

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

WILLIAM B. MORRIS
March 1, 1832-August 23, 1878

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William B. Morris only lived in Boise for seven years, but during that time his business ventures had an impact on the young town. He was born March 1, 1832, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He came to Boise in 1871 to manage the Northwestern Stage Company and the Wells Fargo & Company's Express office. His business investments included the purchase of the War Eagle Flour Mill (renamed Morris Mills), which was managed by his nephew, William H. Ridenbaugh. Morris also owned a toll bridge on the Boise River, a sawmill on Shaffer Creek with Alexander Rossi, and a lumber yard on upper Main Street. He served on the board of directors of the First National Bank of Idaho from 1876 to 1878 and was vice-president of the bank.

Morris was especially interested in reclamation projects. In November 1877, he claimed 17,076 acres south of Boise under the Desert Land Act. He constructed a headgate to divert water from the Boise River and built seven miles of canal at a cost of about \$60,000. A ten-acre log pond was also dug three miles below the head of the canal to float logs down to the mill. When Morris died on August 23, 1878, the canal became the property of his widow Lavinia T. Morris, and his nephew William Ridenbaugh, for whom the canal is named.

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