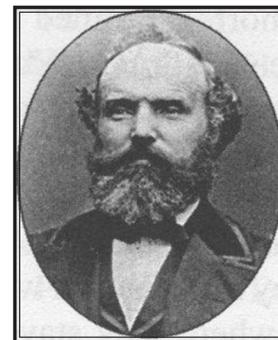


CHARLES SANSOM

Born: April 16, 1826 Forest Green, Gloucestershire, England

Age: 30

Rescuer



When Charles was only six years of age, his father was killed by being knocked down and run over by a heavily loaded wagon. Charles attended school for a few years and then worked as an errand boy to help support his family. Later he worked in a woolen factory, but his greatest restless desire was to be a sailor and travel, which he attempted a few times but was unsuccessful. He also tried to join the army but was one half inch too short. He felt that some power was holding him from going abroad. He recorded: "I had to give that project up. ... About this time I joined the Temperance Society, not because I was fond of intoxicating liquors for I did not like them, but for an excuse to keep out of the company of young men who were in the habit of going to these places where intoxicating liquor was sold. I kept the pledge faithfully."

In 1844 Charles met a young Mormon girl, Pamela Knight, and went with her to "hear the Mormons preach." He wrote, "I was soon convinced of the truths of the doctrine they taught. I received the glad news with a joyful heart. ... I was baptized at Avening, January 3, 1845, and confirmed at Chalford by Brother Webb. ... I had joined the Church for the love of its principles and it was truly a happy time for me to realize that I was living at a time when the true gospel was again on the earth; when apostles and prophets and the gifts of the gospel had been restored. I used to wish I had lived in the days of the Savior and his apostles."

Charles married Susannah Hartle on Oct. 31, 1847. Together they emigrated, going as far as New Orleans where cholera was raging in 1848. They later arrived in St. Louis the day after a "great fire which burned up 23 steam boats and about one-third of the business part of the city." After the fire, the cholera broke out again. Over 1000 died in one week, including many Latter-day Saints. Susannah died there of this disease in 1851. A short while after her death, she appeared to Charles in the night and comforted him.

Charles remarried a woman named Margrett Jones or Wilkinson, but he soon surmised that she had purposely misled him and had no intentions of going to Utah. She and a friend went back to England. Charles wrote:

I readily furnished her the means to go with and she started with the idea that she could induce me to follow, but my face was set westward and as soon as the spring opened [in 1852], I set out for the Valley. ... When we arrived at South Pass, 225 miles from the Valley, I decided to leave our company, take some bread and a blanket and walk ahead into the Valley. In company with two others we started out and reached the Valley in about nine days. Our train got in about seven days after. We found it very cold sleeping out where night would overtake us. The last night out we slept on the top of the big mountain. ... I arrived in the city without a cent, having lost what little I did have while sleeping on the ground with my clothes on. ... On Wednesday following I procured a fine yoke of cattle ... then two hind wheels of a wagon with a pole out of a fence for a tongue and loaded up with potatoes, mellons, cucumbers, onions, and beets ... and 50 pounds of flour ... and some dried mutton ... and started back on the road to meet my wagon and the family [Peck] with whom I had traveled. I started back alone, but met lots of our folks as they came along in a scattered condition, it not being convenient to keep a large company together after getting into the mountains. As I went along I distributed some potatoes and mellons to some of my acquaintances and well pleased they were with the treat. I traveled back as far as the Weber River and learned that my team would be along to camp there at night. I returned my cattle out and waited as our wagon hove in sight; it looked like a ship dismantled, they having had an upset that day and broke the bow. As soon as Sister Peck saw me she came bounding along nearly jumping over the sagebrush, so pleased was she to see me again with a fresh yoke of cattle and provisions ... out of which they made a feast that night.

Charles married Mary Ann Lewis in 1853 and worked hard at whatever work he could find. He belonged to Captain Ballo's Brass Band for twenty years. He also played many years in the Salt Lake Theater.

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The next few years were difficult, culminating in a severe winter in 1855-56. Charles was able to save his cow by “going up to the mountain and gathering the dead grass from bare spots here and there and then going down into the willows and cutting off the tender tops. ... Bread stuffs were very scarce and many suffered for the want of it. Myself with many others dug roots to eat, and one occasion I had gathered a lot of poison ones and was cooking them when by my wife tasting to see if the mess was properly seasoned she found out that something was wrong. By inquiry discovered that I had gathered a mess of poison segos.” The whole meal was thrown out and there was nothing left for dinner that night. Charles, being quite a joker, wrote a sign and put it on their door. It read, “One hearty appetite for sale.”

From Charles’ journal, we learn of his experience in rescuing the late companies:

This season some of our emigration started very late and many came with hand carts across the plains and were caught in the snows while they were yet 300 miles from the valley and a call was made for teams to go out and help them. In response to this call, over two hundred horse and mule teams went out, some went as far as the Sweetwater. I volunteered to go and on November 11th I left North Ogden with a four-horse team well loaded with horse feed. In Salt Lake City I met with President Brigham Young. He told me not to hurry my team but try and have them in as good condition as I could to come back with, so as to be able to do more good than I would be with a used up team.

When I got to Fort Bridger the orders were that we need not go any further as the belated companies [Martin, Hodgett, Hunt at this time] would be there in a day or two. But having a good team and Fort Bridger being a very cold place to stay, myself in company with one other good team concluded to go on until we met them, so we partly unloaded our wagons and taking along with us some flour and salt, we put out for Green River where we arrived in time to see the Company coming in. All the hand carts had been left behind, many of the folks were frozen and their cries as they came straggling in late, cold and hungry were enough to make the stoutest heart ache, what with their frozen limbs and haggard looks, for they had been suffering for food and the dirty, neglected appearance of most of the company were sights long to be remembered, but still many were happy under it all. Their songs would ascend every night around their campfires, surrounded by snow and many acknowledged us to be their saviors. I made myself useful in building fires and carrying wood and water for them until after midnight, until some of my brethren advised me to quit it or I would use myself up.

On arriving at Green River I drove into the river and got about half way across when the animals would pull the wagon no further and another team was sent to unload the flour. The wagon remained in the river all night. I started back in the morning with 8 or 10 passengers and a chest belonging to Ed Martin. I frequently scraped the snow to one side with a tin plate and made my bed on the ground. Two or three would sleep together, but we had no tent. There were tents for the emigrants which the teamsters would fix up; and then get some wood for their fires. After that the teamsters would fix for themselves. Large fires were built and the brethren from the valley would go around and administer to the sick and lame, but the majority of them felt safe in the care of those who had come out to help them. The brethren who went out as teamsters were a jolly lot and did their best to make things pleasant for their passengers.

The last night out before reaching the city was the worst. We camped in Killion’s Canyon where there was no chance to put up tents and no place to turn out our teams. We had to tie our animals to the wagons and had nothing to feed them. The snow and sleet came down lively and the wind blew. The passengers had to huddle into the wagons and sit up all night. In the morning we made as early a start as we could and arrived in Salt Lake City at the head of Main Street about 11:30 a.m. This was Sunday and the last day of November. President Brigham Young dismissed the morning meeting as soon as he heard of the arrival on Main Street. Thousands flocked around our wagons to welcome their friends and to offer homes to the destitute and in less than two hours all were provided for. I stayed with my wife’s father that night and next morning left for North Ogden. My team being tired we took two days to reach home. I felt truly thankful to my Heavenly Father that I was permitted to be at home again after such a perilous trip in the winter. I was out 21 days and it snowed every day.

In 1873-74 Charles filled a successful mission to England. His daughter, Elizabeth Barnes, said “It took a pound of butter to redeem a letter from England” at this time.

In *Biographical Encyclopedia*, “Salt Lake Stake of Zion,” Andrew Jenson concluded his article on Charles Sansom by quoting him, saying Charles hoped to “live to see the day when the Saints shall enjoy their rights and the wicked cease to rule over them.”

Sources: Journal of Charles Sansom, LDS Family History Library; Daughters of Utah Pioneers files; Biographical Encyclopedia, as listed.