



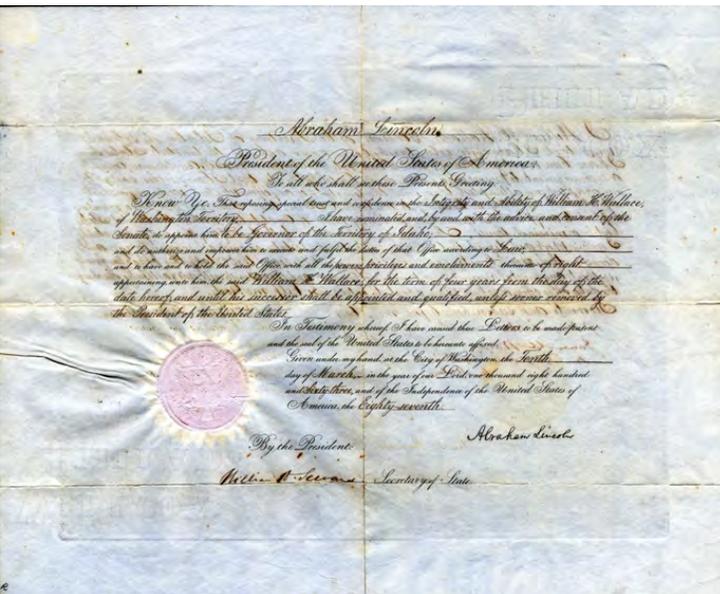
William H. Wallace

In the early morning of March 4, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed the congressional act creating Idaho Territory. That very day, William Wallace wrote to the president, seeking nomination as first territorial governor. The letter did not have far to travel; Wallace was in the capital as Washington's territorial delegate to Congress. Until March 4, Idaho had been a part of Washington Territory. Wallace had worked to separate the new mining regions of Idaho from Washington. Now he sought appointment as Idaho's first governor.

The Senate confirmed Wallace's appointment on March 10, and on March 17 he accepted the position, swearing, during the height of the Civil War, that he had never supported the "pretended" Confederate government. He added his name to a certificate previously signed by President Lincoln and Secretary of State William Seward. It is one of Idaho's most cherished documents, one among many preserved for the people of Idaho at the Idaho State Historical Society.



William H. Wallace



Oath signed by William H. Wallace

Wallace made plans to head the largest territory in America, including all of the present states of Idaho and Montana and most of Wyoming—an area bigger than Texas.

On April 1, Idaho's new governor and his wife Luzena began their long journey from New York to Idaho, via the Isthmus of Panama.

While on that journey, Wallace selected Lewiston as the first capital. It seemed to make sense; Wallace had campaigned in that region for Washington territorial delegate in 1861. At that time, Lewiston was a swashbuckling supply center for burgeoning Clearwater mines.



Page 2 continued...

By the time Wallace returned on July 10, 1863, he found a city little resembling its heyday. In Wallace's absence, population had shifted dramatically south to newer diggings in the Boise Basin.

Wallace set up offices in the elegant Hotel DeFrance. During that hot summer of 1863 and into the fall, it became scene of some of the most significant discussions in Idaho's history, as Wallace supervised the organization of Idaho's first government.

While attending to official business, Wallace also threw himself into the political fray by becoming a candidate as Idaho's first delegate to Congress. He won the election in October by 367 votes. Idaho's first governor would serve one of the shortest tenures. William Wallace returned to the nation's capital and served one term as territorial delegate. He then returned to his home at Steilacoom on Puget Sound, where he died in 1879.

"I have the honor to report that I reached this place last evening and this morning entered on the duties of my office," William Wallace wrote Secretary of State Seward on July 11, 1863 from Lewiston. Territorial government in Idaho had officially commenced.

