

RICH COUNTY, UTAH

Rich County occupies the northeast section of the State of Utah. It faces Idaho on the North and Wyoming on the East. A range of high mountains along its western border separates it from Cache County and the rest of Utah. Rich is among the smallest of Utah's counties. It has a length of approximately fifty-six miles and a width of slightly more than eighteen miles. It has a land area of 1031 square miles. Of its 659,840 acres, less than one acre in ten is devoted to the production of crops. The grazing of sheep and cattle is an important part of the economy of the area. One half of the county's total acreage is used for grazing purposes.

Generally the climatic conditions in Rich County would be regarded as severe. Killing frosts are common early and late in the short growing season. Therefore, the crops are limited to those which are hardy by nature and which require the shortest possible growing season. The average annual rainfall is about nine inches, with an average annual temperature of 40 degrees F. The moderating effects of Bear lake, which occupies a large section in the northern end of the county makes the area around the lake slightly warmer than the southern end of the county. The elevation of the valley is about 6,400 ft.

There are about 243 farms in Rich County, which averages 2,162 acres in size. These farms are distributed along the Bear River in the southern part of the county and around Bear Lake in the northern portion of the county. Wild hay, alfalfa, barley and oats are the principal farm crops.

There are four communities in Rich County. The county seat is located at Randolph, which has a population of about 483 people. Ten miles south of Randolph is located the community of Woodruff, which has a population of about 194. A low range of hills separates the north and south ends of the county. Over this low range of hills to the north lie the two communities of Laketown and Garden City. Laketown has a population of about 263 and Garden City has about 357.

Other small communities have existed within the limits of Rich County, but have since been united with these centrally populated areas. Among these communities is Sage Creek, located north of Randolph, and Argyle, located a few miles to the south of Randolph. The most recent to be annexed to another community is Pickleville. It was located south of Garden City just west of Bear Lake with much of it being on the lakeshore. It is now part of Garden City. Improved roads and better means of transportation have made it undesirable to continue these small communities as separate social areas so their identities have been abandoned.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Rich County takes its name from Mormon colonizer Charles C. Rich, who was called by Brigham Young to lead colonies and make settlements in the area. The first settlements in

what is now Rich County resulted from previous settlements made in the Bear Lake Valley in Idaho. Charles C. Rich had led a colony from Cache County into the Bear Lake Valley in 1863. In the fall of 1864 settlers who had spent the previous winter in Paris and surrounding communities in the Bear Lake Valley moved southward into what is now Rich County, Utah.

The community of Garden City was the first one to be settled by this movement. The area at the south end of the lake was not filled with white settlers for several years after Garden City was located. President Brigham Young had made a treaty with the Indians stipulating that the area immediately surrounding the South of Bear Lake was to be reserved for the Indians to be used as a trading point. Previous to the coming of the white man it was customary in both the spring and fall for the Indians to spend many weeks trading furs and Indian ponies, and fishing in the waters of Bear lake and its surrounding tributaries.

LAKETOWN AREA FUR TRADERS RENDEZVOUS

The Rocky Mountain Fur Company headed by Milton G. Sublette, Dave E. Jackson, and Jedediah S. Smith conducted a fur trading rendezvous in the vicinity of Laketown on July 1827, taking 130 bales of beaver furs for shipment to St. Louis in March with 60 men and merchandise arriving via South Pass in late June. The trading was concluded and all parties dispersed in mid July 1827, following the return of Smith from a perilous journey to California. Traders were also here in 1826. In the late 1860's, Meadowville, Round Valley, and Laketown were being established as "Mormon" communities in spite of troubles with the Indians over this, their "hunting grounds". It seems that the first white settlers in the valley had made a treaty with the Indians, which gave to the whites the north end and the Indians the south end of Bear Lake Valley. Large bands of Indians frequently gathered in the vicinity of Laketown. In 1870, a gathering of Indians, (estimated at 3,000), camped on the south shore of Bear Lake causing settlers a great deal of concern and trouble; however, after a meeting of the settlers and chiefs, among them Chief Washakie, an agreement was effected and the Indians moved to Wind River, Wyoming. Today, this same area is a thriving ranch community with an LDS Church, elementary school, stores, service stations and cafes. On the shore of the lake are many permanent and recreational homes. The Cache National Forest, which borders the Laketown community on the west and south, abounds with deer and elk. To the north and east of the town, the Great Salk Lake Council of Boy Scouts has established an aquatic camp on lakeshore acreage.

BEAR LAKE VALLEY

The trappers and traders of the early 1800's were familiar with the Bear Lake country. One, Donald MacKenzie (1819), a red haired Scotsman, is credited with naming Bear Lake and Bear River, so called because of the numerous black bear in the area. He explored the country and traded with Indians. At MacKenzie's instigation, over 10,000 Indians camped on both sides of a seven-mile stretch of Bear River at the north end of Bear Lake. The gathering (including the Bancock's, the War-are-ree-kas, and the

Shoshonis, not all of which were on friendly terms themselves) was the largest ever known to have assembled in the Rockies. The giant Indian Chief Pee-eye-em and his brother Ama-qui-em, also a huge man, were in authority over the entire group. Mackenzie's purpose in arranging for this Pow-Wow was not only to trade for furs, but also to persuade the Indians to be friendlier to the white people.

The first covered wagons came into the Rocky Mountains in 1830, during which year they made their way as far west as Fort Washakie in Wyoming. Continued efforts were made to find passable wagon trails through mountains to the Pacific Coast, which goal was finally reached in 1840. At that time, the entire northwest mountain area was known as the Oregon Country and western travel was either to the Oregon or California regions. While early maps give the probable location of the first Oregon Trail somewhat to the north, well marked wagon ruts and the stories of Indians and early settlers of this region indicate that the first wagon to Migration "Oregon" followed the southerly and westerly shores of Bear lake, leaving this valley through a canyon to the northwest.

Additional color is given to this belief by the fact that this area was the site of an important trapper rendezvous as early as 1827, and well-marked trails were followed for many years in and out of the valley. The first permanent settlement in the Valley was Paris, Idaho, settled in the fall of 1863 by "Mormon" pioneers led by Charles C. Rich. Most of the other towns were settled the following spring.

BEAR LAKE

Bear Lake is a natural fresh water lake, although it is used as a reservoir to supply water for hydroelectric plants and irrigation. Small mountain creeks, underwater springs, and the floodwaters of Bear River being diverted into the lake by dams and a canal system feed it. Later it is returned to the river by pumping it out of the lake as needed.

Bear Lake is the remains of a larger lake that once covered the entire valley. It lays half in Utah and half in Idaho and it is about 20 miles long and 7 miles wide. Its greatest depth is 208 ft, and its average depth is 100 ft. By late summer, the surface water warms up to about 70 degrees. During the winter the lake usually freezes over by late January or early February and remains frozen until some time in April.

Situated in a mountain valley about 6,000 ft above sea level, Bear Lake is bordered on the west and south by an apron of irrigated farmland against the timbered mountains. Rugged perpendicular purple mountains back the picturesque east shoreline.

Bear Lake's intense blue-green color is probably due to the clearness of the blue deep water, the sandy bottom, minerals in the water and the reflection of the blue sky. It often varies with a change in color of the sky. Fall and spring months are the most productive for fishing in Bear Lake Waters. Three species of Whitefish are commonly taken from the lake. Recent research and plantings of Cutthroat, rainbow, and lake trout (mackinaw) have increased the interest of sportsmen in the area. Mackinaws up to 20 pounds are

occasional rewards for anglers. A brief annual run of Bonneville Cisco in late January has popularized the unique fishing in shallow icy water.

RESOURCES

Beef cattle are the most important product from the farms and ranches of Rich County. As one travels through the valley in the fall of the year when the cattle have been gathered from the summer grazing areas, one may see huge herds of fine cattle grazing in the meadowlands through the entire county. In the year 1957, 15,800 head of cattle were marketed from Rich County. Ogden, Salt Lake, Denver, and Omaha supply markets for these beef animals. The fertile valleys of Rich County supply luxuriant natural grasses. This grass is harvested as hay during the summer and supports the large herds located in the area.

Sheep and wool production are also important. In 1956 Rich County produced a quarter of a million lbs. of wool, and more than one-half million lbs. of lamb. However, this has declined in recent years.

The fertile soil and delightful summer in the Bear Lake area makes this section ideal for the production of small fruits. There are located in Garden City several areas devoted to the production of raspberries and strawberries. Many people come from surrounding areas in Utah, Wyoming and Idaho to assist in the picking of this fruit in its season. The extremely delicious flavor of this fruit, grown in the cool valley of the Bear Lake, makes it a favorite with them.

OTHER RESOURCES

Other important resources in Rich County are recreation in the Bear Lake, and oil and gas exploration throughout the entire county. Communities and schools are growing because of the people moving into the area to work in these industries.

Water is also an important resource. Approximately one and one-half miles west of the northern border of Garden City is a large natural spring. Swan Creek has its source in the spring. It is said to be one of the largest in the West. The Swan Creek Electric Company once supplied electricity to residents of Rich County and had its dynamos located in the rapids of the stream.

RECREATIONAL AREAS

That portion of Bear Lake, which is located in Rich County, is largely becoming famous as a recreational area or center. Numerous summer resorts are located along its shores. Here, in the summer, boating, swimming and water skiing are favorite sports. Since the lake is open the entire year to fishing, it is also a favorite recreational area for fishing. The Cisco, as mentioned before, is a small fish that is caught with a net. Bear Lake is one of the few places that Cisco is found.

Several streams of the county provide recreational opportunities for fishing and hunting. Among these are: Woodruff Creek, Otter Creek, Sage Creek and Randolph Creek. Bear River itself, which winds through the southern end of the county, then leaves the state and travels through western Wyoming until it enters Bear Lake in southern Idaho, affords a rare opportunity for fishing and hunting. Seventeen miles west of Woodruff is Monte Cristo Park. The forest service maintains an excellent park in this area, which is a favorite camping place in the summer. The Crawford Mountains, east of Randolph, are also used for hang gliding. This has one of the best air currents there are for this sport.

GOVERNMENT, SCHOOLS & CHURCHES

The courthouse and county seat is in Randolph and houses the offices of county government. This building was erected in 1940.

There are 4 schools in the Rich County School District. Elementary schools are found in Randolph and Laketown. In September of 1985 the junior high & high schools were consolidated. Junior high students within the county are now transported to Laketown. High school students are transported to Randolph.

People of Rich County are generally prosperous people. They are mostly of the L.D.S faith. There is located in each community a fine chapel and cultural hall to care for the religious and social needs of its people.

RANDOLPH

Randolph was settled in 1870. The first twelve men under the leadership of Randolph Stewart arrived from St. Charles, Idaho, at the present site of Randolph on March 14, 1870. During the spring and summer other settlers arrived from Salt Lake City. On Dec. 1, William Tyson arrived with a small flock of sheep.

After establishing camp, the town site was laid out and some crops planted. Many of the men returned to their homes for their families. About twenty homes were built the first summer.

The first public building was an 18 X 24 ft. log building with a shingle roof. It served as an amusement hall, schoolhouse and place of worship. The early business enterprises of Randolph had a rather turbulent existence. Stories of these early business ventures indicate that failure resulted from extending too much credit to accidently mixing poison with sugar. A bank established in 1906 was robbed in 1913 and closed its doors in 1929.

Occasional winters with heavy snow caused the early settlers many hardships. Many Indians visited and lived in the area, but were on friendly terms with the settlers.

During the early years of settlement, fish, sage and prairie chicken, ducks and geese, deer, elk, mountain sheep and antelope were in abundance. When the sheep industry became popular, the antelope disappeared. As stated before, Randolph is the center of

extensive cattle and sheep ranching. The Bear River Valley from the Wyoming border on the southeast extends north for miles, is about 8 miles wide and is almost exclusively cattle and sheep ranching. Phosphate was mined in the Crawford Mountains for a long time, but the mine is now closed.

The Rich County Fair and Rodeo is an annual attraction held each August in Randolph. Also, team roping is a sport that is greatly participated in.

Well-known people who are associated with Randolph include David Kennedy, who was Secretary of the Treasury under President Richard M. Nixon, from 1969-1971. Kennedy was born in Randolph in 1905. Wilford Woodruff, former President of the LDS Church, owned property in Randolph. He was one of the advanced parties that first arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley in 1847.

WOODRUFF

During the summer of 1870, while the people of Randolph were busy building and settling in their new location, eight men from Bountiful, Davis County, Utah, were exploring the valley ten miles to the south. They liked what they saw, the broad valley deep with native grass alive with wild game and fish in the streams. They returned to Bountiful in November. With provisions and the wives of the men, they returned to settle the town of Woodruff during the winter of 1870-71. In this vast cattle country dams and reservoirs have been built, making unique camping and fishing for modern explorers. The mountains west of Woodruff and Randolph are a part of the Cache National Forest in which elk and deer are hunted extensively. In this part of Bridgerland, one can get away from it all either on foot or with a camper. On a paved highway, which runs from Woodruff to Ogden, is majestic Monte Cristo Peak. In this delightful top-of-the-world setting is a delightful forest campground.

GARDEN CITY

The first colonizers, five in number, sent by the Mormon Church, came to the present location of Garden City in the fall of 1875. They spent the winter getting logs from the mountains west of Garden City to build homes in the spring and summer of 1876. In 1876, the first women (three) arrived, followed in the early fall by other families who moved from Fish Haven and probably other communities in the Valley.

Garden City was the last site on the shores of Bear Lake to be colonized. Most of the other towns in the Valley were settled in the spring of 1864. This explains why most of the families moving to Garden City had their furniture and other household articles.

The new settlement was first called Belle View. In 1879, at the suggestions of the general authorities of the LDS Church, it was called Garden City, because of its beautiful garden-like appearance.

Shortly after the settlement of Garden City, a water-driven saw mill and flourmill were built at Swan Creek, 3 ¼ miles north of town. An irrigation canal 6 miles long was engineered and dug from Swan Creek to the farmland around Garden City.

Farming in the area is extensive, with small scale, individual operations. Each farmer usually produces various crops, cattle and sheep being the main ones. The climate is adapted to raising garden vegetables, the warm days and growth-retarding cool nights make an ideal combination to bring a firm, mellow product. Marketed in late July and early August, Bear Lake Raspberries are popular for their excellent size, flavors and quality.

In the Garden City recreational area are found most of the accommodations and services available on the lake. Trailer and camping courts, resorts, condominiums and modern motels meet the various needs of the visitors.

Garden City is the site for a trilobite fossil bed which has been recognized by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. as being of major importance. Geologists from the Institute noted that the formation was more than 530 million years old, placing it in the Cambrian period from the Paleozoic Era.

LAKETOWN

In 1863, Luther Reed established a sawmill in what is now Round Valley. But because the Indians were so menacing, they moved into Laketown, or “Last Chance” as it was then called. From then on families began moving into the Laketown area and building log homes and planting crops. The families came from other settlements in Utah and Idaho.

The first years were hard ones as crickets and frost destroyed crops. Also the Indians in the area were demanding and the settlers were advised by President Brigham Young to give them what they wanted in order to keep peace. Settlers survived by eating potatoes and fish from the Bear Lake.

The first school opened in Laketown in 1869. It was held 3 months of the year and in a building that had a dirt floor and was also used for church meetings. In 1871 a post office was established. In 1874 a two-room frame house was built to accommodate the first store in Laketown. It was stocked with groceries, staples, dry goods and hardware, which were exchanged for cash, grain, butter and eggs.

By the early 1900's, Laketown was turning into a prosperous, thriving community that it is today.

SHOSHONE, MOUNTAINMEN, EARLY SETTLERS

The first human beings to set foot in the Bear Lake Valley were the Shoshone Indians, who lived near the southern shore of the lake. The area was rich in beavers, so the

mountain men and trappers soon followed. One of the largest and most popular rendezvous was held on the southern shore of the lake during the summers of 1826 and 1827. Historians record that Jim Bridger, Jedediah Smith and William Ashley, as well as many Native Americans attended this popular rendezvous.

Mormon pioneer leader Brigham Young sent Charles C. Rich to Bear Lake to settle the valley. It was a hard climate to survive in. Even today, Randolph City, located southeast of the Bear Lake Valley, records the coldest temperatures in the state throughout the year.

A re-enactment of the Bear Lake Rendezvous is held the second week of September, and is organized by Bear Lake State Park.

BEAR LAKE

Elevation 5,910 ft
Length 20 miles
Width 8 miles
Shoreline 48 miles
Surface 112 sq miles
Depth 208 ft
Volume 6.5 million acre ft

Located on the border of Utah and Idaho, Bear Lake is a unique and valuable resource. The lake is at least 28,000 years old, and for the last 8,000 years was isolated from the Bear River by Earthquake activity. This isolation has resulted in unique water chemistry as well as rare forms of plant and animal life. Four of the lake's species of fish are found nowhere else in the world. It's unusual Caribbean blue is the result of limestone particles suspended in the lake.

Four state owned parks provide boating, camping, and picnic facilities. Utah's Bear Lake Marina, Rendezvous Beach, and Eastside State Parks and Idaho's North Beach State Park all have camping, day-use, picnic and swimming areas. The Marina has boat-launching facilities. Boats can also be launched from First Point on the southeast side and Rainbow Cove, just north of Cisco Beach.

Boat fuel is available from a barge anchored just north of Ideal Beach Marina. Although Ideal Beach is private, the fuel is available to the public.

Boat and other watercrafts are available for rent at Lighthouse Landing, Blue Water Beach and Rendezvous Beach.

Restaurants and gift shops are located in Garden City, Laketown, Pickleville and Ideal Beach.

Commercial camping and lodging are available near Garden City at Bear Lake KOA, Lutz Campground, Bear Lake Motor Lodge, Inn of the Three Bears Bed & Breakfast and Ideal Beach.

BEAR LAKE'S FISH

Bear Lake Cutthroat - Native Sport Fish



Lake Trout (Mackinaw) – Introduced Sport Fish



Bonneville Cisco- Endemic Sport & Forage Fish



Bear Lake Whitefish- Endemic Forage Fish



Bonneville Whitefish – Endemic Sport Fish



Bear Lake Sculpin – Endemic Forage Fish



Rainbow Trout- Introduced Sport Fish

Brook & Brown Trout – Rare Introduced Sport Fish

Utah Sucker – Native Nongame Fish

Utah Chub – Native Nongame Fish

Carp – Introduced Nongame Fish

Yellow Perch – Introduced Sport/Nongame Fish

Redside Shiner – Native Forage Fish

Bear Lake Monster – Endemic Legendary Marine Animal

(Note: Endemic = Found nowhere else in the world.)

BEAR LAKE'S WILDLIFE

Mule Deer

Elk

Moose

Cottontail Rabbit

Uinta Ground Squirrel

Red Fox

Western Gribes

Comon Loon

Cormorants

Golden & Bald Eagles

Mergansers

Seagulls

Pelicans

Assorted Ducks & Geese

Muskrats

Beaver

Blow Snakes

Western Garter Snakes

Great Basin Rattlesnakes

THE BEAR LAKE MONSTER

The lake was very calm. Above, a bright summer moon provided unlimited visibility. Suddenly, just a few feet offshore, the surface parted with a swelling roar of angry water as a serpentine head reared high, swaying from side to side and leering with great red eyes. From the nose and mouth of the monster gushed streams of water. It had huge ears like slimy bushel baskets.

The Indians of the region reported rumors of the Bear Lake Monster to the first white settlers of the lake. They reported that many times in the past it had captured and carried away braves who were swimming. They said the Monster was a serpent kind, but had legs about 18 inches long and sometimes crawled out of the water.

From the first settlement of the valley by the Mormons in the early 1860's, various persons reported seeing a huge animal in the lake. Charles C. Rich, who was in charge of settlement under Brigham Young, was curious about the monster and started keeping notes but put little credence to them because "such persons have generally been alone."

Typical of these early stories was that of S.M. Johnson, who lived across from the lake. One day in June 1868, Johnson was riding his horse along the lakeside when he saw something in the lake, which he thought was a body of a man. He got a little closer and saw that the water did not wash the object to shore. He thought it must be a large tree with its trunk anchored in the bottom of the lake. However, the tree opened a mouth, which was "large enough to swallow a man" and was blowing water from his mouth and nose.

Johnson clearly noted the head, the huge ears, and also three small legs raised from the water. Johnson's visit with the monster must have made it friendly, for within one week it was spotted by more than 20 people. The monster was soon accepted real throughout the valley.

A few nights later M.C. and Allen Davis of St. Charles, Idaho, accompanied by Thomas Slight and John Collings of Paris, Idaho, were taking six girls home from a party in Fish Haven when a peculiar motion of waves on the water suddenly attracted them. It was swimming south and all agreed it swam with an incredible speed. Mr. Davis thought it moved about a mile a minute. In a few minutes after the first monster passed by it was followed by a second much smaller one. A larger one followed this, and so on until four large ones and six smaller ones had run southward out of sight. These witnesses were very prominent men and were well known in the county.

This monster was very much discredited by a group of scientist, however, who proved that it was an immense codfish on which eight chicken legs had been attached. The monster had been shipped from the east.

All in all, the story of the Bear Lake Monster seems to have been widely enjoyed throughout Utah and the belief in the monster will live forever.

WHY IS BEAR LAKE SO BLUE?

The Native Americans started the tradition of adding blue dye to the lake to make it a pretty color, and the mountain men and early settlers continued the tradition of pouring blue dye into the lake. The Bear Lake State Park now uses boats to add the dye.

JUST KIDDING!! On most days it does look like someone has been adding blue dye to the lake. The color of the lake actually is a unique, natural phenomenon that occurs as a result of limestone particles suspended in the lake. The particles absorb light and reflect blue light. The lake changes to vary the shades of blue, green and deep aquamarine, depending on the weather and the wind. Even on a cloudy day, the lake can be as blue as ever. Then on other days, the lake can seem dull or colorless. Even when it is ice covered, the color changes to reflect the lake's many moods.

Most people who pass by Bear Lake will remember the incredible turquoise color of Bear Lake. It is a color that is only duplicated in Caribbean waters or glacial filled lakes in Canada. The Bear Lake overlook on HWY 89, up Logan Canyon, is one of the best spots to capture a view of this incredible lake.

RECREATIONAL SIGHTS FOUND IN RICH COUNTY

1. Camp Hunt (Boy Scouts of America)
2. Bear Lake State Park Recreation Area
3. KOA Campground
4. Garden City Park
5. Blue Water Beach
6. Sunrise Campground
7. Limber Pine Trail
8. Highway Rest Stop
9. Rendezvous Beach
10. Cisco Beach Recreation Area
11. Camp Bear Lake (Boy Scouts of America)
12. Laketown Ward
13. Randolph City Playground, Rich County Park
14. Little Creek Reservoir (New, Pole and Old Canyon)
15. Hang Gliding Area (Crawford Mountains near Randolph)
16. Woodruff Ward
17. Birch Creek Reservoir
18. Monte Cristo Campground and Winter Sports Area
19. Laketown Canyon Recreation Site
20. Otter Creek
21. Little Creek Reservoir

22. Big Canyon
23. Birch Creek Reservoir
24. Woodruff Creek
25. Laketown Neponset Waterfowl Habitat Site

HISTORICAL MARKERS

There are four historical markers along the highways in Rich County. The Utah State Historical Society, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Utah Department of Highways and a special interest group, have erected these markers.

1. A historical marker found south of Randolph pays tribute to the first camp of settlers into the Randolph area, the founders of Randolph area, and the founders of Randolph City. The Daughters of Utah pioneers erected this marker.
2. Another marker found on the west side of Bear Lake, approximately two miles south of the Utah-Idaho State line, describes the early travel routes of pioneers. The route around the west side of Bear Lake is one of the many branches of the Oregon Trail.
3. A third marker is located at the Bear Lake Scenic Overlook, up Highway 89 west of Garden City. This marker explains the naming of Bear Lake and other interesting facts of the lake and surrounding area.
4. The fourth marker is found at the highway rest stop north of Laketown. This marker identifies the south end of Bear Lake as the site of the 1827 –1828 Mountain Men Rendezvous, where mountain men and traders gathered for their annual trading and social event.

GHOST TOWNS

Four Ghost towns or the remains of important early Rich County settlements have been identified in the County. They are:

1. Round Valley (Cottonwood Canyon)
2. Sage Creek (at the junction)
3. The Argyle Town (South of Randolph)
4. The Thompson Homestead (Laketown Canyon)