



IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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**IDAHO'S BOUNDARY DISPUTE WITH UTAH**

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Extending from Mexico's northern border (established by an 1819 treaty with Spain) north to Great Britain's share of a region known as Oregon prior to 1846, Idaho's other boundaries stimulated two decades of controversy after 1860. But aside from a minor error that left a very small portion of Dakota Territory bordering on Idaho after Wyoming was established in 1868, only one serious dispute over location of land along territorial boundaries affected Idaho. Until 1872, Idaho engaged in a major dispute with Utah over a sixty-mile strip of Cache Valley and Bear Lake country. A substantial area, considerably larger than Delaware and Rhode Island combined, was affected. It was nearly square in shape--an oddity considering that latitude was all that was involved. If that dispute had been projected along Idaho's entire Utah-Nevada border (42<sup>nd</sup> parallel), an area as large as New Hampshire and Vermont would have been included.

Utah's expansion into territory north of its border commenced early in 1860, when a Cache Valley community was founded in Washington at Franklin, which finally became Idaho's oldest town. Territorial authorities in Olympia had no idea that they were responsible for government for a new settlement in Spokane County more than 800 miles away. A year later, they transferred that part of Spokane County to Shoshone County. Franklin's pioneers did not realize that they had occupied part of Washington. After they became part of Idaho--a territory a great deal larger than Washington--they remained unaware of their change in jurisdiction. They naturally went right on assuming they were still in Utah. A little later in 1863, a new Mormon Bear Lake colony was set up in Idaho. This expansion penetrated far beyond Franklin, which was only a mile or two from Utah. Some Bear Lake settlements ranged as far as sixty miles from Utah--a distance that hardly could be passed off as resulting from ignorance attributed to lack of a precise boundary survey. Mormon apostate settlements at Malad and Soda Springs cheerfully admitted that they were in Idaho: established by dissenters who came to Idaho to escape from Utah, they blocked further expansion from Utah into Idaho and accounted for an almost square Utah segment of territory beyond that jurisdiction's borders.

In 1864, Utah's legislature was considerate enough to establish a whole new county in Idaho (with a modest population overlap into Utah) to accommodate Bear Lake settlements there. Richland's county seat--and most of its population--was in Idaho. Saint Charles remained county seat until 1872, when Idaho's jurisdiction finally was recognized, and what remained of Rich County in Utah had to be reorganized. Cache Valley settlements in Utah had their own county, so Idaho's share did not need a separate local administration.

By 1870, close to one out of every six citizens of Idaho lived under Utah jurisdiction and administration. Their disputed Cache Valley-Bear Lake area had more

population per square mile than Idaho's remaining lands could boast. Idaho officials had a hard time figuring out whether to be thankful that so many Mormon communities refused to accept a change in territorial jurisdiction, or whether to complain that they were losing tax revenue to Utah. Actually, Idaho had shown only a limited amount of anti-Mormon discrimination prior to 1872, and when disputed borderland residents finally conceded that they lived in Idaho, they had an opportunity in 1872 (that continued for a decade) to decide, through a controlling voting influence, all territorial election outcomes. In 1872, a Mormon from Franklin, in fact, became chaplain for Idaho's legislature. That represented quite a shift, considering that earlier in 1872, they had ignored Idaho's disputed boundary in order to participate in Utah's constitutional convention. Even after Idaho's boundary dispute was settled by acceptance of a survey report in 1872, Idaho's most prominent Mormon leader continued to serve in Utah's legislature, although he resided in Paris, which became Bear Lake County seat. But his son, Joe Rich, simultaneously represented his county in Idaho's legislature. Bear Lake County, like Rich County before it, actually was managed as a Utah County even through Idaho's boundary dispute had been resolved adversely. Altogether, this whole boundary dispute was handled very differently from any other cases like that in United States history. As in many other matters Idaho was different.

**(This information has not been edited.)**