



Charles C. (Coulsen) Rich 1809-1883

Born 1809 Northwestern Kentucky

Baptized 1832

Married Sarah D. Pea 1838, later practiced Plural Marriage; Fifty-one Children

Original Member of Council of Fifty 1839

Ordained Apostle and sustained to Quorum of the Twelve 1849

Died 1883 Paris, Bear Lake County, Idaho

This biographical sketch adapted from Utah History Encyclopedia

Charles Coulsen Rich was born in northwestern Kentucky to Joseph and Nancy O'Neal Rich on 21 August 1809. Pioneers of the early agricultural frontier, the Rich family moved to southern Indiana in 1810 and on to Tazewell County, Illinois in 1829. Charles received a basic education and training as a cooper, but spent most of his early life working on the family farm. In 1831 he heard about the Mormon Church and was baptized the next year. Between 1832 and 1838, Rich continued farming and served as a missionary for the Church.

In 1838 Rich married Sarah DeArmon Pea (1814-1893), and the couple settled near Far West, Missouri until driven to Nauvoo, Illinois in 1839. Rich served as a counselor in the Nauvoo Stake, sat on the Nauvoo City Council, and was one of the original members of the Council of Fifty. After the death of Joseph Smith, Jr., in 1844, Rich rose to the rank of Major General in the Nauvoo Legion.

As a Church leader, Elder Rich followed the doctrine of plural marriage, taking three additional wives in 1845: Eliza Ann Graves (1811-1879), Mary Ann Phelps (1829-1912), and Sarah Jane Peck (1825-1893). Before leaving Nauvoo in 1846, he married Emeline Grover (1831-1917); and at Winter Quarters he took Harriet Sargent (1832-1915) as his sixth wife.

In 1846 General Rich helped organize the Mormon exodus from Nauvoo. After a winter at Mt. Pisgah, Iowa, Rich was named military leader of the 1847 Emigration Company, which followed Brigham Young's Pioneer Company into Salt Lake Valley in October 1847. On the 5th day of October, Nancy Rich, the mother of Charles C Rich, died; she was the first adult of the Saints who died in the Valley. The family soon commenced to get logs from the canyons to build houses, and while this was being done they lived in their tents and wagons. Elder Rich served as a counselor in the Salt Lake Stake Presidency and as a member of the Council of Fifty. He operated a farm in Centerville, Utah in 1848, and the next year, at age thirty-nine, was named to the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.

In October 1849 Elder Rich accepted a call to assist Amasa Lyman in supervising Mormons in California between 1851 and 1857. He and Lyman established a relatively prosperous economic colony at San Bernardino, which served as a way station for immigrants traveling to Utah via the Spanish Trail. Recalled in 1857, Rich moved back to Centerville. He represented Davis County in the territorial legislature and served as aide to General Daniel Wells of the Nauvoo Legion during the Utah War. Between 1860 and 1862 Rich joined Lyman in England to oversee the Mormon Church's European Mission.

After a one-year respite in Centerville, Elder Rich accepted Brigham Young's call to colonize the Bear Lake region against the threat of non-Mormon settlement. In September 1863, Elder Rich led his party from Franklin, Idaho, into Bear Lake Valley, settling at present day Paris Idaho. In 1864 Rich moved his six wives and thirty children to Paris and began a twenty-year struggle to maintain the colony in the face of severe winters, poor harvests, delicate Indian relations, and isolation. In 1864 Brigham Young honored Rich by naming Rich County, Utah and St. Charles, Idaho, after him.

Between 1864 and 1872 Elder Rich represented Rich County in the Utah territorial legislature, until it became clear that most of the Bear Lake settlements were in Idaho. He remained an active Democrat in local politics and as a Mormon Apostle, supervised both the religious and secular lives of Bear Lake settlers. Elder Rich was organizing the colonization of Star Valley, Wyoming, before becoming partially paralyzed by a stroke in 1880. He died three years later, on 17 November, 1883 at the age of seventy-five, the father of fifty-one children and grandfather of eighty-five.

Although Charles C. Rich spent relatively few years in Utah proper, he was a major figure in the settlement of Utah and in the social and political history of "Mormon Country".