

LEHI SILVER BAND WAGON

Constructed: 1891

Address: Bandwagon Park (300 West and 800 North)

Present owner: Lehi City Corporation

In March of 1887 the YMMIA Silver Band, under the leadership of Joseph Kirkham, was formed in the Lehi City Hall. Though the band was motivated by a Mormon Church youth group, it was intended initially as a political organization--to promote the cause of "bimetallism." This meant a dual standard of the American Treasury, based on both gold and silver.

For several years the band performed for many local celebrations and festivities. In the spring of 1891 the organization purchased its famed Lehi Silver Bandwagon. Band financial director William Goates was visiting the Mitchell Fair in Salt Lake City when he saw a large crowd admiring the running gears of a Co-operative Wagon and Machine Company display. The mechanism was not painted, but the wood was oiled and highly polished and the iron was beautifully bronzed. The purchase of the outfit was announced in the inaugural 29 May 1891 issue of the *Lehi Banner*.

The wagon box was crafted by Lehi's master carpenter, Gay Whipple. Upon completion the wagon was given a highly polished "piano finish" and remained this way until 1895 when Edwin Evans, who had just returned from art study in Europe, was hired to paint the wagon. Evans's masterful job included life-like nude mermaids on each side of the vehicle.

When the wagon made its debut, the horses were well-groomed and decorated with flags and bunting. The band boys were dressed in their uniforms--a linen duster and a summer helmet. The wagon moved along the parade route to constant clapping and shouts of approval.

Despite complaints from some of the town's straight-laced ladies about the brazen display of female anatomy on the mermaids, the wagon remained uncensored and gradually became known throughout the state as an artistic masterpiece.

The wagon was initially stored in a shed on the jail lot on Second North. The city also assumed financial responsibility for most of the band's needs, on the condition that they "render service to the city upon holidays."

By 1905 the band's attire had been switched from linen dusters and helmets to a dark green uniform with black trim. Matching caps had the word "LEHI" printed across the front. The 20 July 1912 *Banner* announced that band members new uniforms were "gray suits and caps." By 1913, however, significant changes had taken place in the organization. Members discontinued wearing uniforms, Edwin Evans's art work had been painted over, and the raised lettering "Lehi Silver Band" was clearly seen on the side of the vehicle.

For a time the band fizzled out, but was reorganized briefly in the spring of 1920, under the direction of Abraham Anderson. As interest again declined in the organization, the bandwagon was stored uncovered at the Hammer Livery Stables on Main Street, where it narrowly escaped destruction during a 1931 fire which burned the livery barn and several nearby buildings.

After the fire the bandwagon was stored in a far corner of the Rodeo Grounds, where it gradually deteriorated. Under the direction of Donald Wright, 1952 chairman of Lehi's "Old Fashioned July 24th Celebration," the bandwagon was repainted in Lehi High purple and white. At that time musicians reorganized the the Lehi Silver Band again appeared in scores of parades. A shelter for the refurbished relic was built onto the south end of the high school football grandstand immediately west of the Lehi Carnegie Library.

In 1975 a decision was made to retire the wagon and to use Lehi's \$14,000 share of American Bicentennial money to construct a park and pavilion to permanently display the conveyance. The last hurrah of the band and its purple and white wagon was the Days of '47 Parade in 1976.

When the parade reached its end at Liberty Park, the old wagon was brought back to town and placed in the just-completed pavilion of Band Wagon Park. From noon until mid-afternoon the Silver Band played its last serenade for townspeople in Wines Park. At 3:00 p.m. the dedication ceremonies for Bandwagon Park were held. After the band members were honored, the Silver Bandwagon, concluding its long career, was retired forever. A replica of the old

wagon was constructed by local artisans in the summer of 1997 and debuted during the Lehi Roundup celebration.