

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### LOCATION OF FORT BOISE AND BOISE CITY

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When mid-nineteenth century municipal planners selected locations for aspiring new cities, they ordinarily chose riverside, lakeshore, or ocean beach sites--depending upon what was available in their area. Atlanta, Georgia, was a rare exception to that practice. Boise also avoided a riverside site as far as was possible.

Military authorities sent out to build Fort Boise--site of our Senior Center--did what they could to develop an Oregon Trail site just as far from a dangerous river location as they could get. Their concern went back only a year, to an 1862 flood of monstrous proportions. Nothing remotely like that deluge has occurred since then--a fortunate improvement in our local river history. For a long spring flood time in 1862, Boise River waters ran more than a mile wide across land that now is Boise, and a lot more than that farther west. So our Senior Center location was deeply submerged for much of that time.

When flood waters finally receded in 1862, they left a huge island where South Boise and Boise State University campus grounds are now. A small northside channel flowed about where Boise River runs now. But from 1862 to 1876, mostly west of what now is Barber Park, Boise River actually flowed pretty close to present Boise Avenue. Somewhere in Ann Morrison Park, those two channels united to terminate that six mile island. Other islands emerged from channel variations farther west, but they were not so close to Boise.

Momentous military events of July 4, 1863, when Major Pinkney Lugenbeel held a ceremony to mark his location of Fort Boise, included two major Civil War turning points: General U. S. Grant gained control of all Mississippi River navigation when he captured Vicksburg--just when General Robert E. Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania collapsed at Gettysburg.

Unaware of these episodes, Boise city founders established their townsite adjacent to Fort Boise, July 7. Then on July 10, Governor William H. Wallace organized Idaho's territorial government in Lewiston. (Congress had created Idaho territory, with an area larger than Texas, on March 4, 1863.) Altogether, those initial days of July were outstanding for their national as well as local significance.

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

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