

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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After a decade of political strife over Civil War and Reconstruction issues, Idaho progressed into a new era of territorial government. Local matters received more political attention, and a new governor--Thomas W. Bennett--set a refreshing precedent by deciding to stay and support territorial administrative reforms that appealed to frontier settlers. In 1872, southeastern Idaho Mormons finally consented to participate in Idaho's government after more than a decade of functioning in Utah. They had a practically unanimous preference for Democratic candidates for national reasons unrelated to Idaho considerations. So in 1874, Idaho's Republicans retaliated with a strong campaign that resulted a decade later in legislation preventing any Mormon from voting, holding office, or serving on a jury. Those disabilities lasted for eight years, until after Idaho was admitted as an anti-Mormon state.

Even though Idaho belatedly gained a stable territorial government, frontier conditions still prevailed. A series of Indian wars disturbed scattered settlers from 1877 to 1879. Except for Franklin, stage coaches and freight wagons served Idaho until 1878. A wild conflict between Governor Mason Brayman (1876-1880) and other territorial officials suggested that reforms in territorial government still were needed. North Idaho, dissatisfied with an inconvenient political attachment to a southern section separated by mountain and canyon barriers, invested a great deal of energy in trying to dissolve that connection. In 1886 and 1887 Congress voted to return North Idaho to Washington. Southern Idaho was invited to join Nevada.

But President Grover Cleveland responded to Boise residents' objections to that arrangement by refusing to approve such a change. Until 1888, Idaho's continued existence remained in doubt, although by that time other reminders of territorial frontier experience were becoming less evident. Late in 1888, a partisan congressional blockage that had prevented admission of any new western states since 1882 suddenly was broken. Six Republican northwestern territories were admitted as quickly as possible. So Idaho adopted a constitution in 1889 and became a state sometime in early or mid-afternoon (Eastern time), about noon Boise time, on July 3, 1890.

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