

Mayor Morris W. Clark-Lehi 36th Mayor 1970-1973

By Richard Van Wagoner

Mayor Calvin Swenson chose not to run for a second term during the fall of 1969. Local conventions nominated two prominent men for Lehi's chief executive. Former two-term mayor Harold Westring became the Democrat's standard bearer and the Republicans nominated city councilman Morris Clark.

Westring campaigned on his twelve year record of service with Lehi City government and promised that if re-elected he would be a "full-time-mayor". His running mates were Lavere Downs and JoAnn Brown. Clark and his running mates Kenneth Whimpey and E. Russell Innes campaigned under the slogan, "It's Action That counts--Busy People Always Get the Job Done!"

Election Day, November 4, 1969 resulted in the closest mayoralty contest in Lehi history. The November 6, "Lehi Free Press" announced a Clark margin of one vote. Members of the city council rechecked the election judges' tallies and declared Clark the winner by a final margin of 707 to 701.

The newly elected council members were JoAnn Brown, the first woman elected to the Lehi City Council, who was the largest vote getter of the election and Kenneth Whimpey.

Mayor Morris (pronounced Morrey) W. Clark was born in Salt Lake City on August 4, 1916 to Asa J. and Julia Bone Clark. He graduated from Lehi High School in the class of '35. During his senior year Lehi remained undefeated in football until the last game when they lost to Provo 9 to 6. "For years the crowds who attend the games have never received such a line of sensational thrill.," noted the 1935 "Lehision." Morris was singled out as "developing grit" on the gridiron.

Elsewhere the yearbook, commented on the handsome senior's romantic interests: "But the feelins' we had druv the both of us mad."

After graduation, the future mayor became employed with the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company in St. George. After his 1937 marriage to Mailda Slade, daughter of prominent citizen Gus Slade, young Clark was transferred to the Idaho Falls Sugar Factory. In 1940, he returned home to manage the local facilities. Although the Lehi Sugar Factory closed in 1924, the company maintained a warehouse in the cavernous 1914-built storage facility which still stands on the site. Many a Lehi lad, including me, stacked sugar in the massive, wonderfully aromatic place.

The name Morris Clark and the Lehi Round-up are nearly synonymous. From his earliest years he was skilled in stock raising and horsemanship. His long record of executive involvement with the Lehi Civic Improvement is unsurpassed. He served as a director for three decades, was rodeo chairman for ten years, and conducted the Queenodeo for many years. He was also a prominent long-time member of the Lehi Riding Club.

An unusual display of unscheduled saddle bronc riding occurred during the opening night of the 1955 Lehi Round-up. As rodeo chairman Morris Clark was racing into the arena as part of an introductory salute, his borrowed horse, as onerous as anything on the grounds, bucked him off, breaking his arm in the process.

Undaunted, he survived to ride again, albeit on more favorable mounts. In 1967, he was elected to the city council and assigned responsibility for streets, water, parks, and buildings. His work as a councilman included extensions of the sewer system, constructions of new water mains throughout the community and installation of a new collection system at the city-owned springs above Alpine.

As mayor, Clark continued the revamping of the Alpine springs. Collection boxes were buried fifteen feet under ground to prevent contamination and root damage. A new main line from Alpine to 12th East also replaced the original wood

pipe system which had been installed in 1909.

The April 30, 1979 “Lehi Free Press” announced that the “rat infested, foul-smelling, air-polluting eyesore known as the City dump” would be permanently closed on May 10. To comply with state air pollution regulations (Lehi’s garbage was burned), to eliminate health hazards, and to be more economical, the cities of the northern end of Utah County combined with the county to convert the Lindon dump (just north of the old Geneva Resort), into a sanitary landfill operation where burning was forbidden.

Mayor Clark, during his tenure, also organized the Lehi Youth Council to obtain input from the younger citizens and to obtain their assistance in city cleanup and beautification projects. In addition to extending the local sewer system to the northeast quadrant of town, the mayor also initiated an extensive curb and gutter installation project throughout town.

No mayor stands alone in administering city government. During Mayor Clark’s term he received substantial support from council members J. B. Cooper, LaVere Downs, Dr. Kent B. Davis, Reed L. Sunderland, JoAnn Brown, Blaine Thomas, Dean Colledge, and Douglas Calton. Ned F. Wilson was city recorder then, Lucile White was treasurer, and Harvard Hinton, and E. Jay Peck served as successive city attorneys.

Mayor Clark’s term of duty was a quarter of a century ago. What was Lehi like then? The August 20, 1970 “Lehi Free Press” ran photos of five storefronts with large “For Sale” signs within a one-block area on Main Street. Former mayor Calvin B. Swenson headed the committee formed to rejuvenate the business district. Kenneth Greenwood, serving on the Swenson committee, and a director of the Chamber of Commerce, became a dominant force in the rehabilitation of Main Street. Teaming with his mother Opal and his brother Dennis, Greenwood in a short period of time purchased five buildings on the south side of Main Street.

The family’s first venture was the establishment of, from the Greenwood’s, a

drive-in facility selling dairy products, bread, eggs and other staple items. This convenience store opened in February 1971. Later that fall the family announced the grand opening of Greenwood Carpets and Interiors and the LaFeria Reception Center, which were housed in the former Racker Buildings (now Colonial House.) They also remodeled the former Davis Market building (now Western Tack and Togs) into a large carpet and furniture warehouse. In May 1972 the family renovated the old Lehi Billiards building (now Cobblerock Cloggers) into Ye Old Pool Hall Gift Shoppe.

Three local men, Dick Smith, Ned Wilson, and Wayman Winslow, also purchased the Star Cafe at 130 West Main in February 1971. The Small Business Administration granted a \$101,500 loan to the Lehi Industrial Fund Enterprise in March 1971. This money combined with an additional \$100,000 of loans from the State Bank of Lehi (\$81,200) and the Lehi Industrial Fund Enterprise (\$20,300), resulted in the construction of a fifty-by-one-hundred-twenty-five-foot building north of the Lehi Riding Clubhouse on Fifth West. Virgo Corporation, a wholesale meat cutting company which customized cuts for restaurant use owned the building until June 1978, when the business became Granite Beef.

Other Lehi businesses to open in 1971 included Dennis and Frank Huggard's popular Porter's Place. In July, Bruce and Mara Dee Peck established a clothing store, The Pacesetter, in the Lehi Cleaners building at 101 West Main. In August, Robert and Frankie Flygare opened the Hitchin' Post, a combination laundromat and beauty parlor in the former Ashton Laundromat. And LaVar Goodwin purchased State Street's Lehi Cafe from Dennis Huggard in October.

During July 1972, Jo Zimmerman opened her new Jo's Fashions in the old Larsen Brother's Market building at 155 West Main and Wes Dalley moved his jewelry and tropical fish business, Dalley's Tropicals, to 98 West Main where Jo's Fashions had previously been. The Maverick Country Store at 500 West Main opened in October, while Pyke Manufacturing Company expanded its Lehi plant by six thousand square feet, and hired an additional fifty sewing-machine-operators.

The disheartening stories of 1972 were the July closing of the Royal Theatre, a movie house which had provided entertainment since 1914, and a devastating fire which destroyed Greenwood Carpets & Interiors and the LaFeria Reception Center on October 8. The following day a large, enthusiastic group of Lehi businessmen and women gathered in the city hall to offer their assistance in helping the Greenwoods rebuild. Eleven hundred citizens turned out to a banquet on November 3 in which \$2,291.30 was raised for the LaFeria Fire Fund. Eventually both businesses were again in successful operation.

On the night of December 28, 1972 the worst blizzard in the history of Lehi blew in from the arctic north. The heavy snowfall surpassed 1948-49 records and caused hazardous and impassable road conditions. I-15 around the Point of the Mountain was closed, and many northbound travelers were forced to find overnight shelter in Lehi. The National Guard Armory opened its doors to hungry and freezing families. Drifts five feet high were sculpted in driveways and streets. For the first time in the memory of many, the U.S. postal service was unable to deliver the mail.

Important events of 1973, included the relocation of the historic Utah Southern/Union Pacific Depot by new owner Jerry Harris in March. That same month Colonial Dental Service and Supply set up business in the Davis/Miller Medical Building at 239 East First North. Tuff and Jetta Allred opened Backroom Antiques behind Tuff's Barbershop at 60 West Main, and Continental Drapery commenced business at 286 East Main. Lehi's last surviving log cabin, built in the 1880s by George F. Southwick and his son Azer was sold to a Provo man and moved from its location at 55 East First South in April.

In May 1973, the Lehi Volunteer Fire Department suspended the old curfew bell from a frame in front of the fire station. Dan's Drive Inn, popular eating place at 96 West Main, suffered a \$25,000 fire in June. Citizens rallied to assist owner Dan Simper and he was soon again selling burgers, fries and shakes. Sportsman Lynn Horrocks opened Timberline Hunters Supply at 155 1/2 West Main on 30 June, and Dennis Huggard opened the Long Bench, an ice-cream parlor, just east of

his Porter's Place restaurant. The Jay Haws family opened Haws Paint and Glass at 125 East Main in July, and one month later General Refractories announced a \$1 million expansion project to include a new grinding and burning facility at their plant. The Lehi chapter of the Sons of Utah Pioneers erected a large granite monument on the site of the Lehi Meeting House after it had been demolished in September.

Mayor Clark elected not to run for re-election in 1973. His wife Matilda died in 1977 and the following year Morris married Donna Evans. He continued to work for the Utah-Idaho Sugar company in Lehi and West Jordan, Utah until his retirement in 1980. He also maintained his high profile with the Lehi Civic Improvement Association and the Lehi Cattle Association, of which he was president for ten years. He has also served on the Metropolitan Water Board since 1980.

Along with the entire Lehi citizenry, I gratefully acknowledge all your accomplishments, Morris, and say thank you for a job well done. Without you, we would certainly not be where we are as a town today.