

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

BENJAMIN M. DURELL  
ca. 1830-October 10, 1883

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Benjamin M. DuRell was born ca. 1830 in either Maine or Massachusetts. He came west to California in about 1849, then went north to St. Helens, Oregon, on the Columbia River in about 1853. He built a flour and sawmill at St. Helens. After the mill burned in 1857, DuRell moved to Salem, Oregon, where he shipped produce to California and built a large port-packing plant and a sawmill. A disastrous flood in the winter of 1861-62 again put him out of business and he headed for the Idaho gold fields.

On his way to Idaho in 1862, DuRell met Christopher W. Moore and the two began hauling goods to the mines in Auburn, Oregon. In the spring of 1863 they brought supplies to Boise, selling some from their wagons and hauling the rest to the Snake River for sale to Owyhee miners. The partners opened several stores, including B. M. DuRell & Co. in Boise and Idaho City, and DuRell & Moore in Ruby City. The stores offered banking services as well as merchandise, and this financial activity led DuRell and Moore to join with three other investors (including Territorial Governor David Ballard) to organize the First National Bank of Idaho in 1866. The bank was granted a charter on March 11, 1867, and opened for business in the rear of DuRell's Boise store on June 6, 1867. Branches were soon opened in their Silver City and Idaho City stores.

DuRell sold his interest in the bank in 1872 and moved to Utah where he organized the Salt Lake City National Bank of Utah.

When the bank failed, he moved to the Butte, Montana, area where he again operated stores. In 1883 he sold out and was on his way to the Coeur d'Alene mines when he contracted pneumonia and died on October 18, 1883, in Frenchtown, Montana.

According to DuRell's obituary, he left a wife in California and a son and daughter. A son, Benjamin, Jr. (age 19, born on the Pacific Ocean) is listed as living with DuRell in Idaho City in the 1870 census.

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