A bronze plaque provided a brief history of the area. Two days later the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers unveiled their monument at the site of the town's first cemetery on State Street.

Thomas F. Kirkham directed efforts towards publishing a Lehi Centennial History. Thirty-nine people worked with him for eight months on the project before it was published by the "Lehi Free Press" in September 1950. Nearly one thousand pages long, the book incorporated Hamilton Gardner's 1913 "History of Lehi", included a new biographical section, and brought the town's history up-to-date.

One of the most interesting controversies during Mayor Coate's administration was over the new Orem Interurban Railroad (the Salt Lake and Utah

Electric Railroad) which had bisected the city along Third North since 1913. The bankrupt corporation was dissolved by legal action at the end of 1946 and the trackage through a franchise grant from Lehi City, was then leased to Union Pacific as a spur to service businesses in the area.

By 1949, the poorly kept railway had become a dangerous eyesore that aggravated citizens who lived along its pathway. Furthermore north/south traffic had to cross the dilapidated grading at eight intersections, only one of which was properly maintained. A local group, calling itself “the Permanent Committee of the Citizens of Lehi Interested in the Removal of the Old Orem Track,” petitioned Mayor Coates and the city council to withdraw the city-granted franchise to Union Pacific Railroad. Ultimately this was done, the track was pulled up, the roadway was paved, and no evidence exists today to show that a busy railroad once transversed Third North.

Mayor Coates was not elected to a second term. During elections held in the fall of 1949, he was defeated by Lehi merchant George W. Leany. Other officials who had served with Mayor Coates during his term included: Lynn R. Webb, George W. Leany, R. Garn Holbrook, John W. Zimmerman, Arlin D. Fowler, Virgil H. Peterson (councilmen); Leland Powell (recorder); Blanche Turner (treasurer); Clemm Turner (marshal); Sylvester Evans (justice); and J. Rulon Morgan (attorney)

After his mayoralty term, Coates continued working at Geneva Steel until his retirement and also served as bishop of the Lehi 3rd Ward for more than a decade. His death occurred on December 28, 1993.