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The Idaho Legislature has met in Boise since 1865 (after the capital of Idaho Territory was moved from Lewiston to Boise in 1864), but for the first twenty years the legislature and other state officials had no permanent home. The governor, secretary of state, and other officials rented offices in various buildings in Boise. Before each legislative session it was the secretary of state's duty to rent and furnish appropriate meeting places for the Council and the Assembly of the territorial legislature.

Looking through old newspapers is the best way to discover where the legislatures met, but this method does have its drawbacks. In the 1860's and 1870's Boise was a small town; the editor of the Statesman seemed to assume that everyone knew where the legislature was meeting, and so consequently did not bother to say. This was the situation in 1865, but fortunately the correspondent for the Owyhee Avalanche in Silver City set the record straight. He reported that the halls which were to be used by the legislature were on opposite sides of Main Street near the bridge. One was brick, the other wood, and both measured twenty-five feet wide and sixty feet long. The correspondent ended his report by saying, "The halls are spacious and roomy; probably will not be finished with a great deal of architecture, but taken altogether will accommodate these Honorable bodies." These two halls were owned by May and Brown, brickmakers and builders. Unfortunately, the Idaho Historical Society does not have pictures of these buildings in their files.

The next year both houses met in the newly built Hart's Exchange, a combination hotel, restaurant, and community center, located on the southeast corner of 7th and Idaho. This session of the legislature was an explosive one and at the end of the session the members erupted in a near riot. Earlier, they had refused to take a loyalty oath as prescribed by the federal government (many were of southern sentiment), so their pay was withheld at the end of the session. This action caused great anger, and to some degree it was vented on the legislative meeting rooms. The Statesman editor noted with great disgust that "much of the furniture of the halls was destroyed and carried away. It is said that some persons amused themselves by throwing lamps out of the windows." Eventually a compromise was reached and the legislators received their pay. It was to be ten

years, however before they met again at Hart's Exchange. By 1876, when the legislative Assembly met there, it was under new management and known as the Central Hotel. The assembly used the hall on the second floor again in 1878, 1880, and 1882. A copy of a lithograph in the files of the Idaho Historical Society shows the hotel as it appeared in 1884.

In 1868 both houses of the legislature met in the Masonic Hall, which was also used again by the Council in 1874. The building and some of the members of the 1868 legislature were described by the Owyhee Avalanche correspondent as follows:

The Masonic Hall, a commodious two-story brick building situated on the principal (Main) street, is the temporary receptacle of the assembled wisdom of the Territory. The Council, comprising ten members, suggestive of their exalted political position, occupy the upper story; and the Assembly, composed of twenty members, two of whom belong to the black fold (that is, Republicans), but are in other respects decent members, hold forth in the lower.

A photograph of the Masonic Hall, taken at a later date, is in the Idaho Historical Society's files, with the building somewhat obscured by the Masons posing in front.

In 1870 and again in 1872, the legislature met in the Good Templar Hall located on Main Street near 6th. This two-story wooden building was used for many community events as well as Good Templar and legislative meetings. A newspaper photo in the Idaho State Historical Society photo collection shows the front of this association building.

The Turnverein Hall was the meeting place of the Legislative Council in 1878 and 1882 (and possibly in 1876 and 1880), and of the Legislative Assembly in 1884. The Turnverein and Harmonica Society was formed in 1870 by Boiseans of German birth to promote "manly exercise" and the singing of traditional German songs. Their hall was the scene of many community happenings, and theatrical troupes often entertained there. Another picture in the IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY files shows the hall as it appeared in its later days when it served as Ostner's Livery Stable. This structure was torn down and a new Turnverein Hall was erected in 1906 at the same location, the southeast corner of 6th and Main.

In 1886 the legislature and other state officials moved their quarters into the recently completed territorial capitol building. There they remained until the main portion of the present state capitol was completed in 1913. Since then the legislature has had a permanent home, which makes for more efficient law-making but is not nearly so interesting as tracking their movements from building to building.

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