

## Charles Hastings Deuel Class of 2024



Charles Hastings Deuel was born in Forbestown, CA in 1868, the son of Butte County pioneers who came to the area in the 1850s as part of the California Gold Rush. His family moved to Oroville in 1882, He graduated from Oroville High School circa 1886, in the building on Bird Street known as The Oroville Grammar School where high school students were housed on the upper floor. Graduation records were not kept in those days.

At age 18, Charles was hired by the Oroville Mercury as a printer's apprentice. He quickly became a reporter and was eventually elevated to acting editor where he served for four years. In 1891, he became the editor of the Gridley Herald, and in 1897 retired from the Herald and joined V. C. Richards at the Chico Record, where he became part owner. He and Richards maintained ownership of the Chico Record, selling it in 1945.

*In 1897, at the age of 31, he purchased the Chico Record, a newspaper that traced its roots to the Butte Record, which was located at Bidwell Bar – a community that today sits beneath the water of Lake Oroville. (drought-year levels notwithstanding, of course,) He remained editor and publisher of our newspaper until 1945 - an incredible 48-year run. (Mike Wolcott, editor of the Chico E-R).*

*Think about that – he began as publisher of the newspaper 20 years before the United States entered World War I and was still there in the final days of World War II. During that period, which included the turn of the century, the Roaring 20s, the Great Depression, and the two deadliest wars in the history of our planet, he built this newspaper into an empire all its own. The Record became one of California's most reputable newspapers, a legacy we strive to uphold to this very day. (Mike Wolcott, editor of the Chico E-R).*

In 1917, he was appointed by President Woodrow Wilson to the Butte County Exemption Board, serving as secretary and working on the Selective Service Act.

While still owning the Chico newspaper, Charles was elected to the California State Assembly in 1924, serving until 1930. In 1931, he was elected to the California State Senate, serving until he died in 1947. During his tenure, he served as a Democrat and as a Republican. Senator Deuel was a strong advocate of prison reform and education and in 1933, was named chair of the University and Teachers Colleges Committee.

While serving as an Assemblyman and Senator, he was active on the Judiciary, Motor Vehicles, Revision of Criminal Law and Procedures, Banking and Loan, Commerce, Navigation, Conservation, and Insurance Committees.

He also introduced many bills on prison reform, one creating the California Vocational Institute in Lancaster, California. *After he died in 1947, the name of the institute was changed to the **Deuel Vocational Institution**, in a bill signed by then-governor Earl Warren. The name change was made by the Legislature as a tribute to the late Senator Charles H. Deuel of Chico, who pioneered California prison reforms during his long tenure as a senator.* The Institution, now located in Lancaster, is to be moved to a site near Tracy. (Sacramento Union January 24, 1951). The facility was expanded in 1959, 1981, and 1993. The prison was closed in 2021.

Following Deuel's death in 1947, in the book "The California Legislature," Secretary of State Joseph Beck wrote, *"To the individual who has inhabited the Senate Chamber of the State of California longer than any other citizen of the State, the passing of Senator Charles Deuel marked the departure from that beautiful old room of the most kindly and most sympathetic presence it has ever known."*

Charles married Bertha Marian Norman of Gridley in 1899 and they were together until his death. They had one son and two daughters. He was inducted into the California Newspaper Hall of Fame in 2021.